



## **ECPAT International Gender Equality Plan**

### **The mission of ECPAT International**

Our mission is to push for the critical systemic and social changes necessary to end the sexual exploitation of children, with governments, intergovernmental institutions, the private sector, civil society, and the public, including children themselves. We catalyse collective, innovative action to end the sexual exploitation of children, empowering civil society, engaging children as agents of change, engaging the private sector as champions and inspiring leadership across all sectors to protect every child everywhere.

### **The link with gender equality**

We acknowledge how age, ability, background, gender, and status, among others, shape children's experiences. We promote equitable, inclusive strategies that challenge systemic discrimination and unequal power structures. Rigid gender norms and unequal power relations between adults and children are recognised structural drivers of child sexual exploitation. ECPAT's commitment to gender equality is therefore not only an organisational value but a programmatic imperative.

### **ECPAT's commitment to principles of gender equity and equality**

ECPAT International is strongly committed to incorporating a gender equality perspective in its organisation and work, while also considering intersectional aspects of people's identities. ECPAT International recognises that exclusion is often based on multiple, intersecting factors, which trigger additional burdens in enjoying equal opportunities and participation.

ECPAT International requires staff, consultants, interns, volunteers, and members of its Supervisory Board to uphold the right to and principles of gender equality and equity, with an intersectional lens, in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. This includes taking progressive steps to achieve gender equality, promote gender justice, and realise the rights of all children both within and outside the organisation, in line with all applicable laws and regulations, human rights standards, ECPAT International's Code of Conduct and other organisational policies.

The purpose of this policy is to institutionalize ECPAT International's commitment to, and provide the organisational framework for, advancing gender equality and equity both within and outside the organisation, having regard also to intersectional aspects of people's identities. This policy aims to provide a clear vision, direction and common language to implement and communicate the organisational commitment to the promotion of gender equality and equity.

This policy supplements relevant ECPAT International's policies.



## Scope

This policy applies to: ECPAT Associate including International staff, consultants, interns and volunteers; members of the ECPAT International Supervisory Board, when acting in the course of their duties.

ECPAT Organisations that are members of the network are not directly bound by this policy, unless they are in a contractual relationship with the ECPAT International. Nevertheless, all ECPAT Organisations are encouraged to develop and implement equivalent standards for ensuring gender equality.

This policy has been approved by the Executive Director of ECPAT International. It should be reviewed every two years with a view to ensuring that ECPAT International continues to institutionalise and advance gender equality practices.

In line with principles of accountability and transparency, this policy has been published on ECPAT International's website, to ensure that its content and underlying principles are known, available and actionable by all.

## Terms and Definitions

- **Discrimination:** Unequal or unfair treatment which can be based on a range of grounds, such as age, ethnic background, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, which can lead to victimization and harassment.<sup>1</sup>
- **Equality:** Is the access to and distribution of a set of resources evenly across people.
- **Equity:** Is the access to, or distribution of, resources based on need.
- **Gender:** socially constructed norms, roles, behaviours, expressions and identities associated with boys, girls, men, women and gender diverse people.<sup>2</sup>
- **Gender equality** means that all people—regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, or sex characteristics—have equal rights, opportunities, respect, and power to shape their lives. It recognises that different groups face different constraints and advantages, often shaped by unequal social norms that disadvantage women, girls, and people of diverse SOGIESC. A gender equality approach seeks to understand and address these differences and intersecting identities, with the aim of transforming unequal power relations and creating a more just society. Gender equity is a key part of this, focusing on fairness to achieve equal outcomes.<sup>3</sup>
- **Gender Equity:** is the process to achieve gender equality. Gender equity recognises that women and gender-diverse people are not in the same 'starting position' as men.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/crcnct-gender-equality-policy-.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization. (n.d). [Gender and Health](#). Canadian Institutes of Health Research (n.d). [What is gender? What is sex?](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://plan-international.org/publications/global-policy-on-gender-equality-and-inclusion/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://plan-international.org/uploads/2024/05/GLO-Global Gender Equality Inclusion Policy-IO-Final-ENG->



- **Gender Identity:** refers to how each person feels about their gender, which may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth. It is key to recognise that there are many diverse gender identities that do not fit into the binary genders of girls/women and boys/men and that are experienced by children and adults around the world.
- **Positive Action:** Policies that support members of marginalised or underrepresented groups that have previously suffered discrimination in such areas as education, employment, or housing.
- **Systemic Inequity:** Patterns of discrimination, inequality, or unfair treatment that are embedded in the policies, practices, or cultural norms of institutions.
- **Sex:** set of biological attributes in humans and animals. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy. Sex is usually categorized as female or male but there is variation in the biological attributes that comprise sex and how those attributes are expressed. as female or male.
- **Sexual Orientation:** A person's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people.

## Dedicated resources

ECPAT International is committed to allocate appropriate human and financial resources to support the implementation of its Gender Equality Plan across all phases, from planning to monitoring and review. A designated focal point will provide oversight, working across teams to ensure that gender equality is embedded in organisational processes, decision-making, and programme work. In this work, sex-disaggregated data is collected and organisational procedures, processes and practices are critically reviewed to detect any gender inequalities and their possible causes within the existing organisations' dynamics and functions. Given ECPAT's structure, this will be implemented through a coordinated, cross-functional approach rather than in a standalone unit.

In addition, staff time will be allocated across the organisation to support key activities such as data collection, further policy development, and internal working groups. Gender considerations will be progressively integrated into planning and budgeting processes to ensure that resource allocation contributes to equitable outcomes and sustained organisational change.

## Collection and Publication of Disaggregated Data

ECPAT International will collect relevant data on gender equality, including:

- Staff numbers by sex/gender at all levels, by disciplines, function and by contractual relation to the organisation;



- Average numbers of years needed for women, men and non-binary people to make career advancements (per grade and by discipline);
- Wage gaps by sex/gender and job/position;
- Numbers of women, men and non-binary people in decision-making positions (e.g. top management team, boards, committees, recruitment and promotion panels);
- Numbers of female and male candidates applying for distinct job positions;
- Numbers of women, men and non-binary people having left the organisation in past years, specifying the numbers of years spent in the organisation;
- Numbers of staff by sex/gender applying for/taking parental leave, for how long and how many returned after taking the leave;
- Number of absence days taken by sex/gender and according to absence motive;
- Number of training hours/credits attended by sex/gender.

Data gathered on gender equality will be published on ECPAT International's website annually and the implementation of the plan will be monitored through a specific Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (which also includes mitigation measures and fosters a culture of adjustment based on learnings gathered through implementation).

Please note that the collection of sex and gender data, or any other identity factors, is contingent upon individuals' consent and willingness to self-identify and disclose this information.

## Training

ECPAT International will implement a structured and continuous programme of awareness-raising and training activities to strengthen understanding of gender equality and unconscious bias across the organisation. These activities will target all staff, including senior leadership and decision-makers, and will be embedded in key organisational processes such as onboarding, management practices, recruitment, and programme design. Training will also ensure that people know how to report a potential concern or issue related to discrimination, harassment and forms of exclusion through internal channels in a safe and confidential manner. Core components will include:

- Training on unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, and applying gender equality and equity principles in both internal operations and programme work (including in decision-making spaces and access to opportunities);
- Sessions addressing the impact of gender norms, biases and stereotypes both relevant to ECPAT's mission to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation, and to internal organisational dynamics and relationships;
- Sessions on understanding how gender norms/beliefs and biases intersect with additional forms of discrimination due to other identity factors, and how to



actively foster work environments that challenge them and promote equal participation and opportunities;

- Integration of gender equality considerations into onboarding and continuous professional development processes, including through intentional positive actions and safe reporting channels.

Training will be based on specific identified organisational needs and designed as an ongoing process rather than one-off interventions. In addition to formal training, ECPAT International will promote broader engagement through:

- Internal workshops, discussions, and knowledge-sharing sessions, which will be designed with an inclusive lens and an approach that actively challenges possible unconscious biases and stereotypes;
- Development and dissemination of guidance materials and practical tools;
- Communication activities to ensure staff are informed of the objectives and progress of the Plan and are actively engaged in its implementation.

This combined approach will support the systematic integration of gender perspectives across the organisation and contribute to sustained cultural, relational and institutional change.

## Work-Life Balance

ECPAT International will strengthen work–life balance as a key component of an inclusive organisational culture, ensuring that all staff are supported to balance professional responsibilities with personal and caring roles. The organisation will review existing policies and practices to identify gaps and ensure that they are equitable, inclusive, and responsive to diverse needs, including across different roles, locations and contractual arrangements.

To support this, ECPAT will implement the following actions:

- Review and strengthen parental leave policies, including ensuring fair conditions for staff on fixed-term contracts and supporting return-to-work transitions;
- Promote flexible working arrangements, including adaptable working hours, while assessing their impact across teams and roles;
- Support staff with caring responsibilities through practical measures and management practices that recognise diverse needs or changing life situations;
- Ensure fair and transparent workload distribution, taking into account part-time work, leave periods, rest breaks, and other responsibilities;
- Provide structured support for reintegration after career breaks, including mentoring and tailored return plans;
- Offer guidance and raise awareness on work–life balance through internal



communication and systemic and concrete management practices.

These actions aim to create a supportive and inclusive working environment that enables all staff to participate fully and progress in their careers.

### Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

ECPAT International will take targeted and intentional measures to improve gender balance in leadership and decision-making across the organisation, recognising that representation must be accompanied by inclusive processes and equal participation. The organisation will assess current gender representation in leadership, governance structures, and decision-making bodies, identify barriers and opportunities to participation, and set realistic targets to improve balance over time. These efforts will be embedded across organisational practices, including recruitment, staff development, and internal governance, ensuring that gender equality is systematically integrated into decision-making processes.

To support this, ECPAT will implement the following actions:

- Provide gender equality and unconscious bias training to leadership, managers, and members of decision-making bodies;
- Review and adapt selection and appointment procedures for committees and leadership roles to ensure transparency, fairness, and inclusivity;
- Promote gender-balanced representation and safe opportunities for engagement in decision-making bodies, including through proactive identification and encouragement of underrepresented staff;
- Increase transparency and objective feedback around decision-making structures, including clear communication on roles, criteria, and opportunities for participation;
- Strengthen support mechanisms for staff to access leadership roles, including mentoring, peer exchange, and leadership development opportunities.

These actions aim not only to improve gender balance but also to ensure that decision-making processes are inclusive, equitable, and reflective of diverse perspectives across the organisation.

### Integration of the gender dimension into research, advocacy and programmatic content

ECPAT International will integrate the gender dimension across its research, advocacy, knowledge production and other activities, ensuring that sex and gender analysis (cross-



referenced with other available identity factors) are systematically considered throughout project design, implementation, risk mitigation, and dissemination. This includes incorporating a gender lens into research questions, methodologies, data collection, analysis, and outputs, with particular attention to how different groups of children experience risks (as well as families and communities involved in our work), are subjected to harms, and access to protection across physical and digital environments. The organisation will also strengthen internal capacity to apply gender-sensitive approaches (at the very least), ensuring that its work reflects diverse experiences and contributes to more effective and inclusive policy and practice.

To support this, ECPAT has implemented and will continue implementing the following actions:

- Integrate gender analysis into research design, including disaggregated data collection and intersectional analysis, where applicable, safe and ethical;
- Develop and disseminate internal guidance and tools to support staff in applying gender-sensitive methodologies across programmes;
- Include gender considerations in quality assurance processes for research, advocacy outputs, and programme design and implementation;
- Provide training and knowledge-sharing opportunities to strengthen staff capacity on integrating gender perspectives across all contexts;
- Promote the inclusion of proactive gender equity practices in external partnerships, research collaborations, and policy engagement;
- Monitor and assess the extent to which gender considerations and approaches are integrated into research and programme outputs and use findings to improve current and future practice.

These actions will ensure that ECPAT's work is evidence-based, inclusive, and responsive to the different needs, experiences, and risks faced by children across gender identities and other identity factors.

## Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

ECPAT International will take a zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence and sexual harassment, ensuring that all staff operate in a safe, respectful, and inclusive working environment.

The organisation's commitments, standards, and procedures in this area are set out in its Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment Policy.

The Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment policy (available [here](#)) outlines expected standards of behaviour, prevention and awareness-raising measures, and clear procedures for reporting, responding to, and addressing concerns.



It also defines roles and responsibilities, ensures the availability of safe and confidential reporting mechanisms, and establishes processes for timely, fair, and transparent investigations, as well as appropriate support to those affected.

The organisation will review and strengthen its existing safeguarding, dignity at work, and anti-harassment policies to ensure they clearly define unacceptable behaviours, reflect power dynamics, and are aligned with international standards. Efforts will also be made to better understand risks and barriers to reporting, ensuring that policies are accessible, trusted, and effectively implemented across the organisation.

To support this, ECPAT will implement the following actions:

- Establish and communicate clear codes of conduct outlining expected behaviours and definitions of harassment and abuse;
- Ensure accessible, confidential, and safe reporting mechanisms, including options for anonymous reporting where feasible;
- Define transparent and fair investigation procedures, including clear timelines, roles, and appeal processes;
- Provide appropriate support to victims and witnesses, including access to guidance, counselling, and referral pathways;
- Apply consistent disciplinary measures and provide guidance on escalation to external authorities where relevant;
- Deliver training and awareness-raising activities for all staff, including on recognising, preventing, and responding to harassment, as well as bystander approaches.

These actions aim to foster a culture of accountability and trust, where all staff are empowered to contribute to a safe and respectful organisational environment.

## Conclusion

The policy will be reviewed bi-annually under the leadership of the Executive Director, who will assess its implementation and propose any necessary updates to the Supervisory Board. All updated versions will be made publicly available on the organisation's website.

All ECPAT Associates including staff, consultants, interns, volunteers, and Supervisory Board members will be required to acknowledge and commit to the policy, and its implementation measures, as part of their onboarding process and professional responsibilities. They will also be informed of any updates and supported through regular briefings and training to ensure continued understanding and compliance.



**ENDING THE SEXUAL  
EXPLOITATION OF  
CHILDREN**

Date April 15 2026