

Gender equality policy

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1. Introduction

IPIS is committed to gender equality. As mentioned in the strategy, IPIS pays particular attention to cross-cutting themes for development cooperation in so far as they are relevant to the specific research we carry out. These are: environment (already part of sustainable entrepreneurship), gender (the position of women in artisanal mining), children's rights (e.g. issues with child soldiers, child labour...), and social economy (e.g. cooperation in artisanal mining). Human rights figure as a transversal theme in all research programs.

Gender equality concerns equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men or any other individuals who do not fit the typical binary notions of women and men. Equality means that the responsibilities, rights and opportunities of all individuals do not depend on whether they are born male or female. Equality means taking into account the interests, needs and priorities of all individuals while recognising the diversity of the different gender identities. Gender equality must concern and involve the society as a whole¹.

IPIS endorses and supports the initiatives that are being taken towards more gender equality in Belgian development cooperation. Just like the NGO federation, IPIS commits itself to create and maintain a positive momentum around gender equality within our organisation. IPIS therefore takes the necessary actions to realise its intentions on gender equality.

2. Concepts and values

2.1. Concepts

¹ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>

In this policy note, IPIS defines the notion of “gender” in relation to the notion of "sex", to understand better their ranges.

According to the *World Health Organization*, ‘gender’ refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. IPIS takes into account a gender-expansive definition, which conveys a wider, more flexible range of ‘gender identity’ than the one typically associated with the binary gender system. Indeed, we believe gender is a set of social, psychological, and/or emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual as man, woman, a mixture of both, or neither, that is to say individual who does not fit typical binary notions women and men such as people belonging to the « third gender » or intersex people...²

However, WHO’s definition is further used in this present policy because in the countries that are being studied, certain subjects are sensitive and offending. Therefore, IPIS confines itself to a narrower definition of gender, based with the typically binary gender system (male/female).

In this case, ‘gender’ includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. ‘Gender’ interacts with but is different from ‘sex’, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Gender identity refers to a person’s deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person’s physiology or designated sex at birth.

Gender inequality and discrimination faced by women and girls put their health and well-being at risk. Women and girls often face greater barriers than men and boys to accessing health information and general services, especially in conflict-affected areas. These barriers include restrictions on mobility; lack of access to decision-making power; lower literacy rates; discriminatory attitudes of communities and healthcare providers; and lack of training and awareness amongst healthcare providers and health systems of the specific health needs and challenges faced by women and girls.

2.2. IPIS’ values

Respect and non-discrimination are core values at IPIS that we commit to implement throughout our operations. IPIS prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnic or social origin, religious belief, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or other aspects of personal status. We are committed to promoting gender equality and to increase

² <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/article/730061>

women's influence and participation in all sectors with a fair distribution of power and resources. IPIS values gender equality and sees it as a basic human right.

2.3. Internal gender policy

IPIS applies non-discriminatory selection procedures during recruitment processes. IPIS is an equal opportunities employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation, age or disability. Therefore, IPIS welcomes and assesses applications from all candidates. Furthermore, at IPIS we strive for a cultural, gender-balanced and intellectual diversification of our team of employees.

Due to the nature and geographical focus of its work, IPIS specifically encourages the recruitment of African colleagues. IPIS strives to put traditional selection criteria such as academic degree in the balance against other relevant indicators such as knowledge of relevant languages, or soft skills such as cultural affinity with, or intricate knowledge of, one of our projects' focal countries.

Furthermore, IPIS wants to create a safe working environment for all of its employees, the ones present in Antwerp as well as the ones in partner countries. IPIS strictly condemns all forms of violence, harassment and sexual harassment. IPIS employees who are the victim of undesirable behavior or sexual harassment can turn to the Office Manager³ who has been appointed as a confidential advisor. By creating a safe work environment and by cultivating a culture of open communication and mutual respect, IPIS encourages employees and partners to speak up and to disclose any undesirable behavior.

Within IPIS, wages are not a subject of negotiation. Wages are fixed according to internally determined scales that form an objective standard and are based on the scales that apply to socio-cultural work. In addition, the organization attaches great importance to a healthy, family-friendly work life balance.

3. Why is IPIS concerned with gender?

3.1. IPIS and human rights

IPIS is a research institute promoting a vision of durable peace, sustainable development and the fulfilment of human rights. We consider gender equality a basic human right. It seemed the right moment for IPIS to publish its *Gender Equality Policy*. Indeed, the current context and as the coronavirus spread lead to lockdowns, during which we have witnessed an increase in domestic violence against women, due to Covid-related stress, job

³ IPIS Office Manager: Anne Hullebroeck (woman) – anne.hullebroeck@ipisresearch.be

losses, frustrations or fears, reaffirming gender equality was needed. This policy aims to promote gender equality, to recognise it as a human right in order to help to stop violence against women; to promote wealth and development and help our societies be healthier and safer.

3.3. IPIS' gender policy in its work

Both the *Sustainable Development Goals*, set in 2015 by the United Nations, and the *Belgian Development Cooperation's policy* formulate specific objectives for gender equality. Even though considerable progress has been made, equality between men and women has not been achieved yet and discrimination based on gender still exists across the globe⁴.

The Belgian Development Cooperation's strategy lists four priorities. IPIS contributes to these four priorities in various ways:

- *Education and decision-making*

Thanks to training and workshops offered by IPIS in partner countries, the organisation contributes to the first priority "Men and women can claim an active place in the economic, social and political life of their region if they are adequately equipped and properly trained. These are dimensions that make the human being a full citizen (M/F/X), but which, in many parts of the world, remain inaccessible to many women and girls".

When organising training and workshops, IPIS pays attention to take a gender sensitive approach to the various issues discussed and to addressing gender-related issues as a transversal theme. Women are often underrepresented or less vocal in such workshops. IPIS makes an effort to increase participation of women, and to create an atmosphere in which everyone feels comfortable to take the floor and contribute to discussions.

IPIS does this by undertaking the following actions:

- Actively invite female stakeholders
- Consciously given female participants the time and room to speak and develop ideas (e.g. have break-out groups with women only when appropriate, or have break-out groups with at least one female representative in each group)
- Prepare (by phone or in small preparatory meetings) the workshop/ training in small groups

In addition, the organisation contributes to this priority by employing in-country consultants. By implementing a non-discriminatory recruitment policy, IPIS aims to give men and women equal employment opportunities.

⁴ https://www.ngo-federatie.be/system/files/2019-06/Gender%20Charter_def040718-1.pdf

However, the situation is sometimes difficult in the local context. IPIS does not want to underestimate the fact that it often works in male-dominated contexts. The organization is aware of the fact that the contacts it has are biased and may not quickly give good references about women if the organizations want to recruit new researchers or consultants and claim that there are no capable women present.

Therefore, the organization wants to strive to train its partners in the future so that they become aware of this bias on the one hand, and on the other hand to make sure that there are certainly enough female candidates.

Apart from that, the organisation wants to improve the security of its female in-country consultants.

One of the first steps when starting a new project is that the research coordinator makes a risk analysis (e.g. about the safety partners in the field). Sometimes this already happens at the prospect stage.

IPIS uses a fixed format to identify the risks associated with the project. It identifies risks that can undermine the critical assumptions as well as the security risks for its own researchers, stakeholders, external consultants and the risks of material damage, delays in execution and reputational damage. IPIS then estimates how likely it is that the risk will occur, what the impact will be and how the organization will mitigate the risk. With regard to the safety of employees and stakeholders and with regard to data security, IPIS applies its security policy (strategic policy).

In the future, IPIS strives to make more efforts to recruit women and to encourage women to apply for a job by the following ideas:

- Positive discrimination
- Consult with CSOs, government, other stakeholder whether they know good female researchers and actively approach these contacts

- *Sexual and reproductive health and rights*

Sexual and reproductive rights must be recognised and exercised for the benefit of women, men and also minorities such as LGBTQIA+ . This is not something IPIS is currently doing. However, the organization strives to do this in the future, but the context of the countries in which the organization often operates makes this difficult.

- *Food security, access to natural resources and economic empowerment*

IPIS contributes to the third priority through its research in different programs, like the earlier mentioned Kufatilia.

The essence of IPIS' contribution is that the organisation document access to livelihood and expose inequalities.

In the future IPIS will evaluate its questionnaires; looking at the following criteria:

- Is data is disaggregated per sex (is there a question in the beginning on sex of respondent?)
 - Are questions included that specifically target women (only for female respondents to answer)
 - Are questions included on gender issues, such as: are there separate toilets, do pregnant women come to the mines, etc.
-
- *Protection of rights and fight against violence (in all its forms) based on gender, with particular attention to LGBTI's*

By developing the incident reporting system 'Kufatilia', a phone-based participatory platform, IPIS engages to actively fight any form of violence. It works together with local organisations to document human rights violations. Incidents can include lots of things such as corruption and fraud but also violence.

In its Arms Production and Trade program, IPIS works together with the IANSA network to intercept illicit flows of small arms. The causes and consequences of the use of weapons are highly gendered. Across all affected societies, young men are the most common perpetrators of armed attacks, as well as the most likely direct victims. Besides that, women suffer disproportionately from the effects of violent conflict⁵.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/small-arms-gender/>

4. Plan of Action

The following section lists both the actions already undertaken by IPIS and IPIS ambitions. IPIS' plan of action is linked to the eight objectives, formulated by the *Charter Gender*, a common framework for Belgian civil society actors and institutional actors. These objectives are:

1. Include the fight for gender equality in IPIS' mission and vision

Actions:

- IPIS gives any individual the opportunity to be socially, professionally and financially stable by pursuing the ambition to recruit female surveyors and consultants.
- IPIS ensures mechanisms, guaranteeing safety in the field. In case of any inappropriate behaviours but also fraud or corruption, one can report any breach of IPIS' Integrity Policy through a person or directly through our Office Manager, via e-mail or via an online form (see our policy here: <https://ipisresearch.be/about-ipis/policy/integrity/report-any-breach-of-ipis-integrity-policy/>). Victims and whistle-blowers remain anonymous. Also when sending anyone on the field, they have to attend preparatory training, guaranteeing their safety.
- One researcher at IPIS currently ensures the safety of women specifically. In general, local surveyors form a pair with a colleague (groups are usually composed of two men, because there are more numerous, or one man and one woman). Before going to the field, women are asked if they feel comfortable with the partner they have been paired with. If not, they do not have to justify themselves and they can choose someone else. When they come back from the field, a member of the research team asks them if their male colleague had an "appropriate behaviour" and if they could, would they go back to the field with the same partner. If something went wrong, women they use the "Report any Breach of IPIS' Integrity Policy" (see the policy here: <https://ipisresearch.be/about-ipis/policy/integrity/report-any-breach-of-ipis-integrity-policy/>).
- IPIS gender policy is a "rights-based approach", which is based on the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by the United Nations in 1948. The idea, therefore, is to start not only from the needs of people, who are subjective, but from their rights.

Ambitions:

- Assure the safety of the local surveyors, which is guaranteed by our IPIS Team (*see our Security Policy*).
- Gender equality becomes one core value of IPIS. This means it must be recalled/mentioned in all its official texts/policies. This will be reviewed before IPIS starts writing its new strategy for 2022-2026 to list the areas of improvement in the new strategy.
- IPIS sensitizes its staff to intersectionality⁶ when introducing IPIS' policy and refers to the *Integrity Policy* and the attached complaint mechanism to address this. The organization pays attention to this in every document of its vision, mission and strategic framework and in all resulting documents.
- IPIS will mainstream gender in all aspects of its actions and policies and in its structures. This will be reviewed before IPIS starts writing its new strategy for 2022-2026 to list the areas of improvement in the new strategy.
- IPIS will appoint one gender focal point in the team who is assigned to review all research questionnaires, job advertisements, ... This person could also attend training on this issue.
- IPIS will discuss the approach from the researcher mentioned above and will try to formalise this approach in its policy in the future

2. Strive for a balanced representation of women, men, transgenders and intersex people in its decision-making and management bodies (board of directors and other bodies) with a maximum of 2/3 of the same sex in these bodies

Overview of the composition of the various teams and governing bodies:

- Total: 37 people working for IPIS (board of trustees + researchers + office team) (2/3 men and 1/3 of women.)
- Board of trustees: 2 women for 4 men: (2/3 men and 1/3 women)
- Office team: parity with 4 women and 4 men (½ men and ½ women)
- General assembly: 7 women, 13 men
- Researchers : 2 women and 7 men
- Focal points: 100% men

Ambitions:

⁶ Intersectionality: a person can experience different forms of discrimination in society at the same time. This also plays an important role for women.

- Increase women's visibility by involving more women researchers and surveyors in our upcoming projects starting in 2021.
- Address the gender equality theme in some of IPIS' future projects.
- IPIS commits to keep a balanced representation of women and men.

3. Work towards a dual approach to gender: a transversal (gender mainstreaming) and a specific approach

Actions:

- Transversal approach: this approach is represented by our *Gender Equality Policy*.

Ambitions:

- Specific approach: a contribution to our annual report written by the designated person of contact for gender equality. She/he/they would write a year review and suggest how we responded to the goals in this policy and how to improve our gender equality policy/goals... The points she/he/they would mention could become new actions to which IPIS could commit for the following year.

4. Develop an overall action plan on gender, together with verifiable monitoring and evaluation measures

Actions:

- The writing of this *Gender Equality Policy* addressing issues faced by women and solutions to make them feel heard, integrated and equal to all team members.
- Monitoring system (refer to the *Integrity Policy* and the complaint mechanism attached which you can read here: <https://ipisresearch.be/about-ipis/policy/integrity/report-any-breach-of-ipis-integrity-policy/>):
 - Management organises surveys with the team to have an annual review of the gender policy
 - Management designates a dedicated person of contact to report any inappropriate behavior.

5. Explicitly integrate gender equality in human resources policy

Actions:

- This *Gender Equality Policy* is linked to the *Integrity Policy* (see here: <https://ipisresearch.be/about-ipis/policy/integrity/>) and published on IPIS' website.
- The *Gender Equality Policy* should be read by all team members and all new members/researchers hired.

- The human resources policy is linked to the *Integrity Policy* and by doing so it provides procedures to respond appropriately to harassment and sexual harassment

6. Explicitly include gender equality in the integrity policy

Refer to our *Integrity Policy* here: <https://ipisresearch.be/about-ipis/policy/integrity/>.

7. Ensure a non-stereotyped and balanced representation of men, women and transgenders in all activities and communication, and pay specific attention to sexual diversity

Actions:

- IPIS pays attention to gender balance when choosing a speaker, spokesperson (m/f/x) or public figure to support your communication
- IPIS is aware of the power of images and stories and commits not to tell stereotypical stories and to look at images and stories with a gender-sensitive perspective.

Ambitions:

- IPIS uses both pronouns he/she when writing official papers and by doing so has the ambition to use the inclusive writing when possible. This will be reviewed before IPIS starts writing its new strategy for 2022-2026 to list the areas of improvement in the new strategy.

8. Contribute to women's empowerment and social discrimination

Actions:

- IPIS contributes to each of its employee's empowerment by offering the possibility to have flexible working hours to promote a good work-life balance.
- IPIS encourages women to take on leading positions. IPIS does not have a vertical organisational structure but rather a horizontal one in which employees are on an equal footing.

Ambitions:

- IPIS is committed to increasing the involvement of women's organisations, LGBTQIA+ organisations (*when possible according to the laws of our research countries*), knowledge centres and other associations with a strong gender impact in actions and policy recommendations. By doing so, the organisation wants to gain more insight to ask the right questions applied to its own fields

of expertise . By the end of their next strategy, in 2026, IPIS wants to be part of at least one organization or knowledge centre.

- IPIS is committed to putting gender on the agenda in its networks