DIVERSITY AND GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

**Policy Number:**

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| --- | --- |
| Prepared and Proposed By | Deepa Murali – Advisor |
| Reviewed and Recommended By | Jon Alex – Trustee |
| Approved By | Board of trustee |
| Date of Approval | 27 – March – 2025 |

**Purpose**

A Code of Conduct provides clear guidance to an organization's employees regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. It establishes an ethical framework that promotes integrity, honesty, and ethical decision-making to set the tone for the organization's culture and values. It also helps the employees understand what is expected of them in various situations.

**Scope**

The scope can be tailored to the organisation's specific needs and typically covers a wide range of behaviours, including ethical decision-making, honesty, respect, diversity and inclusion, confidentiality, conflicts of interest, and more.

**Applies To**

All the employees, Service users and Vendors of Varshini Illam Trust.

**Version Control**

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| **1.0** | **27- March-2025** | **Board of Trustee** |

**Table of Contents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| S no | Table of contents | Page No |
| 1 | Introduction | 2 |
| 2 | Purpose | 2 |
| 3 | Scope | 2 |
| 4 | Diversity | 2 |
| 5 | Gender Equality | 3 |
| 6 | Partnerships | 4 |
| 7 | Governance | 4 |
| 8 | Review and Revision | 4 |

# **INTRODUCTION**

Varshini Illam Trust (VIT) is committed to promoting diversity and gender equality across its organisation. We recognize the value that people with different backgrounds, experiences and skills bring to the workplace and encourage an organizational culture that fosters these differences. We believe that diversity is a driver of innovation, collaboration, and performance. VIT is committed to creating and maintaining a workplace that is inclusive and fair and reflects the diversity of the communities within which we are located.

**PURPOSE**

This policy provides guidance on the measures VIT has in place to promote diversity and equal opportunities across the organisation and within the workplace.

# **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all workers engaged by VIT, including employees, interns, volunteers, Trustees, vendors located all over India.

# **DIVERSITY**

VIT is committed to maintaining an inclusive workplace that values people’s differences and provides opportunities for all staff to achieve their full potential. We define diversity as the visible and invisible differences that exist between people and the varied ways of thinking and working. VIT sees workplace diversity and inclusion as the responsibility of all individuals and expects its employees, volunteers, interns, and leadership to treat all people with respect. VIT prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender identity, sexual orientation, intersex status, marital or relationship status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding, family responsibilities, disability, religious and political orientation, race, ethnicity and age or personal association with a person with any of these attributes.

At VIT, our established recruitment process seeks to put the right person in the right role and accordingly ensures that all jobs are open to people on the basis of merit. This is achieved through a multi-tiered recruitment process, where applicants are interviewed by several staff members as a safeguarding method against personal bias or discrimination. Prior to the commencement of employment, remuneration is established without discrimination and is determined based on experience, skill level and qualifications. Following the year-end performance reviews, remuneration for all staff is reviewed based on merit. Beyond our paid employees, VIT welcomes volunteers and interns from all backgrounds, recruiting these individuals based on their skills and interest in our work.

VIT has developed and implemented policies and processes that promote diversity within the workplace and protect people, especially those who are already marginalized, from discrimination.

These include:

* Disability Inclusion Policy
* Human Rights Policy
* Recruitment Process (which enforces anti-discrimination)
* Training and awareness programs on topics such as gender, disability, and unconscious bias
* Periodic assessment of Opportunity’s and gender equality and disability inclusion practices.

# **GENDER EQUALITY**

VIT is committed to ensuring gender equality in the workplace and recognizes that gender inequality is still prevalent within the Indian workforce. Women continue to earn less than men and face additional barriers to career progression, evident by the significant underrepresentation of women in leadership and top-management positions.

VIT acknowledges the gendered nature and unequal distribution of unpaid labor iiiwith women bearing disproportionate responsibility for unpaid domestic and care work. Whilst men and women are vulnerable to family, domestic and sexual violence, women continue to be at greater risk. VIT is committed to addressing these barriers and constraints through provisions that ensure equal access to opportunities and benefits for men and women. We support gender balance in the workforce, inclusive of Trustees, and Managerial positions.

VIT has developed and implemented a number of complementing policies and processes that promote gender equality through flexible working arrangements and leave for both men and women, including:

* Paid leave (providing extended periods of paid time away from work including for childcare and/or eldercare responsibilities).
* Paternity Leave.
* Gender Equality Policy
* Parental Leave Policy
* Gender awareness training for staff.

# **PARTNERSHIPS**

VIT engages with mission-aligned partners that promote diversity and gender equality through the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized people in the delivery of their services, including women living in poverty, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and ethnic minorities like scheduled castes in India.

# **GOVERNANCE**

The Trustees regularly reviews its composition to ensure that the Trustees, the employees have a diverse range of skills, experience, qualifications, attributes, age, geographic representation, and gender balance to increase the effectiveness. The Trustees are committed to ensuring the principles of diversity, gender equality and non-discrimination are integrated across the entire organisation. It reviews and approves VIT’s policies in this domain and takes the responsibility for implementing them.

**REVIEW AND REVISION**

This policy would be reviewed on an annual basis or earlier based on needs. The recommended changes would be approved by the Trustees.