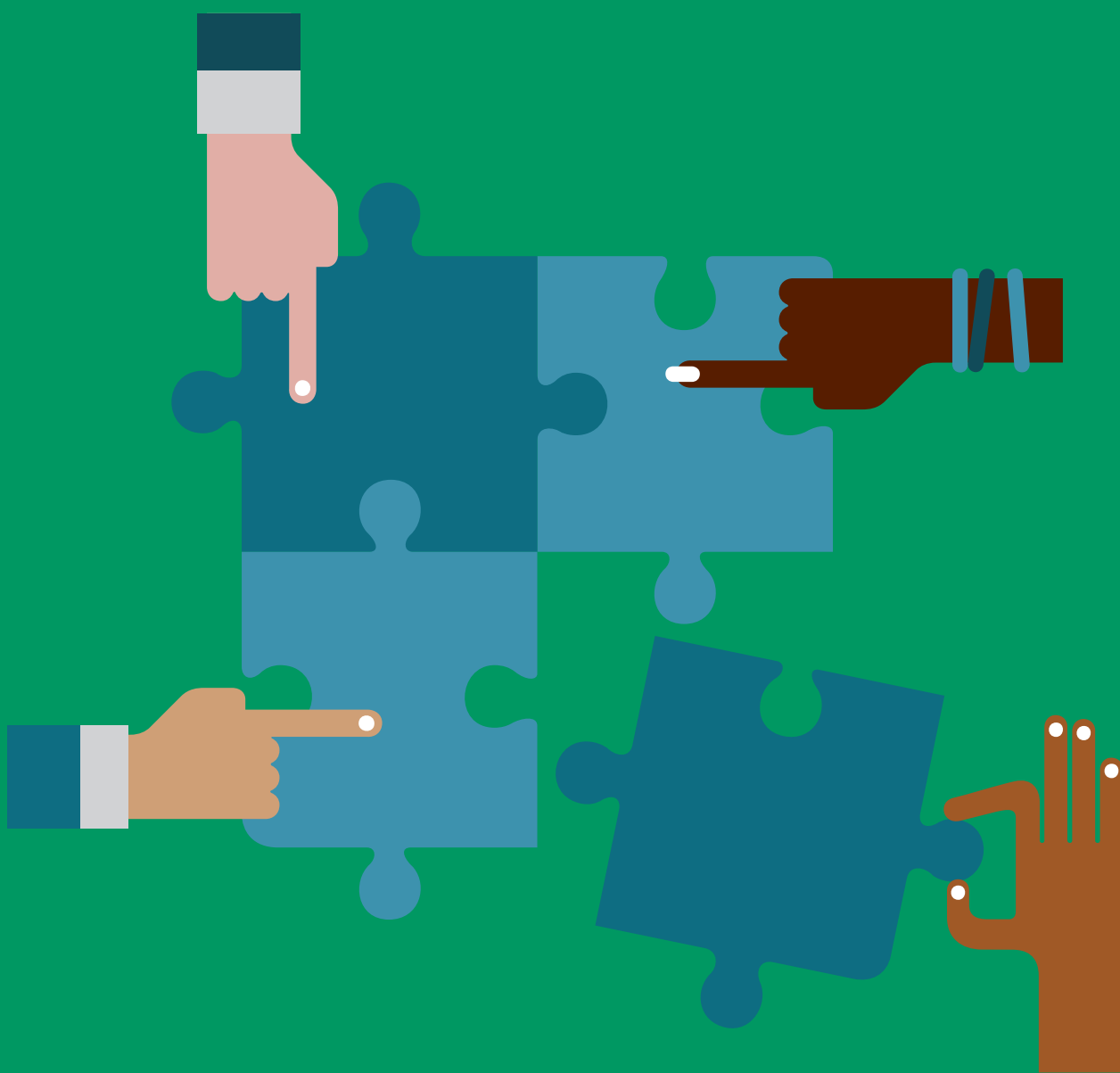




Gender Policy

JULY 2023



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Content

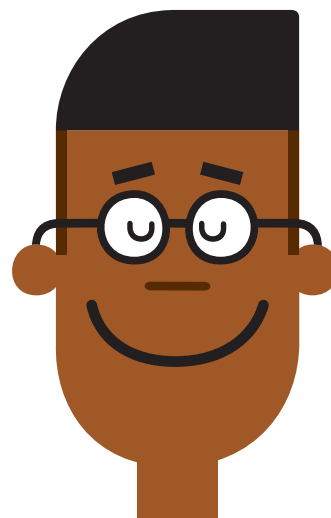
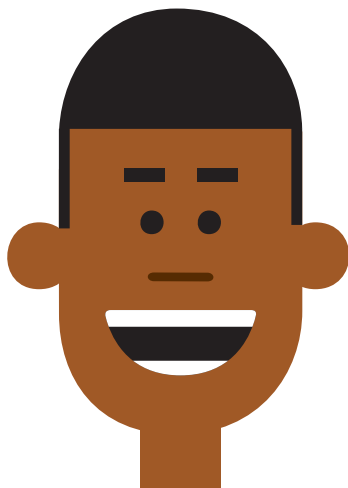
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Glossary

This glossary explains gender-related terminology that is used further in this policy. It is important to have an aligned understanding and common language when talking about gender in VVOB and this glossary provides the framework for the concepts used.

While using gender terminology correctly is important to avoid misunderstandings, staff also need to feel comfortable and confident to use their own words when discussing aspects related to the gender policy and need not to hold back because they are unsure about the exact and correct terminology.

In order to ensure that all VVOB staff have a working understanding of the terminology used in the gender policy and feel comfortable discussing topics related to gender equity, internal capacity will be strengthened through a foundational internal learning trajectory on gender equity that will be offered to all staff (see section 4. Organisational Culture of Gender Equity).



Gender

The personal and social norms and expectations associated with being male, female, a combination or neither.

Sex

The assignment and classification as male, female or intersex, based on biological differences at birth. The term intersex is used to describe all people who biologically do not fall in the male/female binary.

Gender identity

Someone's internal sense of being male, female, a combination or neither.

Gender equity

Striving for the inclusion of all sexes and gender identities. It refers to recognising that people have different needs, opportunities and levels of power and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a way that restores imbalances.

Gender equality

A state of equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all sexes and gender identities. It entails that rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on whether they are born female, male or intersex nor on which gender they identify with. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of all sexes and gender identities are taken into consideration, thereby recognising the diversity of all people.

Describes the process towards gender equality. E.g., VVOB programmes take additional measures to make sure that certain groups of children who do not have equal opportunities in education (e.g. girls in certain contexts) get additional support in order to level the playing field.

Describes the end state we want to achieve. E.g., as a result of a VVOB programme all children, regardless of their sex or gender identity, have the same opportunities to pursue a certain education career.

Gender awareness

Awareness of gender stereotypes, gender norms, (unconscious) gender bias and the inequalities and discriminations that result from these.

Gender-transformative

Counteracting and breaking through gender stereotypes, gender norms, gender bias and discrimination.

Attention to transforming power dynamics and structures (lying at the root of, and maintaining, these inequalities) is central.

Gender stereotypes

Preconceived ideas about the personal attributes, behaviours and roles determined and limited by sex.

Example: Women are more caring than men.

Gender bias

Prejudiced actions or thoughts about gender which results in an unfair difference in the way people of different sexes and gender identities are treated.

Example: Not allowing boys to babysit children because you assume they are not capable of caring for them.

Gender norms

Social norms and societal expectations on femininity and masculinity.

Example: Girls should care for their younger siblings while boys help out in the yard.

Gender mainstreaming

The process of assessing the implications for people of different sexes and gender identities of any planned action, including legislation, policies, programmes in all areas and at all levels.

Introduction and key principles

Gender equality is a basic right for all people, including children.

Gender equality and gender equity are also cross-cutting development issues. This means that gender equality (the end state of equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for people of all sexes and gender identities) is an important development objective in itself, and that gender equity (the process of restoring imbalances in order to reach gender equality) is instrumental for the achievement of any development or education objective.

As an organisation committed to contributing to an equitable world where the right to quality education of every learner is respected, protected and fulfilled, gender equity needs to be at the heart of everything we do. This includes VVOB's programmes, as well as VVOB's own organisational processes.

VVOB's Gender Policy represents VVOB's commitment to gender equity and outlines the principles VVOB follows in striving for gender equity in the workplace and in its programmes.

In its 2030 strategy 'Learning Unlimited' VVOB has put forward the clear ambition to be an equitable, diverse and inclusive organisation in terms of both its project activities and organisational practices. VVOB has already started its journey to reach this ambition and will continue to define and work on specific milestones and actions in the coming years.

As part of this journey and an important key milestone, VVOB has always put gender equity at its core. In 2012 the first version of VVOB's gender policy was launched, which was updated in 2015. With this revised version (2023), as an ever learning and growing organisation, we want to bring this policy in line with our 2030 strategy and with societal evolutions.

Building on its values of quality, integrity, respect, commitment, and innovation, VVOB recognises the following as fundamental principles in its commitment to gender equity:



1 Gender equality constitutes a fundamental and universal human right.

VVOB as an employer, as a partner, as an implementer of education programmes, etc. has the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil this right for its staff, partners and beneficiaries. In order to do so, VVOB expects the same from all our staff in all areas of their responsibilities. This includes the organisation's and staff members' obligation to eliminate all forms of discrimination, whether these be direct (someone is treated unfavourably because of their sex or gender identity) or indirect (policies and procedures, applying to everyone, excluding a certain group of people based on sex or gender identity).

2 Gender equity needs to be addressed through a contextualised approach

VVOB also recognises that people's beliefs, identities, roles and behaviours should be understood within the context of their culture. In order to maximise the impact of the gender equity policy, it is therefore important that the actions formulated in the gender equity policy are contextualised to ensure the best possible fit, but never compromising on the fundamental human right of all people to be treated equally in dignity and rights. VVOB offices, teams and staff play a crucial role in successfully translating the concepts, principles and practices set out in the Gender Policy to their context.

3 To ensure gender equity, multiple and intersecting discrimination and disadvantages must be addressed.

Discrimination based on sex or gender identity can intersect with other forms of discrimination and might impact people differently depending on other identity markers. Therefore, in the implementation of the gender policy VVOB will systematically look at the intersections with other bases of discrimination and disadvantage, such as race, skin colour, ethnic, cultural and social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, disability, age, sexual orientation, romantic/sexual orientation or socio-economic status, in order to ensure equality of all people.

4 The balanced participation of all sexes and gender identities in decision making is a prerequisite of an effective and quality organisation.

The right to equality of all sexes and gender identities requires that our headquarters and our country offices take all the appropriate measures and adopt all appropriate strategies to promote a balanced representation and participation of all sexes and gender identities in all spheres of decision-making.

5 The elimination of gender stereotypes is fundamental to achieving gender equity.

Our teams promote the identification, acknowledgement and elimination of the stereotypes and obstacles upon which the inequalities in status and condition between sexes are based, and which give rise to the unequal evaluation of the roles of women and men in political, economic, social and cultural terms.

6 Integrating a gender equity perspective into all activities of VVOB is necessary to advance equality and quality education for all.

VVOB recognises that learners suffer severe disadvantage and exclusion in education systems. VVOB recognises that offering quality education for all learners is both an intrinsic right and a critical lever to reaching other development objectives. VVOB is committed to removing barriers and bottlenecks around sex and gender disparities, gender stereotypes and discrimination in education, also and especially for the most disadvantaged learners.

7 VVOB leads by example in its role as employer and creates equal opportunities and promotes equal outcomes for all people in regard to all aspects of employment, including work organisation and working conditions.

VVOB commits to implementing practices that create these equal opportunities and builds staff capacity to implement this policy internally and externally.

8 VVOB commits to continuous improvement of its approach to gender equity.

VVOB commits to continuous improvement of its approach to gender equity, and regularly reviews and updates its gender equity policy and practices based on new evidence, feedback, and learning. This will allow VVOB to stay responsive and relevant to the evolving gender issues in the communities we serve.

Scope and target group

VVOB's gender equity policy is part of a broader organisational inclusion agenda, ensuring equality of all people and eliminating discrimination and disadvantage that includes but is not limited to people's sex or gender identity. Acknowledging its place in this broader agenda, the VVOB gender equity policy specifically sets out the main concepts, principles and actions that constitute VVOB's commitment and approach to gender equity in the workplace and in its programmes.

The policy sets out VVOB's ambitions in becoming an ever-increasing gender equitable organisation. This document itself is not a 'how-to' guide but highlights the prime principles that underpin this ambition as well as the strategies to achieve it. Further and continuous operationalisation and monitoring of the policy will take place through the annual VVOB Global Priorities and the global and country level Balanced Score Card system.

The primary audience for this gender policy is VVOB staff. All concepts and principles mentioned in this gender policy apply to all VVOB teams and all VVOB programmes.

This policy also applies to suppliers/partners that perform services that are related to internal VVOB processes (e.g., recruitment and assessment, payroll, outplacement, well-being and prevention, management consultancy, insurances, communications, etc.). To ensure this, compliance to the gender policy is included in the procurement and purchasing requirements for these suppliers. For other suppliers and technical partners, VVOB requires compliance to the integrity policy only.



Picture illustrating the concepts of equality, equity and justice. Based on an illustration from Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities, by City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), Ottawa.

Organisation-wide culture of gender equity

An organisation-wide culture of gender equity creates the foundation for the implementation of VVOB's Gender Policy. Gender equality and gender equity need to be infused in all areas of the organisation. In order to establish such an organisation-wide culture of gender equity VVOB will develop and implement actions in four key areas:

VVOB policies

Gender equity is to be **mainstreamed in all VVOB policies**. This implies harmonisation of all policies with the principles, actions and terminology as set out by the Gender Policy, so that these policies become gender equitable. Gender equity mainstreaming is considered implicitly throughout the implementation of all (existing) VVOB policies and will be taken up explicitly when updating existing or developing new policies.

Gender equitable organisational environment

VVOB does **not tolerate any form of gender discrimination, harassment or violence** in the organisation. At all levels of the organisation, VVOB ensures a gender aware and safe organisational environment (both physically, mentally, socially, etc) that promotes gender equitable values and a gender equitable organisational culture.

While this is a responsibility of all VVOB staff, this is especially the case for VVOB's leadership, both globally and at country level. **VVOB leadership leads by example and promotes and where necessary enforces the values, principles and practices stipulated by the VVOB Gender Policy.**

For all staff, the competence '**Gender awareness**' is **integrated into competency profiles and assessed and developed through the development circle process** (see Gender in the workplace). Gender-based violations of the integrity policy will be dealt with according to the procedures of the integrity policy.

Planning, monitoring and evaluation

In order to ensure the VVOB Gender Policy is translated into organisational practice at all levels of the organisation, VVOB ensures that gender equity actions are included in the annual VVOB Global Priorities. The **gender equity actions in the yearly organisational priorities** are monitored through integration of designated indicators in the **Balanced Scorecard System**. Where necessary VVOB develops **Gender Equity Dashboards** that support the monitoring of gender actions identified in the yearly organisational priorities.

At the programme level, gender equity will be included in all evaluations. External global gender screening of (a

selection of) VVOB's organisational processes also takes place periodically.

Internal learning and awareness

In order to ensure all VVOB staff and teams are aware of the principles and practices stipulated in the VVOB Gender Policy and have the capacities to apply these, VVOB:

- Integrates 'Gender Awareness' into the competence profiles of all staff.
- Integrates a Learning Trajectory on Gender Equity into its staff **onboarding system** and processes.
- Ensures the phased implementation of **foundational and more advanced internal learning** trajectories on gender equity via the yearly global and CO organisational priorities. Apart from building knowledge these trajectories also specifically address staff skills and attitudes towards gender equity. At global level this implies phased implementation into the Global Internal Learning Programme.
- Ensures **sharing of knowledge and experiences** on gender equity between different parts of the organisation.
- Develops and implements internal awareness raising initiatives on the principles and practices stipulated in the VVOB Gender Policy e.g., through internal communication initiatives, office branding, internal events, etc.

Roles and responsibilities

The VVOB Gender Policy identifies the following roles and responsibilities in order to ensure actions in these four key areas are implemented and to nurture and maintain an organisation wide culture of gender equity:

- **All staff members** have a responsibility to respect, uphold and implement the principles and commitments of the VVOB Gender Policy – This responsibility needs to be communicated clearly to all staff members and needs to be enforced where necessary, including through the Development Circle Processes.
- **Specific responsibilities** for certain positions in the implementation of the VVOB Gender Policy.

Leadership

- VVOB leadership/management leads by example and promotes and where necessary enforces the values, principles and practices stipulated by the VVOB Gender Policy, including through the Development Circle Processes.

Gender programme focal persons

(Strategic Education Advisors, Education Advisors/ Global Strategic Education Advisor, Programme Coordinators Belgium)

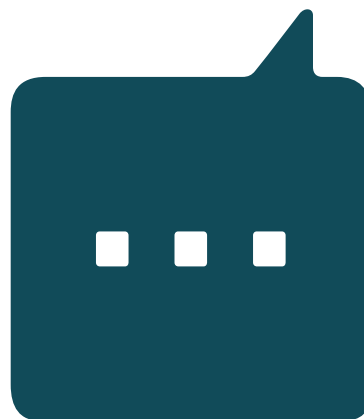
- Ensure gender is consistently addressed in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of VVOB programmes, by raising awareness / bringing it to the attention of VVOB programme staff.
- Act as a resource centre, point of reference and sounding board on gender for the rest of the programme team.

Operation managers/global HR lead

- Ensure Gender Equity actions are identified and implemented in VVOB as a workplace (section 5 of this policy).
- Act as a point of contact and sounding board on gender in the workplace for the country team and globally.

Communications staff

- Ensure that external communications are gender aware and transformative.
- Draft guidelines for gender aware communications.



Gender in the workplace

Introduction

VVOB recognises that all organisations are gendered structures. We therefore make every effort to ensure that the values and principles stipulated by this policy are also reflected in the policies and practices of VVOB as an employer and a workplace. This will be discussed within five parts of 'Gender in the workplace': recruitment, talent development, gender and diversity, equal working conditions and facilities in the workplace. VVOB strives to include everyone and champion each person's fundamental rights at the workplace. We achieve this by:

- Removing institutional and structural discriminatory practices which hinder gender diversity.
- Making sure that all HR policies and practices at the VVOB workplaces are gender equitable, and that terminology used in those is gender aware.
- Having a work environment that enables people to develop their full potential regardless of their sex or gender identity.

Recruitment

By applying gender equitable recruitment, we can attract and attain a more diverse workforce within VVOB. Therefore, we use recruitment as a tool to ensure gender balance, without making compromises on quality and/or required competences. In order to do so, VVOB:

- Publishes **vacancies** that are **equitable and gender aware, which includes applying the principles of gender aware communication** (see point 6: gender in communication). This will be done by adjusting vacancy advertisements and publishing vacancies openly to reach all candidates.
- Strives towards **gender balanced selection teams**.
- Actually uses recruitment as a tool to ensure gender balance, guided by monitoring this balance in our entire staff population and act consequently.
- Includes **'gender awareness' as part of the competences** to be assessed during recruitment processes for all positions.
- In case of a strong gender imbalance, **we go beyond regular procedures and channels** since they might in this case not be gender equitable enough (e.g., access to certain sourcing channels), ...

Talent development

Just like recruitment, we use talent development as a tool to ensure gender balance. VVOB provides **equal opportunities** to people of all sexes and gender identities in **professional and personal development**, including promotion opportunities. For example, by making all opportunities, in terms of positions and career paths, visible for all staff and encouraging all staff to look into those opportunities.

To be able to achieve this, we **analyse potential barriers** for the sexes and gender identities in career possibilities through the periodical gender screenings of VVOB's organisational processes (see 4. Organisation-wide culture of gender equity), and deliberately attempt to bridge these gender gaps via career programmes. and deliberately attempt to bridge these gender gaps via career programmes.

Talent development also plays an important part in ensuring implementation of the gender policy. VVOB therefore sets up **training trajectories on gender equity**, including but not limited to:

- An induction process for all staff on the gender policy and its implications for the functioning of the organisation and individual staff members.
- A training for recruitment committee members in gender equitable recruitment.
- A global leadership trajectory to train leaders in gender equitable leadership practices.



‘Gender awareness’ is considered part of the required competences for all staff and integrated into all staff competence profiles and HR processes related to talent development, such as development circles, job profiles and professional development. Same as for other competences, there are different levels of competence required for different roles. Therefore, VVOB:

- Works on capacity development of the competence ‘gender awareness’ by **detecting capacity development needs** and setting up trajectories to develop the capacity on this competence. Capacity development addresses knowledge, skills as well as attitudes of staff in terms of gender awareness.
- Provides **training on gender equitable leadership** as well as on the role of **gender biases** in evaluating staff.
- Provides **specific gender equity training for certain positions** and functions including Gender Programme Focal Persons; Operations Managers; Communication positions.
- Monitors the gender balance and the capacity related to gender awareness within the staff population.

Gender balance

Having gender balance in the workplace has many benefits such as a wider talent pool, it improves decision making, creativity, innovation, flexibility and therefore long-term sustainability.

Never compromising on quality or the required competencies through the existing internal and external HR assessment procedures, we strive towards an equal representation of people of different sexes and gender identities in VVOB by applying **gender aware monitoring and evaluation systems** which help to provide information on the status, gaps and interventions. We strive towards **not more than 2/3 representation of the same sex or gender identity** in recruitment and management teams. At the same time, we ensure that the gender balance in management teams is representative for the gender balance in the organisation. We regularly **analyse obstacles** hindering staff to participate i.e., assume or retain senior positions and take appropriate corrective measures.

Finally, VVOB also realises that gender inequity can also manifest itself in the **way informal roles and tasks** within the organisation (also referred to as organisational citizenship behaviour e.g., planning and organisation of informal events, household duties, etc.) are taken up by staff from different sexes or gender identities. VVOB will ensure staff are aware of gender stereotype organisational citizenship

behaviours, to valorise these tasks and roles as an organisation and will encourage all staff to perform them equally.

Equal working conditions

VVOB will implement equitable reward management, compensation and empowerment systems, ensuring equal pay for equal work as described in the HR policies and manual. In order to do so, VVOB:

- Makes sure that the **terms and conditions of employment** are equal to people of all sexes and gender identities.
- Ensures reward systems are based on **equal pay for equal work**, regardless of sex or gender identity.
- Ensures **flexible working options** to accommodate the needs of people of all sexes and gender identities -and has strong minimal global standards in place with regards to this, for example
 - Ensuring there are flexible working hours and teleworking opportunities in order to facilitate work-life balance
 - Ensuring (parental) leave, breastfeeding pauses, etc. to accommodate the needs of all sexes and gender identities

Facilities at the workplace

At VVOB we strive to make sure that the organisation has appropriate and equitable facilities, including tailored and innovative solutions to make the workplace more conducive to all staff.

In order to do so, VVOB:

- Ensures **all offices, project locations or other work areas** (in so far, they are under VVOB’s control) are equally accessible and safe for people of all sexes and gender identities. This relates both to the physical environment (e.g. bathrooms and toilets) as well as to psychological environment (e.g. addressing toxic working environments). For locations and working areas not under VVOB’s control, VVOB will do what it can to address these inequalities as to help make changes in the future a possibility.
- Ensures that facilities at the workplace are appropriate for all staff and initiates **innovative ideas** which it can act to make the **workplace conducive, appealing and comfortable** to all staff, such as breast-feeding and nursing facilities, gender friendly and inclusive spaces and furniture, health and wellbeing initiatives, etc.

Gender in VVOB programmes

Introduction

Children can suffer severe **disadvantages and exclusion in education systems** based on their sex or gender identity. This is often the case for girls, but it also happens to boys, children who identify as neither or both or intersex children. Limited awareness of these gender inequalities and gender stereotypes among different education stakeholders affect practices from classrooms to policy, impeding performance and learning outcomes, leading to unequal opportunities, violence and oppression in children's future lives.

Education, development and the realisation of **human rights** are inextricably intertwined and involve the reduction of gender inequalities as an integral element. Offering **quality education** is both an intrinsic right and a critical lever to reaching development objectives and ensure **all children** develop to their full potential.

Therefore, **VVOB is committed to removing barriers and bottlenecks around gender disparities and discrimination in education through our programmes**. Within VVOB programmes three strategies are deployed to ensure all children can develop to their full potential regardless of gender disparities and discrimination in education:

- Mainstreaming gender into all education programmes.
- Implementing specific gender initiatives, including on gender-transformative pedagogy.
- Sharing and building knowledge, evidence and practice on gender equity in education.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming involves **planning, (re)organisation, improvement, and evaluation of processes**, so that a gender equity perspective is incorporated in all policies, strategies and interventions, at all levels and at all stages. In order to achieve gender equity, gender mainstreaming must be complemented by specific actions, where striking gender disparities still remain.

VVOB is committed to mainstreaming gender equity into all of its programmes for a number of reasons. Firstly, gender equality is an **important development objective** in itself, and therefore warrants attention to gender equity in all of VVOB's programmes. Secondly, children's right to quality education

cannot be achieved as long as gender inequality and discrimination in education exists. In that sense, gender equity is also **instrumental** for the achievement of any educational objective. Thirdly, gender equity in VVOB's programmes is one of the VVOB's requirements for **quality assurance**, as the quality of VVOB's interventions needs to be assessed against their relevance to actors of different experiences and needs, in diverse social, economic, geographic and political contexts.

VVOB's approach to gender mainstreaming consists of a number of steps that are taken over the course of the programme cycle. In order to ensure that VVOB teams and staff have the capacity to implement these steps in all of the VVOB programmes, relevant **resources on gender mainstreaming are identified, developed and shared** within the organisation. This includes the development and dissemination of a guideline for gender mainstreaming in VVOB programmes.

Context analysis at country level: In screening for key educational issues which VVOB can address, key gender equity issues are identified so they can be addressed in programme development, and implementation. To feed these context analyses, VVOB Country Office Gender Focal Persons collect and update relevant references on gender equity in the respective countries and make them available to the rest of the team. The context analysis guides **gender mainstreaming activities** in programmes; or it identifies needs and opportunities for **gender specific programmes** (see below).

Formulation: During the programme formulation stage, VVOB examines to what extent relevant gender equity issues and objectives are taken into account and how they can be further integrated into the key project/program results and approaches. For this purpose, VVOB programme formulation documents include a section that assesses the impact/effects of the programme (both positive and negative) on gender equality and to what extent gender equity considerations are taken into account.

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation: Examples of gender mainstreaming in programme implementation include actions that ensure equal participation and representation of different sexes and gender identities in programme activities; specific activities to remove barriers for people of certain sex or gender identity (e.g. related to security, mobility, childcare) to participate; communicating proactively about gender-related results; etc.

A gender-aware monitoring and evaluation system that is composed of a combination of gender specific and gender disaggregated indicators ensures that a programme's impact on gender equality is monitored during programme implementation.

In order to ensure that VVOB teams and staff have the capacity to implement these steps in all of the VVOB programmes, relevant **resources on gender mainstreaming are identified, developed and shared** within the organisation. This includes the development and dissemination of a guideline for gender mainstreaming in VVOB programmes.

Specific gender equity actions: flagship programme on gender-transformative pedagogy (and beyond)

Besides mainstreaming gender equity in all programmes, VVOB contributes to gender equity in education by taking **specific actions** that strive for gender equality through contextually relevant gender-transformative interventions.

VVOB's prime strategy for specific gender equity programmes is to strengthen partners' capacity on **gender-transformative pedagogy** as part of VVOB's Gender-transformative Pedagogy Flagship Programme. Next to the flagship programme, **additional specific gender equity actions** (e.g., programmes on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, programmes on improving girls sustained access to education, etc...) are also considered when they are deemed particularly relevant for certain contexts.

Gender-transformative pedagogy

In order to define gender-transformative pedagogy, UNICEF (2020) provides a useful continuum which rates initiatives according to the extent to which gender equity has been into the aims of a specific intervention. This continuum ranges from gender-unequal to gender-transformative approaches.

Translated to pedagogy, **gender-transformative pedagogy** recognises the need for teachers to take a proactive role in the classroom and the broader institutional environment to promote gender equity. Gender-transformative pedagogy (GTP) prompts teachers to reflect on their own beliefs about traditional gender roles, raises awareness about their (un)conscious bias and supports teachers to take an active role in challenging gender stereotypes through the learning environments they create, the learning materials they use, the learning activities they implement and the language and interactions they use in the classroom and beyond.

Promoting and supporting gender-transformative pedagogy in schools requires **gender-transformative school leadership**. School leaders can create gender-transformative school environments by actively promoting gender equity considerations into the different dimensions of school leadership: school vision, values and policies, processes, school environments, learning materials and activities, support to school staff and engaging the wider school community.



Finally, gender-transformative pedagogy and school leadership can only thrive when the **broader (institutional) environment has increased consciousness** of the broader institutional and societal gender biases that affect pedagogy and school leadership.

VVOB's gender-transformative pedagogy programmes:

- Are implemented in various sub-sectors and at various levels (e.g., policy makers, teacher educators, school-level educators).
- Support the development of contextual resources for GTP and provide capacity development of pre- / in-service teacher educators .
- Pilot pre- and in-service interventions on gender-transformative pedagogy – creating and sharing evidence and aim towards scaling and institutionalisation.
- Provide support to education policy review/ development regarding gender-transformative teaching and learning processes and include advocacy and awareness raising of a range of stakeholders.
- Support the development of contextual resources for GTP.

Sharing and building knowledge, evidence and practice

As the third and last pillar of VVOB's programme approach to gender equity, **VVOB shares and builds knowledge, evidence and practices on gender-transformative pedagogy** as well as on other specific gender equity actions.

This implies that:

- The creation of evidence (e.g. through research) on specific gender equity initiatives is systematically built into programme design.
- VVOB actively develops resources that support staff as well as other organisations to implement specific gender equity actions (including gender-transformative pedagogy).
- VVOB establishes support centres and communities of practice on specific gender equity initiatives, both within and outside of the organisation.



GENDER-RESPONSIVE

Acknowledges and considers women's and men's specific needs

GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE

Addresses the causes of gender-based inequalities and works to transform harmful gender roles, norms and power relations

Gender equity

moderate

Transform

Gender in communications

Communication, whether in written form, verbally or via images and videos can either enforce or challenge gender stereotypes and gender bias that result in gender inequalities. Because of that gender equity is an important consideration in all of VVOB's communications, both internally and externally, through written, verbal or visual channels of communication.

Addressing gender in VVOB's communications, we make a distinction between **gender aware** and **gender-transformative** communication.

All of VVOB's internal and external communications are gender aware. This implies that VVOB is conscious about the communication strategies it adopts, taking into account that not all communication channels are used in the same way or the same extent by people of different sexes and gender identities. It also implies that VVOB is conscious about the way in which it implements its communication strategies. This includes that we are conscious of and avoid the use of gender stereotypes and gender bias in our communications and that we actively portray gender diversity. VVOB also commits to avoid male normativity in communications, where the masculine form is considered the generic norm and other perspectives are excluded or added in the margins. Gender aware communications also take into account the intersections that exist between different bases of discrimination and disadvantage, and actively works to counteract these.

Some examples of gender aware communication are:

- In written communication we do not use the male as norm; we include perspectives of people that challenge expected gender roles, we ensure a diversity of sexes and gender identities are depicted in decision-making roles.
- In visual communication we portray people in different roles and are conscious of gender stereotype images, we use non-stereotypical colours (instead of pink for women, blue for men), and we showcase diversity in our infographics.
- During events we ensure a diverse representation of people from different sexes and gender identities and backgrounds in different roles (speakers, panellists, facilitators, etc.).

Besides being gender aware in all VVOB communications; where possible and relevant VVOB proactively uses gender-transformative communication strategies to support global and local efforts working towards a more gender equitable society. This means that VVOB actively uses its communication to counteract gender discrimination and to help transform the power dynamics and structures that lie at the root of and maintain gender inequalities. This means that VVOB actively uses its communication to counteract gender discrimination and to help transform the power dynamics and structures that lie at the root of and maintain gender inequalities.

Some examples of gender-transformative communication strategies that VVOB uses:

- Prioritising messages that promote gender equity and address gender discrimination and inequalities in external and internal communication.
- Sharing messages that actively aim to change people's knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and beliefs about gender.
- Sharing evidence that counters discriminatory gender stereotypes and gender norms
- Sharing practices on how communities and organisations counter discriminatory gender stereotypes and gender norms.
- Giving voice to advocates for gender equity in external and internal communications.

In order to ensure that all VVOB communications are gender aware and, where relevant are gender-transformative, VVOB:

- Develops guidelines on gender aware and gender-transformative communications as part of the global internal and external communications policy.
- Streamlines terminology in all internal and external communications with the gender glossary.
- Makes sure capacity development of staff on gender addresses gender aware and transformative communications.
- Performs internal/external gender aware communication audits at global and country office level.



Gender in partnerships

The bulk of VVOB's work takes place in close partnerships with other organisations and institutions. Therefore, ensuring that VVOB's values regarding gender equity are reflected in these partnerships, is instrumental for the impact of VVOB's gender policy.

Due to the different nature of our partnerships, VVOB makes a distinction between government partners on the one hand and funding and technical partners on the other hand.

Government partners

Government institutions including ministries of education are VVOB's primary partners, both at the strategic and the operational level. In these partnerships, VVOB actively **supports government partners efforts to working towards a more gender equal society** and supports them to **improve their existing practices** on gender equity. This includes supporting government partners in mainstreaming gender equity in their policies and practices as well as supporting government partners in taking specific actions towards more gender equitable policies and practices. In order to do so, VVOB:

- Advocates for more gender equitable policies and practices of government partners.
- Strengthens government partners' capacities for gender-transformative policies and practices.
- Generates and shares evidence on gender discrimination; gender mainstreaming and gender specific actions (including Gender-transformative Pedagogy) with government partners.
- Ensures/advocates for gender balance in forums/ meetings/... organised in collaboration with government partners.

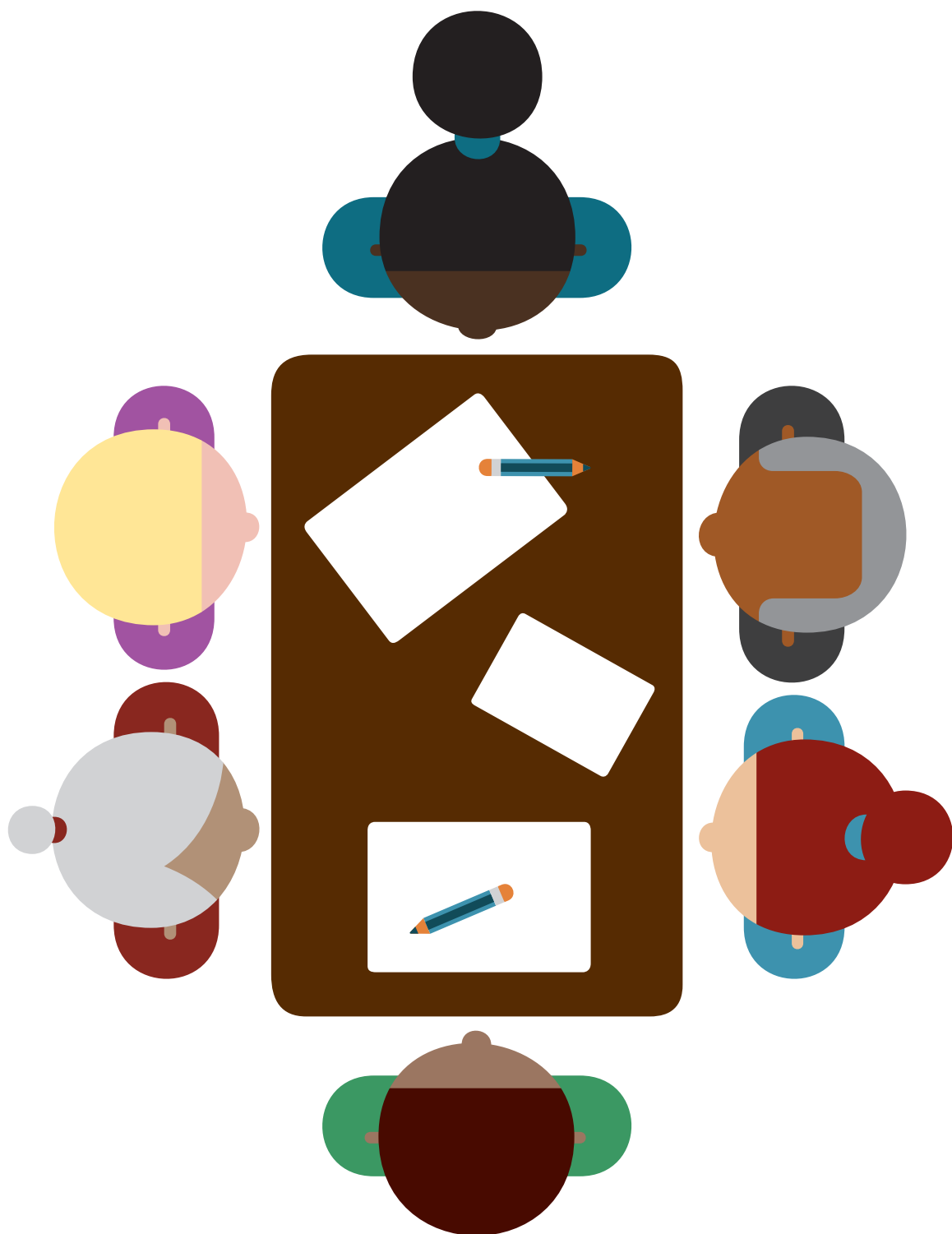
Funding and technical partners

Funding and technical partners play a crucial role in enabling VVOB to achieve its desired impact. Achieving this impact in a gender equitable manner, is only possible if these partners adhere to standards that reflect VVOB's values around gender discrimination and gender equity. VVOB, therefore, **expects all funding and technical partners to adhere to the principles of gender equity and non-discrimination** that underpin these values. In order to ensure this:

VVOB includes gender discrimination as part of the exclusion criteria in the ethical check for funding partners.

VVOB includes clauses on gender equity and gender discrimination in all contracts with technical partners (e.g. through inclusion in the Code of Conduct and/or Declaration of Honour). **Partnerships** with funding and technical partners are also used by VVOB **to promote local and global efforts working towards a more gender equitable society**. Therefore, VVOB actively builds partnerships with organisations who share VVOB's values on gender equity to:

- Support VVOB's mission in this area via knowledge and expertise.
- Build other's capacity to ensure gender equity, including through the implementation of joint programmes.
- Build or enter into coalitions to advocate for gender equity.
- Generate evidence on gender-transformative education.





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