

# UPR INFO GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS- BASED APPROACH POLICY



*Promoting human rights through  
the Universal Periodic Review  
<http://www.upr-info.org>*





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### POLICY STATEMENT

UPR Info is a non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing human rights through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a human rights review process of all UN Member States and engaging all stakeholders. UPR Info strives for a world free from discrimination based on gender and where every human being can fulfil their potential without any other type of discrimination. UPR Info's strategy is anchored to gender equality, intersectionality and a human rights-based approach.

The policy defines UPR Info's commitments and principles for our gender equality and human rights work. The policy applies within the organization, in all programmes and communication work. The activity of UPR Info will help to realize the rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international and regional human rights instruments.

UPR Info policy work and capacity building will help duty bearers attain their commitments to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights, as well as empower rights holders to claim and enjoy their rights. It will be guided by principles based on human rights.



**Participation:** UPR Info supports meaningful and inclusive participation and empowers rights holders to participate in decision-making.



**Legality:** UPR Info promotes the integration of domestic and international legislation, as well as an integrated approach with international and regional human rights monitoring mechanisms.



**Accountability:** UPR Info promotes rights holders to set up accessible reporting methods and works with civil society groups to hold the government accountable.



**Non-discrimination:** UPR Info raises awareness about the need of addressing the underlying causes of human rights violations and encourages solutions that address discrimination in law and practice.



**Transparency and access to information:** UPR Info fosters an environment that promotes transparency and information access both internally and externally.

## A HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH TO GENDER

### Gender

UPR Info shares the definition of the term “gender” as in the “General Recommendation No. 28 on the Core Obligations of States Parties under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”: “The term “gender” refers to socially constructed identities, attributes and roles for women and men and society’s social and cultural meaning for these biological differences resulting in hierarchical relationships between women and men and in the distribution of power and rights favouring men and disadvantaging women. This social positioning of women and men is affected by political, economic, cultural, social, religious, ideological and environmental factors and can be changed by culture, society and community.”



### Intersectionality

Gender has an undeniable impact on an individual’s experiences with human rights, and it is important to recognize, but the realization must be coupled with an acknowledgement of intersectionality. Largely, human rights issues are unable to be fully understood without acknowledging the intersectionality of rights.

Intersectionality can be defined as the presence of gender-based discrimination intersecting with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others. For instance, a migrant woman who is disabled undergoes a unique experience that can only be understood through the convergence of all of her social identities. Gender is a significant aspect of human rights issues, but gender identity interacts with other important identities as well.

### A Human Rights Based Approach

A human rights-based approach integrates international human rights standards and principles in development and programming activities. It takes into account the prohibition of sex discrimination – and other grounds - and evaluates how a situation impacts differently diverse groups living in vulnerable situations or marginalized, including women and gender non-conforming people's human rights. It is extremely important that a gender equality approach is incorporated when discussing human rights. Gender can have a great effect on discrepancies between men and boys, and women and girls. Women and girls have an increased probability of being a victim of gender-based violence, less opportunities to be in leadership positions, and risk the loss of other universal human rights, simply due to their gender. Women and girls are affected differently by human rights issues, and oftentimes in unfavorable ways. Gender has a great influence on human rights, or lack thereof.



## HOW UPR INFO UTILIZES AN INTERSECTIONAL GENDER STRATEGY

The integration of a gender-equality and human rights-based approach is the responsibility of all UPR Info team (employees and management). UPR Info is aware of the importance of having prepared staff that can apply a gender perspective in the work and use an intersectionality lens.

In 2018, UPR Info appointed two staff members as gender equality focal points in the organization. The appointment coincided with the nomination of UPR Info's Executive Director to the International Gender Champions Initiative.

By the end of the current organizational strategic plan (2027), UPR Info is committed to establishing progressively a gender-equality focal point in each programme of the organization, through recruitment or training.

UPR Info developed other personnel policies to secure a gender sensitive staff, e.g. ethical guidelines that include the prohibition of sexual harassment.

UPR Info will:

- Encourage an inclusive and respectful atmosphere at work that welcomes the expression of individual gender identities and non-discrimination on a gendered basis for those who do not fit into a gender binary;
- Encourage gender balance among employees, including in managerial roles;
- Take steps to ensure work-life balance by providing working conditions that meet the needs of both men and women; and
- Encourage open discussion and internal debate about gender-based discrimination.

### Programmatic and Communication Work

Through its work, UPR Info works to empower women and gender nonconforming people, as well as groups living in vulnerable situations or marginalized groups, to have a place at the decision-making table. UPR Info will work to ensure that no one is discriminated against because of the gender with which they identify when working on human rights throughout the UPR process.

To achieve this, UPR Info will:

- Ensure that the scheduled activities (trainings, events, or tool development) and information about the UPR process (through the website, emailing, e-learning

platform, and UPR Info's database of recommendations) are appropriate and accessible to both men and women.

- Promote a gender balanced composition in panels and activities conducted by UPR Info. For example, 56% of the speakers in the Pre-sessions held during the third cycle of the UPR identified as female.
- Invite participants in its activities to carry out a gender-equality analysis for each human rights issue addressed.
- Ensure that women and individuals facing gender discrimination have meaningfully participated in organized activities such as capacity building activities, events to discuss good practices on the UPR, or Pre-sessions.
- Include information, examples, or data on gender equality and intersectionality in the production of content for capacity building activities or the preparation of policy documents. This can be achieved by offering examples of how to collect data for UPR reports, sharing best practices on how to develop specific and actionable recommendations, providing strategic advocacy ideas, and providing information and resources to monitor UPR recommendations. This is not an exhaustive list.
- Ensure that all programs implement monitoring methods, such as performance indicators and collect gender-disaggregated data.
- Ensure that the UPR good practices communication coverage developed is inclusive and non-discriminatory.



## THE UPR AND GENDER RELATED ISSUES

The UPR has been a tool for states to promote gender equality and improve human rights since its establishment in 2006. Many recommendations either directly refer to gender, or to an identity that intersects with gender, therefore addressing gender inequality in a particular state. In the third cycle of the UPR, Malaysia recommended that Rwanda “Adopt and implement comprehensive policies to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and take more measures to promote the integration of women into the labour force”. This single recommendation refers to women’s rights, labour rights, and disability rights. Not only does this recommendation display how the UPR can advocate for gender equality, but it also exhibits how intersectional human rights truly are.

The UPR is a tool for advocacy, but it is also a platform to push forth human rights legislation. A recommendation from the second cycle of the UPR that refers to

gender equality is from the Netherlands to Greece. This recommendation reads “Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence [Istanbul Convention]”. This particular recommendation calls for appropriate and specific legislation to protect women against domestic violence, and was supported by the state under review. Supported recommendations showcase a desire to move forth with improving human rights before the state under review is reviewed once again. The UPR is able to catalyze a movement towards gender equality, but also towards general human rights improvements. Once again, it is difficult to completely separate gender from other significant social identities, therefore illustrating intersectionality.

*"Adopt and implement comprehensive policies to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and take more measures to promote the integration of women into the labour force."*



*"Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence [Istanbul Convention]."*

This is a living document and will be updated based on our experience and external and internal changes.

UPR Info, 2018, updated in 2023.

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