



Handbook on Gender Equity and Social Inclusion

FOR THE BANKING SECTOR IN KOSOVO

© USAID Investment Promotion and Access to Finance Activity

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INTRODUCTION

Global progress has been made toward gender equality and social inclusion through initiatives that address systemic barriers and empower women and marginalized groups. The United Nations and other entities have advanced legal reforms for equal rights in education, employment, and political involvement. Programs enhancing women's economic independence and leadership skills have increased alongside campaigns that challenge stereotypes and promote inclusivity. These efforts have improved representation in leadership, healthcare, education, and awareness of discrimination.

Despite these advances, challenges remain. Gender-based violence is widespread, and disparities in pay and career advancement persist, especially affecting women, youth, and other marginalized groups. Stereotypes continue to restrict opportunities, and underrepresentation in decision-making persists. Intersectional issues exacerbate marginalization. Sustained action is required to dismantle discrimination, promote inclusive policies, and ensure everyone's rights and potential are recognized.

Definition of Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Gender equity means equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for all genders, emphasizing that differences in rights and opportunities should not be based on sex. It seeks to give all genders equal power to influence society and its outcomes.

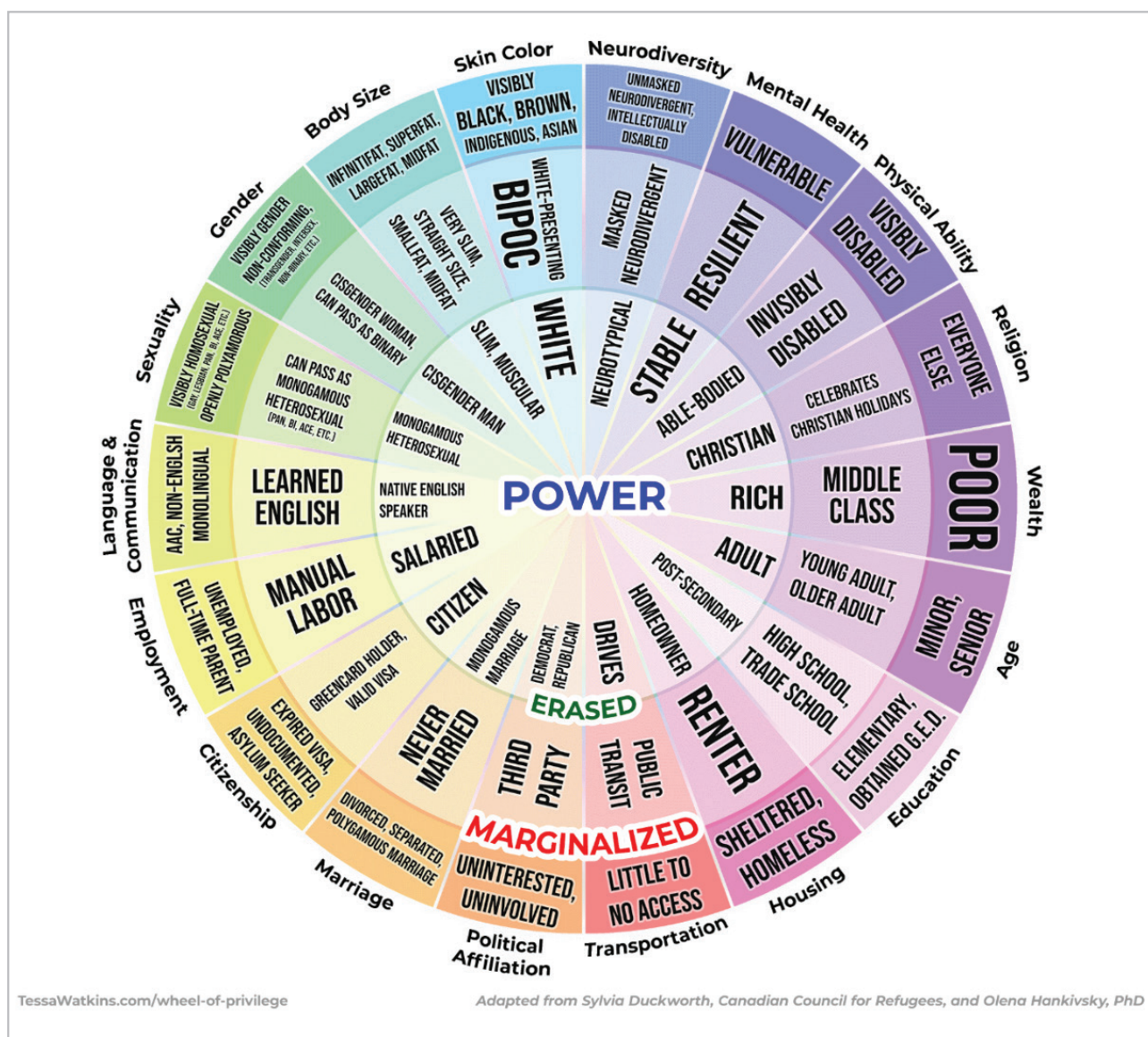
Social inclusion involves enhancing how individuals and groups participate in society, focusing on increasing the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged by their identity. It aims to empower the marginalized to leverage global opportunities and ensure everyone can reach their potential, regardless of background.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality recognizes how various forms of discrimination, like gender, race, and socioeconomic status, overlap and affect marginalized individuals, particularly in economic contexts. In finance, it highlights how different groups, such as minority women, may face unique challenges due to overlapping identity factors, influencing their access to financial services and employment opportunities in financial sectors. For example, women from minority groups might face unique challenges that are not fully understood by considering gender and ethnicity separately. This might manifest in the form of discriminatory lending practices, unequal access to financial services, or barriers to employment in financial institutions that disproportionately affect certain groups.

An intersectional approach in finance means acknowledging that financial policies and products affect people differently, urging institutions to consider these complexities when designing services to ensure accessibility and fairness. This tailored approach promotes financial inclusion and equity, potentially leading to innovative services for underserved communities and expanding market efficiency.

FIGURE 1: *The Intersectionality Wheel*




Understanding Gender Equity and Social Inclusion

Gender equity involves women and men working together to reshape attitudes and responsibilities in personal, professional, and community contexts. It aims to improve freedoms and quality of life for all, beyond achieving numerical equality or adhering to legal standards.

Social inclusion refers to the efforts made to improve conditions for individuals and groups to actively participate in society. It focuses on enhancing the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those marginalized based on their identity, enabling them to engage more fully in societal activities.

An inclusive society creates mechanisms and frameworks that empower communities to hold their governments and leaders accountable. It ensures that all groups, especially marginalized ones, are involved in decision-making processes. This inclusivity extends to ensuring the active participation of every societal segment, especially those often marginalized, like women, youth, elderly, LGBTI community members, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities, in the decision-making processes.

 **Equality:** Equality refers to treating everyone the same way, regardless of their background or circumstances. In a perfectly equal world, everyone would have the same access to opportunities and resources.

Equity: Equity acknowledges that people come from different backgrounds and may have different needs. It focuses on fairness and ensuring everyone has a fair shot at achieving their full potential. This may involve providing additional support to those who have faced historical or ongoing disadvantages.

So, why is equity important for gender and social inclusion?

Gender inequality and social exclusion create uneven playing fields. Women, youth, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups often face systemic barriers that limit their access to education, employment, and other opportunities. Equity recognizes these disparities and aims to level the playing field by providing targeted interventions and resources based on individual needs.

By focusing on equity, we can create a more inclusive society where everyone has the chance to thrive, regardless of their gender, background, or ability.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals¹ were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The SDGs are composed of 17 goals, which are integrated and indivisible, balancing the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

SDG 5, aiming for gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, presents a significant opportunity for banks. By providing financial products and services designed to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs, like microloans and financial literacy training, banks can unlock economic potential and close the gender gap in financial inclusion. This focus on SDG 5 aligns perfectly with the banking sector's mission to promote financial well-being and economic growth, creating a positive ripple effect throughout society.

GESI Principles

Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) are key for creating equitable, sustainable societies and institutions, particularly within the banking sector. GESI principles affect both internal operations and external interactions.

Internally, GESI ensures inclusive staffing practices that promote diversity and combat discrimination, creating an environment where all employees can thrive.

Externally, GESI guides interactions with clients and the community, making services accessible to all and tailoring engagement strategies to diverse needs, which enhances market reach and customer satisfaction.

A comprehensive GESI policy addresses both workforce dynamics and business practices, including clear hiring guidelines and client engagement strategies, ensuring that organizations truly embody equity and inclusion in every operational aspect. Implementing GESI is essential for banks, particularly in places like

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Kosovo, where gender inequality remains a significant challenge. Women often face barriers to economic participation and professional advancement, making it crucial for banks to lead in promoting gender equity. By adopting GESI policies, banks in Kosovo can help address these disparities, meet ethical standards, enhance their reputation, and contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable economic environment.

The UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) are a set of guidelines for businesses to promote gender equality in the workplace, marketplace, and community. They encourage companies to offer equal opportunities, invest in training for women, and advocate for a more inclusive environment.

TABLE 1: *UN Women's Empowerment Principles - Equality Means Business*

GESI Principle	Description
Principle 1: Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality	Affirm high-level support and direct top-level policies for gender equality and human rights.
Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination	Ensure that workplace policies and practices are free from gender-based discrimination. Implement gender-sensitive recruitment and retention practices and proactively recruit and appoint women to managerial and executive positions and to the corporate board of directors.
Principle 3: Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers	Take into account differential impacts on women and men, provide safe working conditions and protection.
Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women	Ensure equal access to all company-supported education and training programs, including literacy classes, vocational and information technology training.
Principle 5: Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women	Expand business relationships with women-owned enterprises, including small businesses, and women entrepreneurs. Support gender-sensitive solutions to credit and lending barriers.
Principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy	Leverage influence, alone or in partnership, to advocate for gender equality and collaborate with business partners, suppliers and community leaders to promote inclusion.
Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality	Make company policies and implementation plan for promoting gender equality public. Establish benchmarks that quantify inclusion of women at all levels.

By role modeling ethical behavior, bank leaders can establish a culture of integrity and trust, which is fundamental in the financial sector. Demonstrating personal drive, commitment, and resilience encourages a proactive approach to challenges, enhancing the bank's ability to adapt in a dynamic economic landscape.

Promoting change and innovation in banks can better meet the diverse needs of clients, including marginalized communities, thus expanding the customer base and improving service delivery. Effective communication and political awareness, combined with building collaborative relationships, ensure smoother interactions with regulators and stakeholders, aligning bank policies with GESI goals.

Enhancing staff capacities through continuous training ensures employees are motivated and equipped to support the bank's GESI objectives. Setting clear goals and monitoring tasks helps track progress in integrating GESI principles. These practices strengthen the institution, ensuring compliance with regulations and preparing banks to address future challenges and opportunities in Kosovo's financial sector.

Gender Equity and Social Inclusion in Kosovo

Social inclusion in Kosovo's private sector, essential for its development, faces both challenges and opportunities. The sector plays a key role in promoting inclusion through job creation and diverse hiring practices focusing on marginalized groups, including women, youth, and people with disabilities. However, barriers persist, such as geographical, educational, and social hurdles for marginalized communities, as well as wage disparities and leadership underrepresentation for women.

Legislative efforts aim to increase employment of marginalized groups, but enforcement is inconsistent. Local NGOs and international organizations advocate for better inclusion practices, although cultural traditions often resist change. Progressive businesses in Kosovo, are embracing diversity as crucial for market expansion and competitiveness, implementing initiatives like diversity training, scholarships for underrepresented groups, and partnerships for inclusion.

A study by the GAP Institute highlighted that financial constraints are a major barrier for women and minority-owned businesses, often relying on personal savings and facing challenges in securing loans due to limited property ownership and potential business uncertainties. Despite these difficulties, some businesses that secure loans achieve sustainability, underscoring the importance of financial support for fostering social inclusion in the private sector. Continuous effort and multi-sector commitment are needed to make economic opportunities accessible to all in Kosovo.

Non-Financial Support

The GAP Institute report indicates that in Kosovo, women-owned and minority-owned businesses primarily depend on national and international NGOs for non-financial support like training and technical assistance. Active involvement in associations is key for accessing these supports. Significant assistance comes from organizations such as USAID Kosovo, Help Kosovo, UNDP, Caritas, KFOR, CDF, and local NGOs, offering resources from machinery and financial aid to seedlings and greenhouses. Additionally, some banks provide non-financial help like financial literacy training and business planning support.

Why is GESI Critical for Banking?

Women's economic empowerment, particularly through entrepreneurship, contributes significantly to broader economic development. Studies show that increasing female participation in the economy leads to higher growth rates. For instance, according to the McKinsey Global Institute, advancing women's equality could add \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025. In the context of Kosovo, women-led businesses contribute increasingly to GDP as more women gain access to finance and enter the entrepreneurial space. For financial institutions, banking on women is also good business. Increasing inclusion in financial services can have a number of positive impacts for banking institutions, as described below.

Expanding Client Base and Market Reach: Incorporating GESI principles allows banks to cater to a broader and more diverse client base. By understanding and addressing the specific needs of all segments of society, including women and marginalized groups, banks can develop targeted products that appeal to these groups, thereby expanding their market reach.

Enhancing Innovation and Competitiveness: Diversity within an organization leads to a greater variety of ideas, perspectives, and problem-solving approaches. Diversity is a catalyst for innovation which can lead to more user-friendly services, improved customer satisfaction, and increased operational efficiencies. Banks that champion gender equity and social inclusion often find themselves ahead of the curve in terms of product development and service delivery.



<https://unsplash.com/s/photos/women-entrepreneurs>

Financial Inclusion and Economic Growth: Financial inclusion is directly linked to economic development. By providing financial services to underserved groups, such as women, youth, and certain ethnic minorities, banks play a crucial role in economic empowerment. Empowered individuals contribute to the overall economic growth, creating a virtuous cycle of development and prosperity.

Risk Management: A diverse client base can mitigate risks associated with over-concentration on a particular demographic. By promoting gender equity and social inclusion, banks can achieve a more balanced portfolio of clients, which enhances stability and reduces exposure to sector-specific downturns.

Social Responsibility and Compliance: Banks operate in a societal context and therefore have a responsibility to contribute positively to the communities they serve. Implementing GESI principles demonstrates a commitment to social responsibility, which can enhance a bank's reputation and brand value. Additionally, many regions are increasingly incorporating GESI compliance into regulatory frameworks. Banks that prioritize GESI are better positioned to meet these regulatory requirements and avoid potential penalties.

Workforce Diversity: A diverse workforce in banking not only enhances decision-making and service delivery, but also reflects a bank's commitment to GESI. It makes the institution more relatable and trustworthy to a diverse clientele, encouraging more people to engage with banking services.

KOSOVO'S GESI LANDSCAPE

Kosovo has made significant strides toward improving gender equity and social inclusion, particularly in the sectors of banking and finance. These efforts are rooted in both the country's legal framework and various governmental and non-governmental initiatives aimed at promoting an inclusive financial environment. This section provides an examination of the current status, highlighting key areas of progress and ongoing challenges.

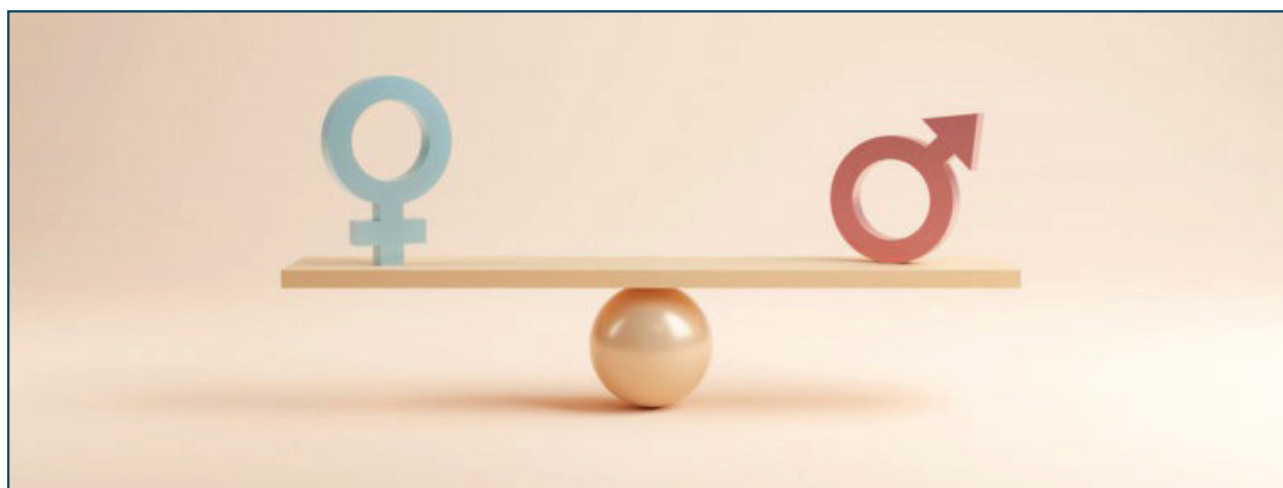
Legal Frameworks for Gender Equality

Kosovo's commitment to gender equality is enshrined in its constitution and several laws that promote gender equality and combat discrimination:

The Constitution of Kosovo guarantees equal rights for men and women and prohibits any form of discrimination on the basis of sex. This constitutional mandate creates a solid foundation for further gender-specific legislation.

Law on Gender Equality (LGE): Adopted in 2015, this law is designed to ensure equality in all spheres of society, including economic participation, decision-making, and access to services. The law emphasizes the importance of gender balance in political and public life, and private sector entities, including banks, are encouraged to adopt these principles.

Law Against Discrimination: This law² explicitly prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, etc., and applies to all institutions, including those in the banking and finance sector.



<https://oecd-development-matters.org/tag/equality/>

² <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=10924&langid=2>

Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024 (KPGE): This action plan aims to implement gender mainstreaming in public policy frameworks. The KPGE³ has three pillars, economic empowerment and social welfare, human development roles and gender relations, and women's rights, access to justice and security.

Law on Gender Equality in Political Representation: This law promotes gender equality in political representation, including quotas for the representation of women in decision-making bodies.

Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence: This law provides for protective measures for victims of domestic violence and establishes mechanisms for prevention and prosecution of perpetrators.

Support for GESI in Banking

Central Bank of Kosovo (CBK) Initiatives: The Strategic Plan of CBK foresees working towards improving financial literacy and inclusion, while the CBK has continuously encouraged banks to consider gender equality in their employment and lending policies. There is a growing focus on ensuring that women and other marginalized groups have equal access to financial services.

Women's Access to Finance: The Government of Kosovo, often in collaboration with international donors, such as USAID, the European Union, GIZ, has launched several programs, such as the Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund, Creating Employment through Export Promotion (GIZ), and EBRD's women's credit windows aimed at increasing women's access to finance. These programs provide credit guarantees and loans to women-owned businesses and training in financial literacy specifically tailored for women entrepreneurs.

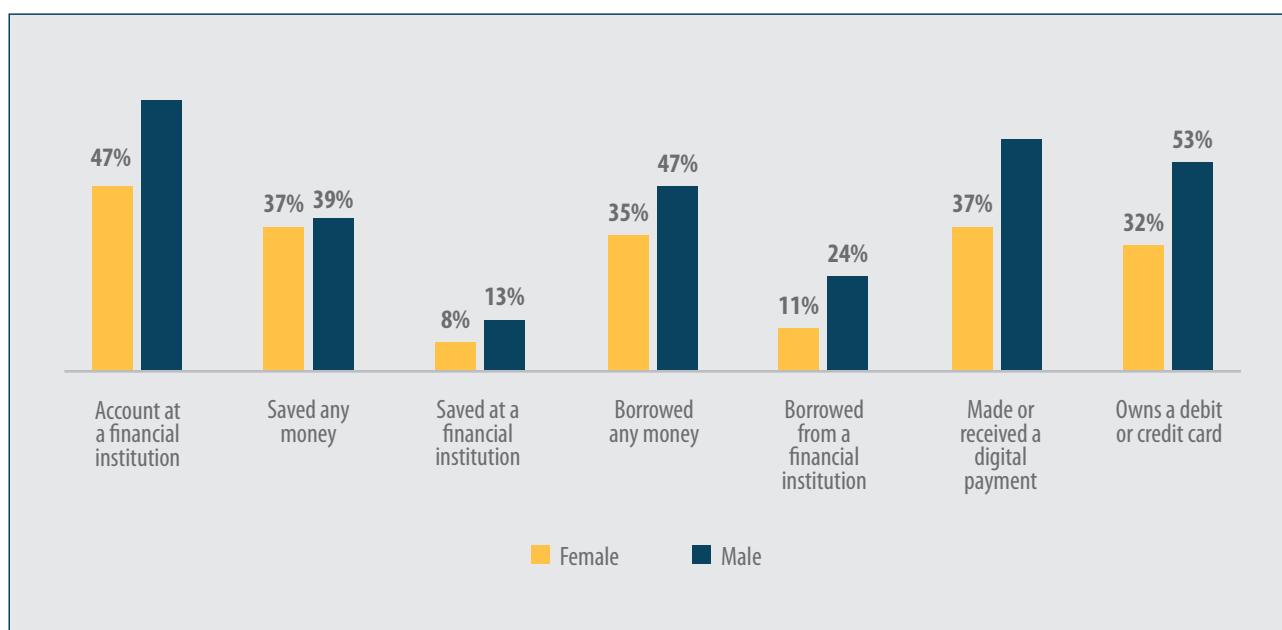
Public Awareness Campaigns: Kosovo conducts regular campaigns aimed at increasing the public's awareness about the importance of women's economic inclusion. These campaigns also focus on educating women about their rights and the financial services available to them.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Despite these positive steps, there are challenges that persist in achieving full gender equity and social inclusion in Kosovo's banking and finance sector:

³ <https://abgj.rks-gov.net/assets/cms/uploads/files/Programi%20i%20Kosov%C3%ABs%20p%C3%ABr%20Barazi%20Gjinore%202020-2024%20-%20ANGLISHT.pdf>

FIGURE 2: *Financial Inclusion in Kosovo*



Source: World Bank Global Findex, 2022 (based on viable population of ages 15+ years)

Underrepresentation in Leadership: Women are still underrepresented in leadership positions within the banking sector. This disparity limits the perspectives and inputs that are crucial for inclusive financial policymaking and product development.

Access to Credit: Women entrepreneurs and those from marginalized communities often face higher barriers to accessing credit due to a lack of collateral and traditional credit histories. This issue is compounded by societal norms and expectations that may discourage women from pursuing entrepreneurial activities.

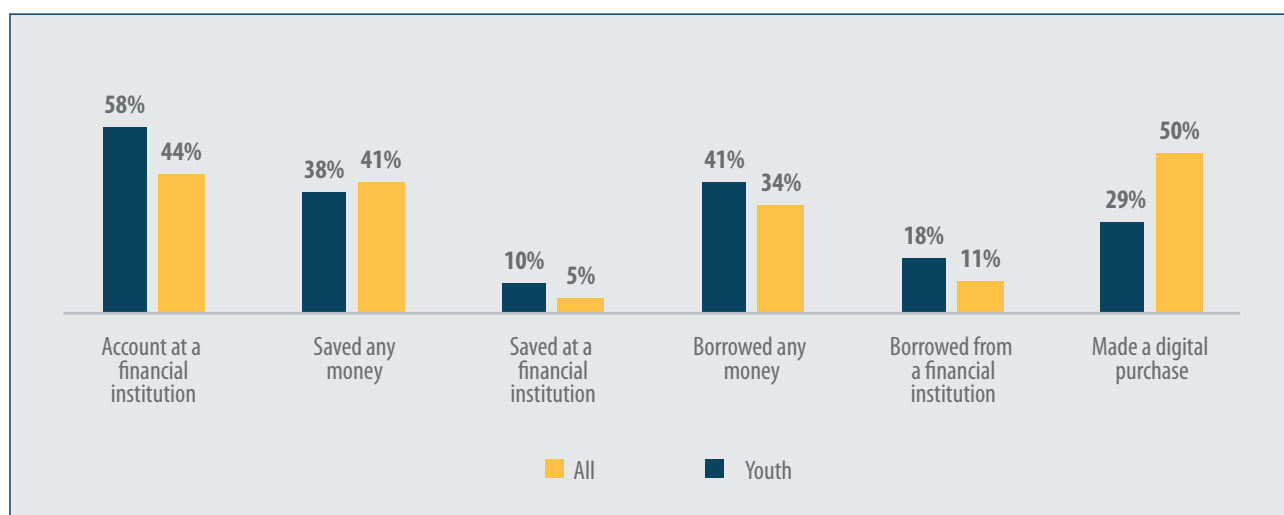
Gender Wage Gap: Although women are increasingly part of the workforce, they often earn less than their male counterparts, even within the banking sector.^{4,5,6} Closing this gap remains a significant challenge. The financial inclusion of youth and other marginalized groups in Kosovo faces several significant challenges. One primary issue is the limited access to banking services, which is often compounded by a lack of financial literacy. Many young people and certain ethnic minorities in Kosovo do not have sufficient knowledge about financial management, savings, credit, and other banking services, which impedes their ability to participate fully in the financial system. Additionally, there are often systemic barriers, such as stringent documentation requirements, high fees, and a lack of tailored financial products that meet the unique needs of these groups.

⁴ Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality – Gender Pay Gap in Kosovo, 2020

⁵ Millennium Challenge Corporation – Labor Force and Time Use Survey, 2017

⁶ Regional Cooperation Council - Women Employment Study for Kosovo*, 2022

FIGURE 3: Youth Financial Inclusion Data



Source: World Bank, *Global Financial Inclusion*, 2022

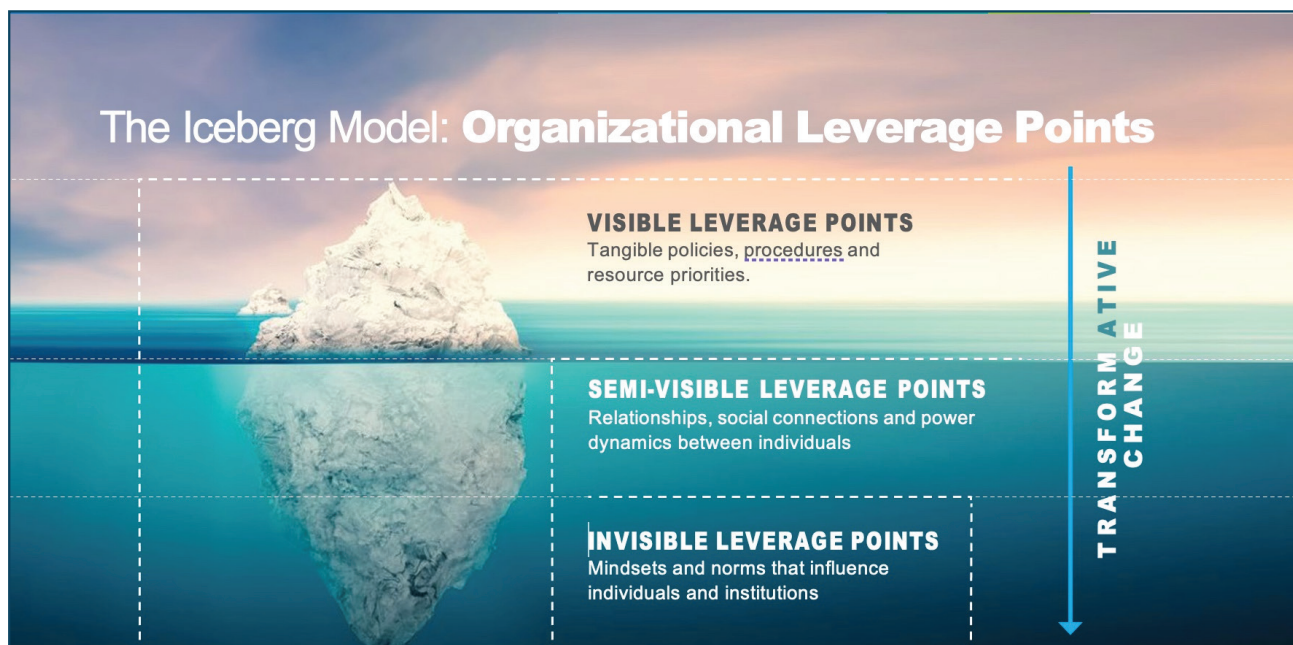
For marginalized groups, particularly those in rural areas or from non-majority communities, these challenges are exacerbated by lower levels of economic development and a lack of targeted outreach by financial institutions. Discrimination and social exclusion further alienate these communities from accessing financial resources that are crucial for economic empowerment.

Efforts to improve financial inclusion in Kosovo must therefore focus on enhancing financial education among youth and other underserved groups, simplifying banking procedures, reducing costs, and developing inclusive financial products that are accessible to all. Additionally, fostering a more inclusive economic environment and combating discrimination are essential to ensure that all citizens have equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from Kosovo's economic growth.

BEST PRACTICES IN GESI POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

In the banking sector, embracing gender equity and social inclusion is not only a matter of ethical leadership, but also a strategic business practice. The CEDAW declaration best practices gender policies and practices have been developed for broad application, including in financial institutions. Key among these practices is gender budgeting, anti-discrimination laws, and inclusive education systems. This section explores how these policies can be adapted and implemented in the banking industry to foster an inclusive, equitable, and prosperous environment.

FIGURE 4: *The Iceberg Model: Organizational Leverage Points*



Global Banking for Women, "Unlocking the Potential of the Women's Market: The Gender Diversity and Inclusion Imperative, 2018."

The main aim is creating systemic change. The model iceberg model of organizational leverage points suggests focusing interventions on these deeper leverage points, like goals, mindsets, or power structures, for a more significant and lasting impact.

TABLE 2: *The Iceberg Model: Organizational Leverage Points*

Visible Leverage Points	Semi-visible Leverage Points	Invisible Leverage Points
Policies, Practices, Resource flows	Relationships, social connections, power dynamics between individuals	Deeply held beliefs or individual mindsets within a bank
Policies and procedures ensure inclusive recruitment, retention, promotion and professional development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid maternity leave policies • Mentorship programs • Executive sponsorship programs • Return to work programs 	Gender power dynamics are uneven in the financial services industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater representation of men in leadership and decision-making positions • Societal and cultural expectations of how women should act 	Mindsets are the hardest leverage point to change, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are reflected in institutional norms and culture • Men and women may have differing beliefs between as to what the true problem is
Reward and recognition systems incentivize desired changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target setting • Resources 	Double standards, combined with the under-representation of women in the leading ranks of financial institutions, tilts the balance of power toward men <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men are assertive, women are bossy 	Gender biases can influence both internal and external priorities for a bank <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring and compensation • Targeting specific market segments • Tailoring customer service to meet segment requirements
Mechanisms to ensure that employees aware of abiding by the policies and procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidential reporting of non-compliance 		

Gender Budgeting

Gender Budgeting is the practice of planning and organizing a budget with an explicit consideration of the needs of different genders. It ensures that the allocation of resources is fair and contributes to the advancement of gender equality. Banks can implement gender budgeting by:

Allocating Budgets for Gender-Specific Products and Services: Develop and market financial products that cater to the unique needs of women and other marginalized groups, such as microloans for women entrepreneurs, savings accounts for girls' education, or insurance products for families led by single mothers.

Training and Development: Invest in training programs that not only sensitize staff on gender issues but also empower female employees through leadership training and career development opportunities.

Community Engagement: Design corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that address specific community needs, focusing on empowering disadvantaged groups through financial literacy, entrepreneurship programs, and access to banking services.

Promoting Inclusion

Anti-discrimination laws provide a legal framework that protects individuals from unfair treatment based on gender, race, religion, or other statuses. The banking sector can strengthen its commitment to non-discrimination by:



GESI in Recruitment

- Integrating GESI into hiring practices is crucial for fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce. This promotes fairness and cultivates innovation and productivity.

Start with Job Descriptions

- Ensure that job descriptions are inclusive and appealing to a diverse range of candidates by using gender-neutral language and highlighting your commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Advertise Broadly

- Target a diverse applicant pool by posting job openings on job boards and social media platforms that target underrepresented groups.
- Engage with community groups and educational institutions that work with underrepresented populations.

Use Structured Interviews and Standardized Evaluation Criteria

- Minimize unconscious bias by developing a consistent set of interview questions and scoring based on skills and experience relevant to the job.
- Focus on the skills and abilities necessary for the job rather than solely on traditional credentials.

Diverse Hiring Panels

- Ensure the hiring process benefits from diverse perspectives by including panel members from various backgrounds and levels within the organization.

GESI in leadership: Bank leaders play crucial roles in promoting GESI. They must role model ethical behavior and lead with personal drive, commitment, and resilience. Providing strategic direction, promoting change and innovation, and communicating with influence and political awareness are key responsibilities. Building collaborative relationships, enhancing staff capability and commitment, and planning and monitoring work tasks for goal achievement are essential to fostering an inclusive environment. Additionally, promoting effective and efficient service delivery and supporting institutional strengthening are fundamental to ensuring the success of GESI initiatives within the banking sector.



GESI in Hiring

Inclusive Culture and Onboarding

- Implement inclusive onboarding processes and development programs that support all employees.
- Support integration of new hires into an inclusive workplace by communicating your organization's policies on diversity and inclusion during onboarding.
- Offer mentorship programs that support underrepresented employees.

Monitor and Evaluate GESI Performance

- Continuously improve the hiring process by regularly gathering and acting on feedback about the inclusivity of the work environment. Track diversity metrics and analyze hiring trends.
- Use surveys and feedback tools to understand candidate experiences during the hiring process.
- Set specific, measurable goals for improving diversity through recruitment.

Build Partnerships and Community Engagement

- Build relationships and support organizations that promote workforce diversity and focus on employment for underrepresented groups.
- Encourage staff engagement in organizations working with underrepresented groups.

Robust Internal Policies: Implement clear, strict non-discrimination policies that define unacceptable behaviors and provide mechanisms for addressing complaints. These policies should be regularly reviewed and updated.

Diverse Hiring Practices: Adopt recruitment strategies that ensure a diverse applicant pool and promote equitable selection processes. This could include partnerships with organizations that support underrepresented groups in the workforce.

GESI in Employee Retention: Incorporating GESI into employee retention efforts is essential for creating a diverse and inclusive workplace that values and supports all employees. By implementing GESI principles, organizations can address the unique needs and challenges faced by underrepresented groups, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and equity. This can be achieved through initiatives such as mentorship programs, equitable career development opportunities, flexible work arrangements, and unbiased performance evaluations. Promoting an inclusive culture where all employees feel respected and valued not only enhances job satisfaction and loyalty but also drives innovation and improves overall organizational performance. By prioritizing GESI in employee retention, companies can build a more resilient and committed workforce.

Regular Training: Conduct regular training sessions for all employees to foster an inclusive workplace culture where every employee feels valued and respected.

Monitoring and Reporting: Establish transparent systems for monitoring and reporting on workplace diversity and the handling of discrimination complaints. This transparency will help maintain trust and integrity within the organization.

Inclusive Education Systems

Inclusive education systems are designed to provide equitable learning opportunities to all, regardless of their gender, socioeconomic background, or other potential barriers. Banks can play a crucial role in supporting inclusive education through:



GESI in HR Management

Workplace Culture and Engagement

- Cultivate a workplace environment that values and promotes inclusion by creating policies that support a balanced work-life integration.
- Create policies to increase engagement and retention among diverse groups.
- Develop processes for addressing and resolving conflicts related to diversity and inclusion.

Performance Management and Feedback

- Administer unbiased performance evaluations and feedback by developing performance metrics that are objective and equitable.
- Develop inclusive performance feedback mechanisms that employees trust and feel comfortable using.

Leadership and Change Management

- Equip leaders with the skills to drive and sustain GESI initiatives through leadership behaviors that promote equity and inclusion.
- Build coalitions and gain buy-in for GESI initiatives within the organization.
- Develop change management strategies to promote GESI.

Financial Literacy Programs: Offer financial literacy courses tailored to diverse audiences, which can help democratize financial knowledge and empower individuals to make informed financial decisions.

Scholarship Programs: Create scholarship funds that target students from underrepresented or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring they have access to quality education.

Internship and Mentorship Programs: Develop internship and mentorship programs that provide practical experience and career guidance to young people, particularly focusing on girls and students from marginalized communities.

IMPLEMENTING GESI PRINCIPLES IN THE BANKING SECTOR

Gender Mainstreaming

GESI mainstreaming in the banking and finance sector involves integrating gender equity and social inclusion into all aspects of financial services and institutional practices. This approach is vital for ensuring that financial products, services, and policies are designed to meet the needs of diverse clients, including women, youth, and other marginalized groups. By mainstreaming GESI, banks and financial institutions aim to improve access to financial resources, enhance service delivery, and ensure fair treatment for all clients. This includes developing targeted financial products that cater to the unique needs of underserved populations, such as microfinance loans for women entrepreneurs or banking services tailored for people with disabilities.

Elements of Internal GESI Mainstreaming

- Appointment & Promotion
- Conditions of Employment
- Career Planning & Development
- Training & Induction
- Performance Management Systems
- Discipline
- Education and Training
- Reward and Recognition
- Organizational Development
- Service Delivery
- Customer Service & Interaction
- Accessibility
- Compliance
- Reporting
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Budgeting
- Policies and Procedures

Conducting a GESI Assessment

Conducting an internal GESI assessment brings rigor and a systematic approach to determining the capacity of a bank and its staff to include gender equality in its operations. A GESI assessment informs a bank where its strengths, weaknesses, and needs lie and is the first step towards building capacity to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women. The results of the assessment also offer a baseline against which future capacity development efforts can be measured and provide a method for generating quantitative and qualitative data to support the development of a GESI capacity development action plan.

Measuring progress in mainstreaming inclusion requires integrating GESI indicators into the bank's performance monitoring systems. Selected equity and inclusion indicators should be sufficiently robust to capture impactful trends. For example, measuring the number of women employees offers a simple data point, but counting the number of women in leadership positions offers a more nuanced understanding of inclusion.

Based on a GESI assessment, banks identify gaps in their policies and procedures and look for opportunities to be proactive in promoting inclusion internally. Developing a stand-alone GESI policy sends a message to management and staff about the commitment of the bank to inclusion. Integrating GESI considerations into

human resource management systems for career and professional development, mentorship, performance appraisal, and training operationalizes inclusion into the daily routine of the bank.

Multinational corporations, especially in the banking sector, have recognized the critical importance of integrating GESI principles into their operational and strategic frameworks. Corporate responsibility in this context extends beyond mere compliance with legal requirements to a broader commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion at all levels of the organization. This effort is manifested through hiring for diversity practices, inclusive work environments, and leadership training programs specifically designed for women.



GESI Policy Goal

- The goal of GESI Policy is to bring benefits to all women, men, youth, and social groups working in and served by the bank.
- This means that all activities implemented by the bank must incorporate GESI in the planning, implementation, and evaluation, and should benefit all communities and genders.

Objectives of GESI Policy

- All gender - the poor, the vulnerable, and the excluded within that group - concerns are incorporated in shaping the policies, processes, and activities of the bank.
- All gender have equal access and ability to participate in and influence the decision-making processes.
- Effective GESI mainstreamed in the bank policies, processes, and activities improves the quality of the bank as an institution.

Developing a GESI Policy

The purposes of the GESI Policy are multifaceted. It aims to ensure legal compliance by adhering to laws and regulations that mandate gender equality and non-discrimination in the workplace. By leveraging diverse talents and ideas, the policy seeks to boost performance, enhancing decision-making, problem-solving, and overall organizational effectiveness. Additionally, it enhances the organization's reputation by positioning it as a socially responsible entity, thereby improving its public image and attractiveness to potential employees and partners. The policy also addresses social inequalities, contributing to broader societal goals by actively working to reduce disparities and promote social justice.

The goal of the GESI Policy is to bring benefits to all women, men, youth, and social groups working in and served by the bank. This involves ensuring that all activities implemented by the bank incorporate GESI principles in their planning, implementation, and evaluation stages, thereby benefiting all communities and genders.

The objectives of the GESI Policy include incorporating the concerns of all genders, especially the poor, vulnerable, and excluded, into the shaping of the bank's policies, processes, and activities. It ensures that all genders have equal access and the ability to participate and influence decision-making processes. Effective mainstreaming of GESI in the bank's policies, processes, and activities aims to improve the overall quality of the bank as an institution.

Developing GESI-responsive Products

Developing inclusive products and services begins with a systematic approach to understanding clients and markets in order to design appropriate product prototypes. These new products should be pilot tested and adjusted based on market response before they are rolled out and launched. Applying a GESI lens to market research requires understanding the unique needs of women, youth, and other marginalized clients. While many financial services needs are shared across all client groups, some services are in greater demand among underserved client groups. For example, many women-owned businesses need smaller seasonally timed loans. Also, youth frequently need to be able to save small amounts on an irregular basis. A good market research strategy will capture these different needs.

The design and development of new product prototypes should consider how and when different clients need money and build product terms and conditions around the clients' business cycle and types of financial needs. How and where a product is offered can also influence its responsiveness to the needs of different clients. For example, digital financial services can increase access to finance for women who are juggling work and home care responsibilities and who may not have time to physically go to a branch office.

Pilot testing of new GESI-responsive products should begin with establishing the parameters of the test and defining success. A representative client sample should include members of diverse groups and communities. Testing should disaggregate and analyze responses of different clients, capturing if they need the product, like it, and are willing and able to pay for it. The pilot product should then be adjusted based on client response.

The roll out and launch of GESI-responsive products offers banks an opportunity to message their commitment to financial inclusion both internally and externally. Internally, training staff need on the new product offers an opportunity to reinforce inclusive messaging. Externally, marketing GESI-responsive products can differentiate a bank from its competitors and enhance its reputation and client loyalty.



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Developing Equitable and Inclusive Institutions

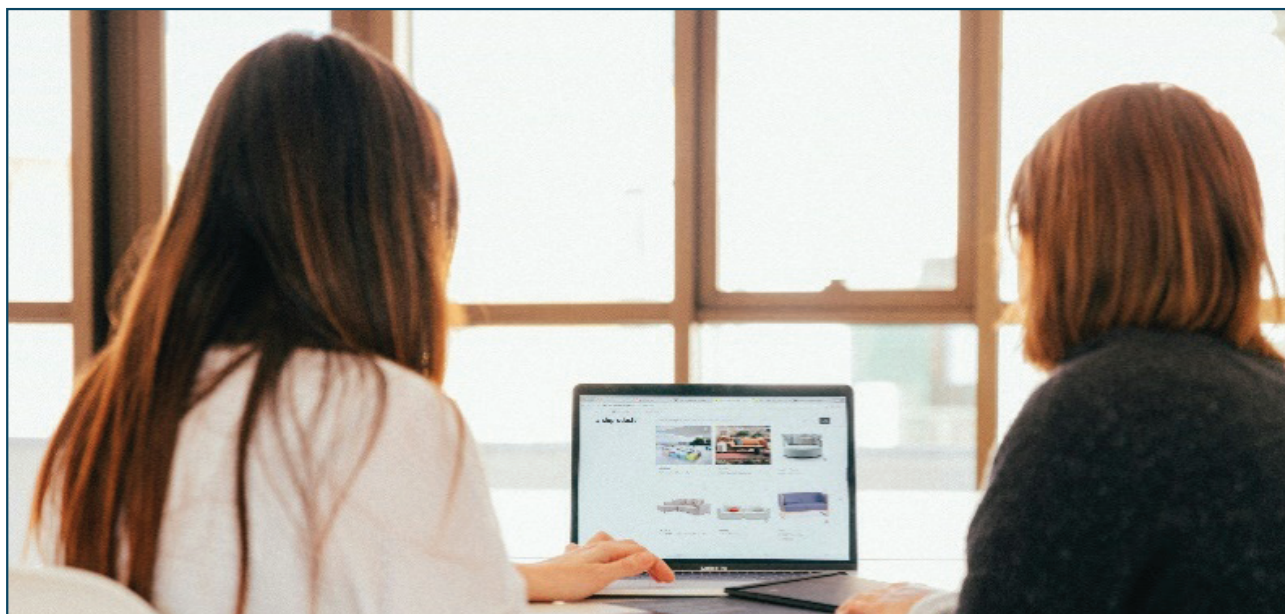
GESI mainstreaming within these institutions also focuses on internal policies—such as inclusive hiring practices, gender-sensitive training programs, and equitable promotion opportunities—that promote diversity and inclusion among staff. This holistic approach not only helps address systemic inequalities but also positions financial institutions to better serve a multicultural and diverse client base, ultimately contributing to more inclusive economic growth.

A comprehensive plan for becoming a more inclusive financial institution requires raising awareness, building systems, and structuring incentives to promote equity in the workplace. This begins with ensuring that recruitment and hiring practices are proactively inclusive. All staff should also be trained on both the principles of gender equity and social inclusion, but also on the business case for inclusive finance.

Relationship banking, which emphasizes building long-term relationships with clients rather than focusing solely on individual transactions, aligns well with GESI principles. By fostering deeper connections and understanding clients' diverse needs, banks can tailor services and products that promote equity and inclusivity. This approach helps ensure all clients, regardless of gender, age, or minority status, have equal access to financial resources and opportunities. Integrating GESI into relationship banking not only enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty but also contributes to broader social goals of reducing inequalities and promoting social justice within the financial sector.

Diversity Hiring Practices

Hiring for diversity practices aims to ensure a diverse workforce by actively seeking to include people of different genders, ethnicities, ages, and backgrounds. In the banking sector, this can be particularly impactful given the global customer base that banks serve.



<https://unsplash.com/s/photos/women-entrepreneurs>

For example:

Standard Chartered Bank has implemented targeted recruitment strategies that aim to increase gender diversity across all levels of the organization. The bank uses data analytics to assess and plan diversity goals and includes a focus on gender diversity in its recruitment advertisements and job descriptions.

Citibank has partnered with diverse professional organizations and universities to reach a broader pool of candidates. The bank's recruitment initiatives specifically target underrepresented groups to ensure a wide array of perspectives within their teams, which is critical for developing services that cater to a diverse clientele.

Inclusive Work Environments

Creating an inclusive work environment is about more than just diversity in hiring; it's about cultivating a workplace culture that welcomes and supports differences. This includes policies and practices that encourage the participation and advancement of all employees. Examples in the banking sector include:

JPMorgan Chase has taken significant steps to create an inclusive environment through the establishment of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), such as Women on the Move, which supports female employees in their career development. These groups provide networks, resources, and support systems to help employees from various backgrounds thrive.

HSBC has implemented flexible working policies that support work-life balance for all employees but are particularly beneficial for women, who often juggle career and family responsibilities. The bank also ensures that its workplace facilities, like nursing rooms for new mothers, are inclusive and supportive of women's needs.

Measuring GESI

Gender impact assessment is the estimation of the different effects—positive, negative, or neutral—of any activity implemented in terms of gender equality. Robust and meaningful gender data are essential in assessing how products and services directly and indirectly contribute to gender equality. Without measurement, effective management is impossible. Meaningful improvements in equity begin with good



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data. The Kosovo Law on Gender Equality mandates the gender division of all data and collected statistical information, requiring these to be recorded, registered, processed, and submitted to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics.

To measure GESI, it is crucial to differentiate client data by categories such as men, women, youth, and minorities. This approach helps in assessing gaps between these groups and measuring progress toward gender equality goals. Utilizing analysis to promote the integration of GESI into systems and interactions is essential. It also involves demonstrating the impact of changes in power relations between men and women, focusing on GESI outcomes for clients and institutions, financially and socially.

There are different types of GESI indicators, all of which are important, but the ultimate focus should be on outcome indicators. Process indicators measure the delivery of activities and demonstrate that we are on track with our commitments, such as the number of training sessions on women's rights held in a target community. Output indicators measure the direct results of our activities and show that they are having the intended effect; for example, the number of women who show increased awareness of their rights after attending a training session. Outcome indicators measure the longer-term results of our work, providing evidence that it will have a lasting effect on poor women's lives, such as a decrease in the incidence of violence against women as a result of increased awareness that violence violates women's rights.

Selected GESI indicators should focus on measuring success to determine whether efforts are achieving the desired results. They should also highlight areas for improvement, pinpointing what needs to be changed and implementing those changes accordingly. Encouraging innovation through these indicators can help identify new opportunities to improve the business. Finally, they should strengthen decision-making by providing the GESI information necessary for making more informed and effective decisions.

Leadership Training for Women

Leadership training for women focuses on equipping women with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to take on leadership roles within the organization. Such programs are essential for breaking the glass ceiling that many women face in their careers, especially in the traditionally male-dominated banking sector.

Barclays offers the Women in Leadership program, which is designed to identify, support, and develop high-potential female employees to take on leadership roles. The program includes mentoring, networking, and bespoke training that addresses the specific challenges faced by women in the finance industry.

Goldman Sachs runs the '10,000 Women' initiative, which provides women entrepreneurs around the world with a business and management education, mentoring and networking, and access to capital. This initiative not only promotes leadership among its participants but also supports the broader economic empowerment of women.

Multinational banks that integrate GESI principles into their corporate strategies recognize the intrinsic value of a diverse and inclusive workforce. Through diverse hiring practices, they build teams that reflect the global markets they serve. By fostering inclusive work environments, they enhance employee satisfaction and retention. And through leadership training for women, they ensure that there is a pipeline of female leaders ready to take the organization forward. These practices are not just about fulfilling corporate social responsibility; they are strategic business initiatives that drive innovation, customer satisfaction, and sustainable growth in the competitive world of banking.

CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES OF WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Access to finance is a pivotal element for enabling women entrepreneurs to start, sustain, and scale their businesses. It directly impacts their ability to contribute to economic development and achieve gender equality. In this detailed analysis, we explore real-life stories from Kosovo, profiles of international female business leaders, and the broader impacts of women's economic empowerment.

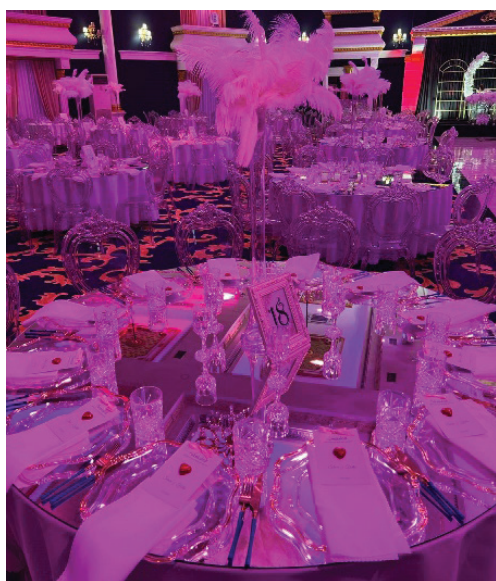
Seasonal Business – Seasonal Financial Needs

Shpresa Hana, an entrepreneur from Gjakova, is in the business of hotels, restaurants, cafes and wedding halls. She lived in Germany and returned to Kosovo opening a restaurant and wedding hall in her hometown of Gjakova. She co-owns the business with her husband, and they work together. However, they face significant challenges due to the seasonality of their business, which in turn impacts their access to finance. The fluctuating revenue streams inherent in such businesses make it difficult to secure stable and consistent financing. During the peak summer season, revenues are at their highest. Off-peak times, however, see a drastic reduction in income, complicating the management of cash flow and the ability to maintain operational expenses, pay staff, and invest in inventory.



Shpresa Hana, Wedding Venue, 2024

Given that financial institutions typically assess risk based on consistent cash flow, the unpredictability associated with seasonal businesses can lead to a higher perception of risk. This often results in stricter lending criteria, higher interest rates, or even outright denial of credit to these enterprises.



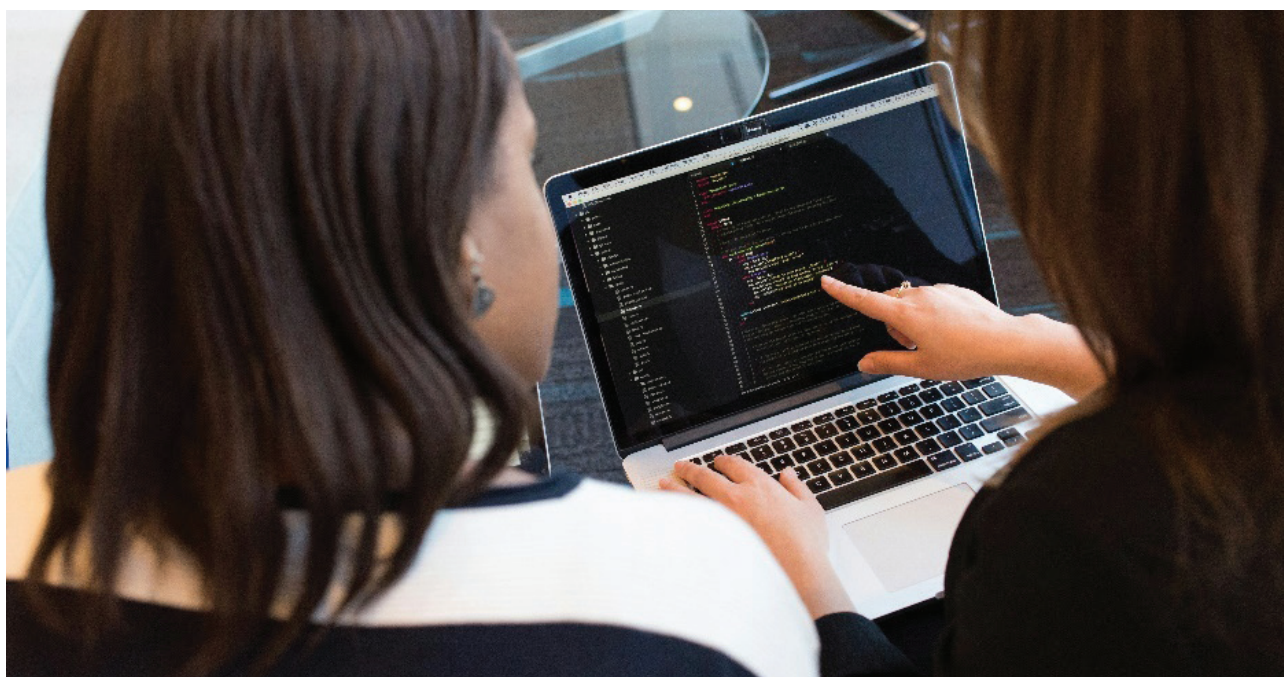
Shpresa Hana, Wedding Venue, 2024

Moreover, the reliance on a limited operational season forces Mrs. Hana to maximize her earnings in a short period, which can be severely impacted by external factors. These elements add to the financial volatility and uncertainty of the business.

For restaurants and wedding halls, finding alternative types of finance, such as revenue-based loans or lines of credit, where repayment is directly tied to the business's income cycle, can provide relief. Additionally, building a good relationship with local banks during the peak season and diversifying the business model to include off-season activities can help mitigate some of the financial challenges associated with seasonality.

Small Businesses – Small Loans

Arta Kryeziu has her own private business, offering consultancies and other technical support to businesses. She considers that one of the highest barriers to doing business remains the small size of the market. This becomes even more difficult when the networking opportunities are sparse, especially for women. Women's businesses are usually smaller, in size and revenue, making it difficult for them to apply and receive funding to expand their business. Many Kosovar businesses rely on public procurement as a primary source of revenue, but frequently women's businesses do not make the cut for qualifying to bid because of their small size. Government contracts can provide a stable, predictable revenue stream that enhances a business' creditworthiness. Without this advantage, small consulting firms must rely on private sector contracts, which can be less stable and more competitive to secure.



<https://unsplash.com/s/photos/women-coders>

Small consulting businesses often lack tangible assets that can serve as collateral for loans. Unlike manufacturing or retail businesses, the primary assets of consulting firms are human capital and intellectual property, which are not as easily valued or utilized as security by traditional lending institutions. This intangible nature can limit financing options to unsecured loans, which typically come with even stricter approval requirements and higher costs.

To navigate these challenges, small consulting firms might need to explore alternative financing options such as invoice financing, where future payments from clients are used as collateral, or seeking angel investors and venture capitalists. Building a strong personal credit score and a detailed, robust business plan can also improve an entrepreneur's chances of securing finance by demonstrating her business's viability and growth potential. Many banks have credit scoring models that use alternative data sources to better capture the risk of "thin file" clients without strong credit histories or access to significant collateral.

Entrepreneurship as the Sole Opportunity

For the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, entrepreneurship is often not the chosen path, but the only path they can follow when faced with lack of formal job opportunities. Fatime Hyseni, a young woman from the Ashkali community dreamt of becoming a famous fashion designer. After being unable to find a job, she enrolled in a training organized by a local NGO, where they learned basic business skills, including writing a business plan and applying for financial support. Following the training, she applied for a small grant and received initial support to establish her business as a tailor. Given how small her business is, however, she continuously faces obstacles to access additional support needed to expand her business.



<https://unsplash.com/s/photos/man-agriculture>

Alban Fahredini, an entrepreneur from the Roma community applied for and received support in the form of gardening equipment from a local organization. The donated equipment included a motor mower, a motorized trimmer for living walls, shears, a professional motorized saw, and a motorized cultivator. Through this non-financial support, he has been able to grow his business and has hired an employee to assist with landscaping, tree maintenance, and the upkeep of various yard decorations. While he has jobs contracted in the municipality, the opportunities to grow his business beyond the current size are limited. Without financial support to be able to purchase more equipment and expand his business, Alban will not be able to grow his business beyond the existing equipment and staff he has.

To address the challenges faced by ethnic minorities, especially those from the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, it is useful to integrate non-financial support services with traditional banking solutions. Local organizations can play a pivotal role by offering training, technical assistance, mentorship, and networking opportunities that prepare entrepreneurs to effectively manage and expand their businesses. Simultaneously, banks can adapt their financial services to these entrepreneurs' unique needs through innovative products like microloans or tailored business accounts. By using alternative data in their credit scoring models, banks can more accurately assess the viability and potential of businesses operated by marginalized groups, who may not have extensive credit histories or traditional collateral.

CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION

This handbook has explored the multifaceted challenges and opportunities within the framework of Gender Equity and Social Inclusion in Kosovo's financial sector. From assessing international best practices and examining Kosovo's specific context, to showcasing inspiring stories of women in business, we've detailed strategic approaches to enhancing GESI across multiple dimensions. (Readers are invited to complete the GESI self-assessment tool included as Annex 2 to this handbook.)

Key findings emphasize the necessity for fully implementing Kosovo's robust legal frameworks for gender and social equity, targeted financial products, and inclusive policies, procedures, and workplace cultures that support gender equity and social inclusion. Recommendations suggest strengthening policy enforcement, enhancing financial literacy, and creating more inclusive financial services tailored to the needs of women, youth, and other marginalized communities.

The importance of collective action in achieving these goals is crucial. Gender equity and social inclusion are not just social imperatives—they are economic ones, vital for sustainable growth in Kosovo's financial sector. Achieving these objectives requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders, including government bodies, financial institutions, businesses, and civil society.

It's crucial for Kosovo's financial sector to prioritize GESI considerations in their policies, programs, and practices. This means not only implementing inclusive policies but also actively engaging in practices that dismantle barriers and create equitable opportunities for all, particularly the most marginalized groups. By committing to these principles, we can ensure a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous economic future for Kosovo.

ANNEX 1: Definition of Terms for Gender Equity and Social Inclusion

Bias or Gender Bias	Bias or gender bias is a stated position; an assumption or situation which shows a preferred view or treatment of one sex over the other.
Culture	Culture is a complex set of learned and shared experiences which embrace the beliefs, values, ideas, customs, languages, and laws of a group of people.
Disability	Disability refers to people with special needs who require special attention, care and support in their families, communities and workplace. And encouragement to determine the full potential in life and refers to the needs created by the interaction between a person with impairment and the environmental and attitudinal barriers he/ she may face.
Discrimination	Discrimination is when decisions are made based on a person's social attributes such as gender, race or ethnic origin, religion, association, physical characteristics and/or other differentiations.
Direct Discrimination	Direct discrimination happens when a person is treated less favorably than another person in same or similar circumstances on a ground of a particular attribute, such as their age, gender, disability, race, region, religion, culture, social status or other grounds.
Indirect Discrimination	Indirect discrimination happens when there is a policy or rule or a way of doing things that might appear on the surface to be fair or neutral, but which has an unequal effect on certain groups of people with a particular attribute and the policy or rule is unreasonable. Indirect discrimination is unlawful regardless of whether the person discriminating intended to discriminate or is unaware that they are doing so.
Equal Employment Opportunity	Equal employment opportunity (EEO) means that employees are given an equal opportunity in accessing jobs, training, promotion, work conditions and other career development opportunities.
Equity	Equity is a process of being fair. It means steps being taken to achieve fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities. It often requires programs and policies to end existing inequalities. Equity leads to equality.
Equality	Equality means that all people enjoy the same status. All people have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development and to benefit from the results.
Gender	Gender describes the different roles and responsibilities of women and men – what males and females do, what they are responsible for, how they are expected to behave, what they are allowed to do, and what is seen as normal and proper behavior. Gender role responsibilities vary according to cultural, religious, historical and economic factors.
Sex	Sex describes the biological differences between men and women. Females and males are born with different reproductive organs - only women have the capacity to give birth and breastfeed whilst only men have the capacity to impregnate women (make women pregnant).
Gender Awareness	Gender awareness is the recognition of the differences in the interests, needs and roles of women and men in society and how they result in differences in power, status and privilege. It also means the ability to identify problems arising from gender inequity and discrimination.
Gender Equality	Gender equality means that men and women have equal value, rights and opportunities to participate in every aspect of employment and life.
Gender Equity	Gender equity is the process of being fair to disadvantaged men or women through specific interventions and actions such as balancing past or current differences that have had a negative impact on a woman or man's ability to participate fully and equally in employment and other opportunities.
Gender Inequality	Gender inequality means that a man or a woman does not have equal values, rights or opportunities.

Gender Mainstreaming	Gender mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that all women and men have equal access and control over resources, decision making and benefits at all stages of organizational processes, practices and policies. Gender mainstreaming seeks to produce transformatory process and practices that will concern, engage and benefit women and men equally by systematically integrating explicit attention to issues of gender into all aspects of the organization's work (Morrison - Gender and Development 2010).
Harassment	Harassment refers to unwanted or uninvited behavior that is offensive, intimidating and humiliating. Common forms of harassment that have been identified are sexual, religious, bullying, physical disability, physical attack, threat etc.

Annex 2: Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Organizational Self-Assessment

The Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) Self-Assessment is designed to be a discussion that promotes honest reflection and brainstorming for improvement. It should have broad participation, including various members of the bank and relevant external stakeholders, to ensure diverse perspectives and a global understanding. This assessment, which is conducted annually, serves as a vital tool for monitoring progress.

Questions	1 – 5 Scale	NA	Feedback
I. Internal organizational strategies and policies with a GESI approach			
a) Are there documented and well-defined guidelines within the bank regarding inclusive policies and procedures?			
b) Are there established codes of conduct within the bank that define expectations of desired behavior and consequences for actions related to discrimination, sexual and workplace harassment, or any other inappropriate conduct?			
c) Are there organizational policies in place that provide reasonable accommodations for parents and primary caregivers?			
II. Organizational structure and management aligned with GESI			
a) Are the staff employed by the bank experts in gender and/or cultural issues?			
b) Are the composition of the bank's staff, systems and processes aligned with and promoting gender equality and social inclusion?			
c) Is there gender and intersectional equity and social inclusion in managerial or other decision-making positions within the organization?			

Questions	1 – 5 Scale	NA	Feedback
d) Does the bank set performance targets for gender equity and social inclusion?			
e) Is gender equity and social inclusion considered in performance evaluation and professional advancement?			
f) Does the bank budget funds for the promotion of gender equity and social inclusion?			
III. Internal Communications			
a) Have staff received training and resources to incorporate GESI principles into their programming and activities?			
b) Does the bank actively encourage or facilitate allyship among its staff, which may involve activities such as team building or the provision of educational resources on gender, intersectional inequality, and social inclusion?			
c) Is inclusive and non-discriminatory language used in the bank's internal communications with staff?			
IV. The bank advocates for gender and intersectional equity and social inclusion with external stakeholders			
a) Has the bank undertaken a GESI assessment or evaluation?			
b) Are the findings of the GESI assessment used in policies, planning, and operations?			
c) Has the bank demonstrated its commitment to GESI in internal communications?			
d) Has the bank demonstrated its commitment to GESI in communication and collaboration with external stakeholders?			
V. GESI and Sustainable Development			
a) Does the bank have systems or tools measure and monitor to cultural and gender issues?			
b) Does the bank integrate participatory and inclusive processes when developing and designing policies or products?			

Annex 3: GESI Assessment for Human Resources

Example Scoring for Assessment Results

1–3: *Needs Significant Improvement*

4–6: *Satisfactory Progress*

7–9: *Strong Alignment with GESI Principles*

1. Recruitment and Hiring Practices

a. Section A: Job Descriptions and Advertisements

- i. Are job descriptions written in gender-neutral and inclusive language?
- ii. Do job advertisements reach diverse audiences through inclusive platforms?
- iii. Are qualifications and criteria flexible enough to attract underrepresented groups (e.g., women, persons with disabilities)?

b. Section B: Recruitment Processes

- i. Does the shortlisting process follow a standardized and unbiased scoring system?
- ii. Are diverse panel members included in interviews?
- iii. Are candidates asked standardized questions to minimize unconscious bias?

c. Section C: Data/Metrics

- i. Percentage of women, persons with disabilities, and individuals from marginalized groups hired over the last year.
- ii. Number of job applications received from underrepresented groups.

2. Training and Development

a. Section A: Training Opportunities

- i. Are training programs equally accessible to all employees, including part-time staff and those with caregiving responsibilities?
- ii. Are there mentorship programs for employees from underrepresented groups?

b. Section B: GESI Awareness Training

- i. Has GESI training/awareness been conducted for all employees?
- ii. Are managers trained on identifying and mitigating unconscious bias?

c. Section C: Data/Metrics

- i. Number of employees trained on GESI principles annually.
- ii. Percentage of employees from underrepresented groups participating in leadership development programs.

3. Workplace Environment and Inclusivity

a. Section A: Policies and Procedures

- i. Are flexible work arrangements, such as remote work and part-time options, available to all employees?
- ii. Are facilities (e.g., ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms) inclusive of persons with disabilities?
- iii. Are parental leave and caregiving support policies gender-sensitive and inclusive?

- b. Section B: Culture and Representation
 - i. Are there platforms for employees to voice concerns about inclusion and equality?
 - ii. Are leadership roles balanced in terms of gender and representation of underrepresented groups?
- c. Section C: Data/Metrics
 - i. Percentage of leadership positions held by women and individuals from marginalized groups.
 - ii. Results of employee satisfaction surveys related to inclusivity.

4. Compensation and Career Progression

- a. Section A: Pay Equity
 - i. Are regular pay audits conducted to identify and address gender or other disparities?
 - ii. Is pay transparency ensured for all employees?
- b. Section B: Promotions and Performance Reviews
 - i. Are promotion criteria clear, merit-based, and free from bias?
 - ii. Are employees from underrepresented groups encouraged to apply for leadership positions?
- c. Section C: Data/Metrics
 - i. Gender pay gap percentage.
 - ii. Promotion rates for employees from diverse backgrounds.

5. Harassment and Grievance Mechanisms

- a. Section A: Policies and Reporting Mechanisms
 - i. Is there a clear, zero-tolerance policy on harassment and discrimination?
 - ii. Are confidential reporting channels accessible to all employees?
- b. Section B: Response and Follow-Up
 - i. Are grievances addressed in a timely and fair manner?
 - ii. Are employees protected against retaliation after reporting an issue?
- c. Section C: Data/Metrics
 - i. Number of harassment cases reported and resolved.
 - ii. Employee satisfaction with grievance resolution mechanisms (survey-based).

6. GESI Monitoring and Evaluation

- a. Section A: Data Collection and Analysis
 - i. Does HR collect and analyze data on employee demographics (gender, age, disability, ethnicity)?
 - ii. Are GESI metrics regularly reported to senior management and used for decision-making?
- b. Section B: Feedback Mechanisms
 - i. Are employees surveyed regularly about inclusivity and fairness?
 - ii. Is feedback from diverse employee groups incorporated into HR policies?

Annex 4: GESI Assessment for Marketing

1. Representation and Inclusivity

a. Table with examples

Criteria	Yes/No	Evidence	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Completion Date
Diverse representation in marketing materials (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, disability)		Ad visuals, campaign videos	Include underrepresented groups	Marketing Lead	
Non-stereotypical roles portrayed in advertisements (e.g., women in leadership, men as caregivers)		Content samples	Update content to challenge stereotypes	Content Team	
Campaigns consider rural, urban, and diverse socio-economic contexts		Campaign plans	Tailor messaging for underserved audiences	Outreach Team	

a. Template table

Criteria	Yes/No	Evidence	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Completion Date

2. Language and Messaging

a. Table with examples

Criteria	Yes/ No	Evidence	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Completion Date
Use of inclusive and gender-neutral language in campaigns (e.g., "they" instead of "he/she")		Campaign scripts, brochures	Revise content for inclusivity	Copywriting Team	
Messaging avoids reinforcing harmful stereotypes		Content reviews	Implement language review guidelines	Communications Manager	
Language accessible to audiences with varying literacy levels and different ethnicities		Feedback reports	Simplify language where necessary	Communications Manager	

b. Template table

Criteria	Yes/No	Evidence	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Completion Date

3. Accessibility

a. Table with examples

Criteria	Yes/No	Evidence	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Completion Date
Marketing materials are accessible to persons with disabilities (e.g., braille, audio, subtitles)		Campaign outputs	Develop alternative formats	GESI/ Accessibility Officer	
Digital marketing complies with accessibility standards		Website, social media posts	Update web and social content	Digital Marketing Team	

a. Template table

Criteria	Yes/No	Evidence	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Completion Date

4. Target Audience Engagement

a. Table with examples

Criteria	Yes/No	Evidence	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Completion Date
Campaigns consider the needs of women, persons with disabilities, and other underserved groups		Focus group results	Incorporate feedback from marginalized groups	Campaign Manager	
Channels used ensure equal access to information for all target groups		Media distribution analysis	Explore additional outreach channels	Media Strategist	

a. Template table

Criteria	Yes/No	Evidence	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Completion Date

Annex 5: Sample GESI HR Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) HR Policy is to ensure that human resources promote equity, diversity, and inclusion across the organization. The policy aligns with a commitment to creating an inclusive workplace where all individuals have equal access to opportunities, regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and job applicants across [Bank Name].

3. Guiding Principles:

- a. Equity: Provide fair treatment and opportunities while addressing systemic inequalities.
- b. Inclusion: Foster a work environment that values diversity and ensures all voices are heard.
- c. Non-Discrimination: Eliminate bias in recruitment, hiring, promotions, and other HR processes.
- d. Accountability: Commit to transparent practices and regular evaluation of GESI implementation.

4. Policy Components

- a. Recruitment & Hiring:
 - i. Job descriptions must use inclusive, gender-neutral language.
 - ii. Advertisements will be placed across diverse platforms to attract candidates from marginalized groups.
 - iii. Candidate shortlisting processes must eliminate bias through standardized scoring criteria.
 - iv. Interview panels should include individuals from diverse backgrounds to ensure balanced perspectives.
- b. Training and Development
 - i. Provide mandatory GESI training for all employees, with specialized modules for managers and HR staff.
 - ii. Offer professional development opportunities tailored to address barriers faced by women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented groups.
 - iii. Encourage mentorship programs to support the career advancement of employees from marginalized backgrounds.
- c. Workplace Inclusivity
 - i. Create an accessible workplace, including physical infrastructure and assistive technologies for persons with disabilities.
 - ii. Celebrate diversity through cultural awareness events and inclusion campaigns.
 - iii. Ensure that work-life balance policies, such as flexible working hours and parental leave, are gender-sensitive and accessible to all.
- d. Compensation and Benefits
 - i. Conduct annual pay equity audits to identify and address wage disparities.
 - ii. Offer benefits that support diverse needs, such as childcare support, eldercare assistance, and disability accommodations.
 - iii. Implement transparent promotion and reward systems that recognize merit and contributions equitably.

- e. Anti-Harassment and Grievance Mechanisms
 - i. Maintain a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, or any form of exclusionary behavior.
 - ii. Establish confidential reporting channels and robust mechanisms for addressing grievances.
 - iii. Provide training on identifying and addressing unconscious bias and microaggressions.
- f. Monitoring and Evaluation
 - i. Set measurable GESI goals and track progress through annual reports.
 - ii. Use employee surveys to gauge workplace inclusivity and address gaps.
 - iii. Engage external GESI consultants to audit HR policies and practices periodically.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

- a. Human Resources Department
 - i. Ensure compliance with this policy across all HR functions.
 - ii. Provide training and resources to employees and managers.
- b. Management
 - i. Lead by example in promoting GESI principles.
 - ii. Actively support the implementation of initiatives outlined in this policy.
- c. All Employees
 - i. Adhere to the principles of this policy in daily interactions.
 - ii. Participate in GESI trainings and contribute to an inclusive workplace culture.

6. Policy Review & Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure alignment with emerging GESI standards and organizational needs. Amendments will be made based on feedback from employees and external audits.

7. Related Policies

- a. Code of Conduct
- b. Anti-Discrimination Policy
- c. Workplace Harassment Policy
- d. Flexible Work Policy

Annex 6: Sample GESI Marketing Policy

[Bank Name]

1. Policy Objective

To ensure that all marketing activities and materials reflect the bank's commitment to gender equality and social inclusion, fostering equitable access to financial products and services for all individuals, irrespective of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

2. Key Principles

- a. Inclusive Representation
 - i. All marketing campaigns must feature diverse representation, showcasing individuals from various genders, ethnic backgrounds, ages, and abilities in non-stereotypical roles.
 - ii. Avoid imagery or language that perpetuates bias or discrimination.
- b. Accessible Communication
 - i. When possible, marketing materials will be designed to be accessible to people with disabilities (e.g., braille, large fonts, subtitles, audio descriptions).
 - ii. Digital content must comply with accessibility standards.
- c. Tailored Outreach
 - i. Develop specific campaigns to address the unique financial needs of underserved groups, such as women entrepreneurs, rural communities, and people with disabilities.
 - ii. Include products adapted to target markets, such as small loans, savings programs, and tailored financial literacy resources.
- d. Gender-Sensitive Language
 - i. Ensure all written, verbal, and visual content uses gender-neutral and inclusive language.
 - ii. Avoid gendered stereotypes, such as associating men with wealth management or women with saving for household expenses.
- e. Partnerships and Collaboration
 - i. Collaborate with community organizations and advocacy groups to develop marketing initiatives that resonate with marginalized groups.
 - ii. Support campaigns that promote financial inclusion (e.g., International Women's Day campaigns or programs for disadvantaged youth).
- f. Feedback and Evaluation Mechanisms
 - i. Establish channels to gather feedback from diverse customer groups about marketing effectiveness and inclusivity.
 - ii. Conduct annual reviews of marketing campaigns for alignment with GESI principles.

3. Implementation Guidelines

- a. Internal Training
 - i. Train marketing and communications teams on GESI principles and unconscious bias.
 - ii. Include GESI principles in onboarding for new employees.
- b. Content Review
 - i. Introduce a GESI content review process where all campaigns are evaluated against GESI benchmarks before release [See Sub-Annex 4A below].

- c. Customer-Centric Approach
 - i. Actively involve customers from diverse backgrounds in the co-creation of marketing messages.
- d. Performance Metrics
 - i. Track metrics such as for customer acquisition and engagement rates among underserved groups to measure the effectiveness of inclusive marketing strategies.

4. Policy Governance

This policy should be reviewed annually by the GESI Task Force, with input from the Marketing Department, Human Resources, and Customer Relations teams.

Sub-Annex 6A: GESI Content Review Checklist for Bank Marketing

This checklist helps ensure marketing materials align with GESI principles. Use it during the review process for all campaigns, advertisements, and communications.

1. Representation

- a. Diverse Imagery: Does the content feature individuals from diverse genders, ethnicities, ages, and abilities?
- b. Non-Stereotypical Roles: Are individuals portrayed in roles that challenge stereotypes (e.g., women as leaders, men as caregivers)?
- c. Inclusive Scenarios: Are scenarios inclusive of rural and urban settings, reflecting a wide range of customer experiences?

2. Language

- a. Gender-Neutral Terms: Does the language avoid unnecessary gender markers (e.g., “customers” instead of “men and women”)?
- b. Avoidance of Bias: Are there no phrases or words that reinforce societal biases?
- c. Simple and Accessible: Is the language clear and understandable, especially for audiences with low literacy levels?

3. Accessibility

- a. Visual Accessibility: Are fonts large enough and colors high-contrast for readability?
- b. Alternative Formats: Is the content available in alternative formats (e.g., braille, large print, audio in different languages, or video with captions)?

4. Financial Inclusion

- a. Targeted Outreach: Does the campaign address the needs of underserved groups, such as women, people with disabilities, or rural populations?
- b. Product Inclusivity: Are products and services being marketed as accessible and beneficial for diverse groups?
- c. Local Relevance: Is the messaging culturally sensitive and reflective of local contexts?

5. Feedback Mechanisms

- a. Stakeholder Involvement: Has feedback been sought from diverse groups, including marginalized populations?
- b. Customer Insights: Are there mechanisms to gather feedback on inclusivity from customers after the campaign launch?

6. Collaboration

- a. Partnerships: Has the content been developed in collaboration with community groups or advocacy organizations?
- b. Inclusive Initiatives: Does the campaign highlight partnerships or initiatives that support GESI goals?

7. Compliance with Ethical Standards

- a. Non-Discriminatory Content: Does the material comply with anti-discrimination laws and ethical marketing guidelines?
- b. Respect for Privacy: Are all subjects and customer data handled with respect and consent?

Sign-Off Process

- 1. Internal Review: Has the marketing team conducted an internal GESI review using this checklist?
- 2. External Validation: Has the content been validated by a GESI expert or advisory panel?
- 3. Approval: Has final approval been given by the GESI Task Force or equivalent authority?

Annex 7: GESI Checklist for New Product Development

1. Product Design

- a. Does the product address the needs of diverse groups (e.g., women, persons with disabilities, rural populations)?
- b. Are inclusive features (e.g., accessibility, affordability) integrated into the product?
- c. Does the product consider barriers faced by underserved groups?

2. Stakeholder Engagement

- a. Were marginalized groups consulted during the product development process?
- b. Are there partnerships with GESI-focused organizations to guide development?

3. Accessibility

- a. Is the product accessible to persons with disabilities (e.g., features, packaging)?
- b. Does the product comply with relevant accessibility standards?
- c. Are instructions available in multiple formats (e.g., braille, audio, simplified language)?

4. Affordability and Financial Inclusion

- a. Is the product priced affordably for low-income groups?
- b. Do payment methods cater to diverse customers (e.g., mobile banking, cash)?

5. Marketing and Distribution

- a. Does the marketing campaign promote inclusivity and avoid stereotypes?
- b. Are distribution channels accessible to underserved groups (e.g., rural areas)?

6. Monitoring and Feedback

- a. Are mechanisms in place to gather feedback from diverse users?
- b. Is data on product usage by marginalized groups collected and analyzed?

7. Quick Review

- a. All criteria met.
- b. Some gaps identified (list areas and actions needed).
- c. Significant gaps (immediate action required).

Annex 8: Monitoring Schedule Template for GESI Initiatives

Monitoring Schedule Template for GESI Initiatives

Purpose: To track ongoing and upcoming GESI-related activities and ensure timely implementation.

Activity/Initiative	Responsible Team	Start Date	End Date	Frequency	Status (In progress/ Pending/ Completed)	Remarks
Conduct GESI training for staff	HR Department					
Pay equity audit	HR & Finance					
Diversity hiring campaign	Recruitment Team					
GESI data reporting to management	HR Department					

1. GESI Audit Checklist Template

a. Table with Examples:

Audit Area	Criteria/Indicator (Examples)	Yes/No	Evidence	Actions Required	Responsible Person (Examples)	Completion Date
Recruitment	Job advertisements use inclusive language		Screenshots of job postings	Update template language	Recruitment Lead	
	Recruitment panels are diverse		List of panel members	Include women in senior roles	HR Manager	
Training & Development	All employees receive GESI training		Training records	Organize training for new hires	Training Coordinator	
	Mentorship program for marginalized groups is active		Program reports	Increase participation rate	Program Manager	
Compensation	Gender pay gap analysis is conducted		Audit reports	Address identified pay disparities	Finance Lead	

Workplace Inclusivity	Facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities		Accessibility audit results	Install ramps in older buildings	Facility Manager	
	Flexible work policies are implemented		Policy documents	Create a work-from-home policy	HR Policy Team	
Grievance Mechanisms	Confidential reporting system for harassment exists		System records	Launch anonymous feedback system	Compliance Officer	
Monitoring & Reporting	GESI data (e.g., demographics, training participation) is tracked		HR records	Develop a dashboard for metrics	Data Analyst	

b. Template Table:

Audit Area	Criteria/Indicator	Yes/No	Evidence	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Completion Date

2. GESI Audit Report Summary Template

a. Table with examples

Audit Area	Key Findings	Strengths	Areas for Improvement	Recommended Actions
Recruitment	Diversity in hiring is improving, but gender balance in leadership is lacking	Inclusive job ads and interview processes	More women in senior positions	Set leadership diversity targets
Training & Development	Majority of staff attended GESI training, but gaps in specialized modules remain	Good participation rate	Lack of focus on disability inclusion	Develop disability awareness module
Compensation	Pay equity audit revealed minor disparities	Competitive salaries across roles	Disparities in bonuses for some categories	Review bonus structure
Workplace Inclusivity	Facilities mostly accessible; flexible work policies underutilized	Accessible branches in urban areas	Accessibility gaps in rural branches	Conduct rural accessibility audit
Grievance Mechanisms	Reporting system is in place but underused	Active anti-harassment policy	Lack of awareness about grievance channels	Raise awareness through internal campaigns

b. Template Table

Audit Area	Key Findings	Strengths	Areas for Improvement	Recommended Actions
Recruitment				
Training & Development				
Compensation				
Workplace Inclusivity				
Grievance Mechanisms				

Annex 9: Gender Performance Indicators

Area	Category	Definition	Formula
Client-Centric	Outreach	Women clients as percent of total clients	<i>Number women clients/Number total clients</i>
	Outreach	New women clients as percent of total new clients	<i>Number new women clients/Number total new clients for the period</i>
	Outreach	Women clients as a percent of addressable market	<i>Number women clients/Estimated female market (or country's economically active female population)</i>
	Outreach	Women clients as a percent of total women served by comparable providers in the market	<i>Number women clients/Number total microfinance women clients in market (country/region)</i>
	Outreach	Percent of women clients below the poverty threshold	<i>Number women clients under the targeted poverty threshold (PPI/poverty line)/Number total women clients</i>
	Outreach	Average initial loan balance as a percent of per capita Gross National Income, by gender	<i>Average initial loan balance for women (men) borrowers per capita GNI</i>
	Products	Percent of clients analyzed through market research, by gender	<i>Number women (men) clients analyzed through market research/Number total clients</i>
	Products	Percent of women accessing two or more distinct type of financial products	<i>Number women clients accessing two or more products/Number total women clients</i>
	Products	Product growth, by gender	<i>Number new women (men) clients accessing a specific product over time period/Number total women (men) clients accessing product at beginning of time period</i>
	Service Quality	Client retention rate, by gender	<i>Number active women clients at the end of the period/(Active women clients at the beginning of the period + new women clients during the period)</i>
	Service Quality	Share of active women clients by loan cycles	<i>Number women clients who are in a given loan cycle/Number total women clients</i>
	Service Quality	Share of active women clients by join-year	<i>Number women clients who joined in a given year/Number total women clients</i>
	Service Quality	Client satisfaction score, by gender	<i>Average satisfaction survey score for women (men) clients</i>
	Client Protection	Percent of clients with inquiries/complaints, by gender	<i>Number women (men) clients with inquiries or complaints/Number total clients</i>
	Client Protection	Percent of women clients who attend financial education programs	<i>Number women clients that attended financial education programs in the year/Number total women clients</i>

Institutional-Focus	Institutional	Percent women board members	<i>Number women board members/Number total board members</i>
	Institutional	Percent women staff	<i>Number women staff/Number total staff</i>
	Institutional	Percent women middle managers	<i>Number women middle managers/Number total middle managers</i>
	Institutional	Percent women senior managers	<i>Number women senior managers/Number total senior managers</i>
	Institutional	Percent women front-line staff	<i>Number women front-line staff/Number total front-line staff</i>
	Institutional	Voluntary staff attrition rate, by gender	<i>Number women (men) voluntarily leaving institution/Number total women (men) staff</i>
	Institutional	Promotion rates, by gender	<i>Number women (men) promoted/Number total women (men) staff</i>
Financial Outcomes	Financial Outcomes	Percent of loan portfolio, by gender	<i>Women's (men's) Gross Loan Portfolio/Total portfolio</i>
	Financial Outcomes	Average loan balance, by gender	<i>Women's (men's) Gross loan portfolio/Number women (men) borrowers</i>
	Financial Outcomes	Portfolio at risk > 30 days, by gender	<i>Outstanding balance of portfolio overdue for women (men) for more than 30 days /Gross loan portfolio for women (men) clients</i>
Social Outcomes	Social Outcomes	Average percent change in net business income or assets by gender and/or average percent change in household income or assets, by gender	<i>(Average women (men) income in given year)/Average women (men) income in prior year</i>
	Social Outcomes	Percent of women who use their loan for their own economic activity	<i>Number women who obtain a loan and state that they will use it in their own business/Number total women clients</i>
	Social Outcomes	Percent of women clients with school-aged children whose children are enrolled in school	<i>Number women clients with school-aged children who state that all children are in school/Number total women clients with school-aged children</i>
	Social Outcomes	Percent women clients that show improvement in housing conditions	<i>Number women clients with improvement in household conditions metric (roof, floor, toilet)</i>

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