

## Alliance Policy Paper on Gender Equality

***“Gender matters everywhere in the world. And I would like today to ask that we begin to dream about and plan for a different world. A fairer world.”***

**— Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

### **About this paper**

As of this moment, gender equality is not achieved anywhere in the world. Inequalities, violences and discriminations based on gender identity, expression, or sexual orientations are prevalent worldwide: Gender equality is a topic that needs to be addressed not only by big international agencies like the the United Nations or the European Union, but also by any network or organisation that aims to contribute to a just and fairer global community.

The Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisation brings together organisations from all around the world working in the field of international Voluntary Service (IVS). There are seven working groups and committees in the network, composed by individuals mandated by member organisations (MOs).

This paper was created by the Gender Equality Working Group in 2018. It is referring to the educational framework and the background of the Alliance’s policy on gender equality. It is dedicated to all Alliance member organisations and partners. It will be subject to constant revision as further developments and changes take place both within the network and the related fields of society including academia and politics.

## 1. The Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations

The Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations is an International Non-Governmental Youth Organisation founded in 1982 that represents organisations which promote intercultural education, understanding and peace through voluntary service. It is a cooperative network of independent and active national organisations, working together on the quality and development of International Voluntary Service (IVS).

Member organisations (MOs) implement and support voluntary service programs, both on a national and on an international level, enabling young people to meet and understand different cultures whilst contributing to community projects of public benefit: European Voluntary Service (EVS), short term volunteering projects, medium term voluntary service, youth leaders exchanges and trainings, as well as a number of other social, environmental, cultural & local development projects.

The aims of the Alliance are set in an international context of non-formal education. The individual volunteers benefit from the interaction both within the group and with the local communities. The volunteering experience gives them the opportunity to travel to another country, use their time productively and make a positive contribution to the local community. This also gives them the opportunity to widen their horizons through meeting and learning from each other as well as from the locals involved.

The network promotes social inclusion, environmental sustainability and gender equality as its guiding principles. International Voluntary Service started out as a movement in which women and men were encouraged to participate equally. In the first ever workcamp to take place in 1920, this was a revolutionary idea. It might not seem so revolutionary nowadays. Yet, IVS projects and organisations are a reflection of the societies they are a part of. Thus, conflicts and inequalities found in today's societies impact every agent of the IVS movement.

## 2. Gender Equality

Concepts and definitions differ between countries and cultures and can change over time so there can never be one true definition. Having this in mind, working in the context of the Alliance, gender equality is defined as follows:

**Gender equality means equal rights and equal opportunities for everyone regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation. Gender equality recognises the diversity of everyone's interests, needs and priorities. It is a human right.**

Inequalities and discriminations exist and can vary depending on the time, space and the individual. As of today, gender equality is not achieved anywhere in the world nor has it ever been:

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## FACTS ABOUT GENDER INEQUALITY

1

### HOMOSEXUALITY

is still criminalised in 72 countries and can result in death penalties in 8 countries

(The Guardian, 2017)

2

### ABORTION

is totally illegal in 26 countries and another 37 countries ban abortion unless it is necessary to save the life of the woman

(World Economic Forum, 2018)

3

### 1 IN 3 WOMEN

worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence – mostly by an intimate partner

(UN Women)

4

### 1 IN 2 WOMEN

killed worldwide were killed by their partners or family in 2012. Only 1 out of 20 of all men killed were killed in such circumstances

(UN Women)

5

### 2/3 OF COUNTRIES

have outlawed domestic violence

(UN Women)

6

### 37 COUNTRIES

exempt rape perpetrators from prosecution when they are married to or subsequently marry the victim.

(UN Women)

7

### 45% TO 55% OF WOMEN

have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15 in the European Union

(UN Women)

8

### 71% OF ALL TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

worldwide are women and girls. 3 out of 4 trafficked women and girls are sexually exploited.

(UN Women)

9

### AT LEAST 200 MIO WOMEN AND GIRLS

alive today have undergone female genital mutilation in 30 countries where representative data is available. In most of these countries, the majority of girls were cut before 5 years old.

(UN Women)

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### ALMOST 750 MIO WOMEN AND GIRLS

alive today were married before their 18th birthday

(UN Women)

As can be seen in these numbers, inequalities and discriminations based on gender are prevalent worldwide. The lack of numbers regarding discriminations against the LGBTQI+<sup>1</sup> community worldwide is due to the absence of proper global studies on the topic.

Gender equality is addressed as an important issue by the UN, the EU and other international agencies: Goal no. 3 of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals was set to be the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in 2000 (United Nations, 2000). In October 2015, the European Union adopted the Joint Staff Working Document *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016 - 2020* (European Commission, 2015). Gender Equality is promoted in the EU's *Rights Equality and Citizenship Programme* (European Commission, 2017) and the EU *Gender Action Plan 2016-2020* (European Parliament Think Tank, 2017). The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 is to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (United Nations, 2017). Simultaneously, the Alliance has been building capacities and increasing concrete actions that address the topic.

### **3. Gender equality within the Alliance**

With thousands of workcamps around the world, Alliance member organisations offer a huge number of different volunteering opportunities every year. The Alliance aims to make these experiences a space of gender equality and works towards an equal society with no gender gaps or bias<sup>1</sup>. The development of the policy on gender equality within the network can be found on the Alliance website<sup>2</sup>.

Established in 2016, the Gender Equality Working Group (GEWG) is the centerpiece of the Alliance strategy to ensure gender issues are addressed adequately. It has been established to promote gender equality as one of the core values of the Alliance and assures the development of the network and its member organisations with regard to the topic. The GEWG builds and proposes strategies to establish inclusive IVS projects, capable of guaranteeing fundamental rights for every volunteer.

### **4. Methodologies and tools**

The GEWG provides educational opportunities and raises awareness on gender equality through means such as media communication, common actions and campaigns. This is achieved by building an expertise with agents within the MOs and from outside the network. The working group also supports networking with sister IVS networks in order to join forces and create a common strategy on how to address gender equality within the IVS movement.

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<sup>1</sup> **LGBTQ+:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, questioning, queer, intersex and the "plus" is the least obvious part of the LGBTQ+ initialism, and stands for those who aren't questioning their sexuality, but identify as part of a group that might not be so well known or understood

<sup>2</sup> [www.alliance-network.eu/committees-and-working-groups/gender-equality-working-group/](http://www.alliance-network.eu/committees-and-working-groups/gender-equality-working-group/)

Methods used can be separated into three separate areas which address different needs and issues but also target different groups:

**REFLECT!** Revising current practices and communication within the network in order to make them more inclusive. Fostering the communication on and discussion about topics which are still considered as taboo.

**EDUCATE!** Creating educational material and strategies, developing and delivering different activities promoting gender equality: trainings, seminars, online courses, study sessions, toolkits and handbooks.

**SHARE!** Sharing information, toolkits, methodology and materials on gender equality on various platforms to reach the different audience and target groups of the Alliance: its website, emailing list, monthly newsletter, Facebook page and the GEWG's Tumblr blog. Additionally, the network's events are used to further work on the topic.

The GEWG invites all organisations to promote gender equality by using the shared expertise and tools regarding gender equality. In the end, the changes we make within the network have an impact and contribute to much bigger changes in society.

## References

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