

DISABILITY INCLUSION POLICY

July 2022

INTRODUCTION

Equitas Development Initiatives Trust (EDIT) mission is to empower people who belong to economically weaker sections of the community and to transform their lives and their children's futures. Our vision is a world in which all people can lead dignified lives. Inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised people, including Persons with Disabilities (PWD), and all other services aligns with EDIT's core values and mission.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy demonstrates the commitment that EDIT makes to ensuring that PWD are not excluded or discriminated against based on their disability. This applies to both the workplace and provision of services offered by EDIT. This policy outlines measures that reduce the risk of exclusion of PWD and promotes a culture of disability inclusion within the organisation. This policy also provides guidance on how to report any concerns or allegations of discrimination or exclusion on the basis of disability.

SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all workers engaged by EDIT, including employees, interns, volunteers, Directors, contractors, and Ambassadors located all over India.

BACKGROUND

EDIT works through local microfinance institutions that provide innovative solutions to empower people, create small businesses, and build vibrant communities. We also support organisations that provide community development services such as health, women empowerment and education. Within EDIT's partnerships and programs, we engage with people without discrimination based on ethnicity, race, disability, gender, gender identity, age or religious or political affiliation. We adopt a socially inclusive approach to development that is underpinned by the principle of respecting and protecting the human rights of all people.

PWD constitute the largest and most disadvantaged minority population globally. The prevalence of disability is higher within lower-income communities, whereby disability and poverty perpetuate and reinforce one another. PWD are subject to multiple violations of their rights and their access to economic opportunities are limited due to lower employment rates, exclusion from education and health services and workplace discrimination.

EDIT acknowledges the intersection of gender and disability. We recognise that women, girls and children with disabilities are often more vulnerable than other members of society, including men with disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities are at greater risk of violence and generally have lower educational attainment. In addition, women and girls typically undertake the role of primary caretaker for family members with disabilities, which may limit opportunities for education and employment.

At EDIT, we respect PWD's inherent dignity and worth. We recognise the rights of PWD to work on an equal basis with others and to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families. We are committed to promoting the realisation of those rights without discrimination based on disability through increasing PWD's access to economic opportunities, services and inclusion in the financial system. Opportunity is committed to disability inclusion within the delivery of its development programs. We recognise the importance of mainstreaming disability issues and see it as an integral part of sustainable development strategies.

DISABILITY DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Persons with Disabilities (PWD): "Those who have episodic or long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others"⁴. Impairment can limit functionality and include hearing, speech and vision impairment, developmental delay, and physical, neurological and psychological impairments. Barriers to effective participation include attitudes and societal barriers, physical and environmental barriers, and policy and systemic barriers.

Discrimination on the basis of disability: "Any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field"⁵.

Reasonable accommodation: "Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

DISABILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

EDIT is committed to the inclusion of PWD and elimination of discrimination based on disability within the workplace. We are committed to ensuring a work environment that reasonably accommodates to PWD and provides current and prospective staff with disabilities equal access to employment opportunities and development. EDIT is committed to providing necessary and appropriate modifications to the workplace and/or work arrangements so that employees with disabilities are able to conduct work in an effective and comfortable manner and on an equal basis to others. Equal opportunities are provided in our recruitment process. All jobs are open to people on the basis of merit, meaning that a person's disability does not bar them from applying or being properly considered for a role at EDIT.

The following measures are in place to ensure the inclusion of PWD in the workplace:

- Disability Inclusion Policy is reviewed every three years
- Documented reporting procedure in place for non-compliance to the Policy
- Staff training on disability inclusion policy, disability sensitisation issues, including mental health, and non-discriminatory practices is delivered at induction and at other times as deemed appropriate.
- Periodic assessment of EDIT's disability inclusion practices
- Organisational commitment to make reasonable adjustments to employees upon request
- Recruitment advertisements specifically encourage PWD to apply
- Bullying, harassment and discrimination of people on the basis of their disability is prohibited in EDIT's Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy. This Policy is applicable to employees, interns, volunteers, Board members, Ambassadors, partners, clients, and donors.

EDIT also promotes the inclusion of PWD through existing policies that establish provisions for flexible work arrangements, leave entitlements and anti-discrimination.

These include:

- Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- Flexible Working Arrangements Policy
- Diversity and Gender Equality Policy
- Human Rights Policy
- Personal/ Carer's leave.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

EDIT partners with organisations that are mission aligned in the provision of services to socially disadvantaged people, including PWD. EDIT supports our partners in adopting disability inclusive and anti-discriminatory practices both within the workplace and in the provision of services. EDIT achieves this by:

- Building the capacity of implementing partners to collect and analyse client data that is disaggregated by sex and disability. This helps to ensure programs are reaching and benefiting PWD
- Supporting partners in the development and implementation of disability inclusion and anti-discrimination policies

- Providing partners with resources on how to mainstream disability within their organisations and in the delivery of services
- Supporting partners in providing accessible services and workplaces that overcome barriers faced by people living with a disability. We encourage partners to provide reasonable accommodation in the provision of support, modifications and/or adjustments that meet the individual needs of PWD to facilitate their participation and inclusion
- Monitoring and assessing the progress of implementing partners on disability inclusive practices, such as these mentioned above.

COMPLAINT REPORTING PROCESS

EDIT has internal procedures for handling complaints, including those related to the discrimination of persons on the basis of their disability and/or for non-compliance with this policy.

The complaint can be made to the Chief Functionary, EDIT who can be contacted by email at johnalexa@equitas.in

Any worker who engages in discrimination on the basis of disability will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include a warning, counselling, demotion or termination of employment depending on the circumstances.