



GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GEDSI) POLICY (2026)

CARITAS SOMALIA

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INTRODUCTION

Caritas Somalia, inspired by the Holy Scriptures, the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church, the mission of Caritas Internationalis, and international human rights instruments, strives for a world in which every person can live in dignity, peace, and justice. Rooted in the values of human dignity, solidarity, fraternity, and integral human development, Caritas Somalia is committed to accompanying, serving, and defending the most vulnerable, without discrimination of any kind.

Operating in a context marked by protracted conflict, displacement, poverty, climate shocks, and structural inequalities, Caritas Somalia recognizes that women and girls, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and migrants, minorities, and other vulnerable groups often face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, exclusion, and violence. In particular, gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pervasive violation of human rights and a major barrier to equality, protection, and sustainable development.

Addressing these realities—including the prevention of and response to GBV—is essential to achieving Caritas Somalia’s mission and ensuring that no one is left behind. This Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Policy sets out Caritas Somalia’s commitment to promoting equality, inclusion, participation, protection, and justice across all its humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding work, in line with the principles of Integral Human Development and a strong “do no harm” and safeguarding approach.

ARTICLE 1 - PURPOSE

The purpose of this GEDSI Policy is to provide a clear framework guiding Caritas Somalia’s commitment to gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion across all its programs, operations, and institutional practices.

This Policy aims to:

- Address the root causes of inequality, exclusion, and marginalisation affecting women and girls, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and other vulnerable groups, recognising intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination;
- Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, including the prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV);
- Ensure the full, effective, inclusive, and meaningful participation of all people—particularly marginalised groups—in decisions that affect their lives;
- Protect the rights of persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, refugees, and other vulnerable groups, and support inclusion, protection, accessibility, and durable solutions;
- Systematically integrate GEDSI principles into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all Caritas Somalia programmes and operations;
- Strengthen accountability, transparency, and institutional coherence in line with Caritas values, international humanitarian and human rights standards, and applicable national frameworks;
- Contribute to integral human development and the transformation of unjust social, economic, and cultural structures.

ARTICLE 2 - SCOPE

This GEDSI Policy applies to all activities, programmes, and operations of Caritas Somalia, whether humanitarian, development, advocacy, or peacebuilding in nature.

The Policy applies to:

- All Caritas Somalia personnel, including employees, consultants, volunteers, interns, and Board members;
- Partner organisations and partner staff involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring, or evaluation of Caritas Somalia-supported activities;
- All geographic areas in which Caritas Somalia operates, primarily within Somalia, as well as any activities carried out outside Somalia under the authority of Caritas Somalia.

This Policy applies throughout the entire project and organisational cycle, including needs assessments, programme design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, learning, advocacy, communication, and internal management processes.

All persons and entities to whom this Policy applies are required to read, understand, and comply with its provisions. Failure to comply with this Policy may result in corrective or disciplinary measures, in accordance with Caritas Somalia's internal regulations and applicable agreements.

ARTICLE 3- DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions shall apply:

- I. Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development¹.
- II. **Gender equity** means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women.
- III. **Persons with disabilities** include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others².
- IV. **Disability Inclusion** means the intentional inclusion of persons with disabilities as rights-holders, active participants, and agents of change in all aspects of development and humanitarian action.
- V. **Social inclusion** means the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of individuals and groups disadvantaged on the basis of identity or circumstance to take part fully in society.
- VI. **Marginalised and vulnerable groups** means individuals or groups who experience exclusion, discrimination, or reduced access to rights, services, resources, or decision-making, including but not limited to women and girls, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, minorities, and people living in poverty.
- VII. **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** means persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, particularly as a result of

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

² <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd>

armed conflict, violence, human rights violations, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border.

- VIII. **Integral Human Development (IHD)** means a holistic vision of development that promotes the well-being of the whole person and the whole community, encompassing spiritual, social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental dimensions.
- IX. **Intersectionality** means the interconnected nature of social categories such as gender, disability, displacement, age, poverty, or social status, which can create overlapping and compounding forms of discrimination or disadvantage.
- X. **GEDSI mainstreaming** means the systematic integration of gender equality, disability, and social inclusion considerations into all policies, programmes, and organisational practices.
- XI. **Twin-track approach** means an approach that combines the mainstreaming of GEDSI across all activities with targeted actions aimed at addressing the specific needs and barriers faced by vulnerable persons.
- XII. **Gender-based violence (GBV)** is violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty³.

ARTICLE 4 - POLICY COMMITMENTS

Caritas Somalia commits to:

- Respecting, protecting, and promoting the human rights and dignity of all people, without discrimination.
- Prioritizing the poor and the most vulnerable through inclusive, participatory, and rights-based approaches.
- Ensuring the meaningful participation of women, persons with disabilities, IDPs, and other marginalized groups in decision-making processes.
- Addressing structural inequalities, harmful norms, and power imbalances that perpetuate exclusion.
- Promoting integral human development by linking humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, and long-term development.
- Upholding solidarity, fraternity, and the common good through partnerships and collaboration.
- Applying the principle of “do no harm” and maintaining zero tolerance for discrimination, exploitation, and abuse.

ARTICLE 5 - GEDSI GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Caritas Somalia is guided by the following GEDSI principles, applied in all decisions and activities:

- Equality and inclusion – Everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, or socioeconomic status, has the right to fully participate in development and humanitarian programs.
- Addressing root causes of inequality – Discrimination is addressed not only at the symptom level, but by tackling the structural causes that perpetuate marginalization and exclusion.
- Inclusion of marginalized voices – Women, girls, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other vulnerable groups are involved in the design and evaluation of programs.
- Contextualization – Every intervention takes into account Somalia’s cultural, political, and socioeconomic specificities and the local community context.

³ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm>

- Collaboration and knowledge sharing – Caritas Somalia shares best practices and lessons learned with local partners, communities, and other organizations.
- Do No Harm – All programs are designed to avoid reinforcing stereotypes, discrimination, or social barriers.

ARTICLE 6 - GEDSI INTEGRATION IN CARITAS SOMALIA PROGRAMS

6.1. Collaboration with local partners

- Select partners committed to promoting GEDSI.
- Support partners in building capacity to integrate GEDSI in their activities.
- Consult local experts and other NGOs to identify best practices.
- Engage organizations that can address needs beyond Caritas Somalia's operational scope.

6.2 GEDSI integration in activities

6.2.1 Twin-track approach: integrate GEDSI in core programs and develop targeted activities for marginalized groups.

6.2.2 Program design and development:

- Identify marginalized groups in communities, including women, girls, people with disabilities, and IDPs.
- Analyze power dynamics, root causes of marginalization, and participation barriers.
- Consult communities to understand specific needs and barriers.
- Actively include vulnerable groups in decision-making.

6.2.3 Monitoring and evaluation:

- Collection and analysis of data disaggregated by gender, age group, and disability.
- Regular evaluation of GEDSI outcomes with feedback from partners.

6.3 Program-specific implications

6.3.1 Humanitarian assistance

- Analyze the different needs of women, men, girls, and boys in crisis and displacement contexts.
- Protect women and girls from gender-based violence and risks associated with internal displacement.
- Include GEDSI indicators in emergency programs.
- Apply SPHERE minimum standards, IASC and other guidelines⁴.

6.3.2 Food security and livelihoods

- Support women food producers, who are the majority in local food production.
- Ensure equitable access to land, agricultural inputs, and financial tools.
- Develop targeted activities to improve gender equity in production and trade⁵.
- Collect disaggregated data to monitor participation and benefits for marginalized groups.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_age_marker_toolkit.pdf;
<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/Gender%20Handbook.pdf>; <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/working-group/iasc-guidelines-integrating-gender-based-violence-interventions-humanitarian-action-2015>;

⁵ <https://www.fsinplatform.org>;

6.3.3 Migration and internal displacement

- Analyze gender impacts on internal migration, refugee flows, and access to services.
- Include women and men in all activities at support centers and programs for displaced people.
- Protect against exploitation and trafficking, with attention to the vulnerabilities of migrant women.
- Collect disaggregated data to ensure equitable benefits.

6.3.4 WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene)

- Design interventions that are gender-sensitive and accessible to people with disabilities.
- Consult communities to ensure safety and accessibility.
- Include marginalized groups in decision-making regarding water and sanitation services.

ARTICLE 7 - ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CARITAS SOMALIA

- HR policies and codes of conduct promoting equity and non-discrimination.
- Create a safe and respectful work environment, free from harassment and abuse of authority.
- Continuous staff training on GEDSI and women's empowerment.
- Strict application of codes of conduct, safeguarding policy, complaints handling and whistleblowing policy.
- Inclusive communication and public awareness campaigns promoting the rights of all marginalized groups.

ARTICLE 8 - APPROVAL AND REVIEW

8.1 This GEDSI Policy has been formally approved by the President of Caritas Somalia and enters into force on the date of approval. All Board members, all staff, volunteers, and partners are expected to adhere to its principles and integrate GEDSI considerations into their work.

8.2 The Policy shall be reviewed every four years from the date of adoption, unless a specific need for an earlier review arises. In particular, the Policy shall be reviewed in the following circumstances:

- a) amendments to Somali legislation or regulations relevant to gender equality, disability, and social inclusion;
- b) publication of new guidelines, standards, or documents that impact GEDSI practices;
- c) significant societal, organisational, or operational changes affecting GEDSI implementation; or
- d) following serious incidents impacting GEDSI principles or the rights of marginalized groups.

8.3 Any revision of this Policy shall be formally approved and communicated to all Board members and all staff, partners, and relevant stakeholders. The most recent version supersedes all previous versions, and dissemination mechanisms shall ensure that all personnel are aware of their obligations under the GEDSI Policy.

Djibouti, on 12/01/2026

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President – Caritas Somalia