

# HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEMS PROGRAM SOUTH AFRICA

(HISP-SA)



## Gender Equity Plan

2021 – 2026

Building Better Lives Together

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## Definition of terms<sup>1,2</sup>

**Discrimination** is defined as any act of omission, (including a policy, law, rule, practice, condition, or situation which directly or indirectly-

- a) Imposes burdens, obligations, or disadvantage on, or
- b) Withholds benefits, opportunities, or advantages from, any person on one or more of the prohibited grounds. (The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000 Act No. 4 of 2000).

**Empowerment:** Refers to the process of conscientisation which builds critical analytical skills for an individual to gain self confidence in order to take control of her or his life. Empowerment of women is essential in HISP-SA is an essential process in the transformation of good gender relations because it addresses the structural and underlying causes of discrimination.

**Equal opportunities:** Refers to a fundamental human right embedded in the Constitution of South Africa. The HISP-SA gender plan is aimed towards the achievement of equal opportunities.

**Equal treatment:** Refers to HISP-SA meeting the specific and distinct needs of different social categories of women and men.

**Gender:** In this HISP-SA plan, refers to the roles, duties and responsibilities which are culturally or socially ascribed to women and men.

**Gender awareness:** Refers to the state of knowledge of the differences in roles and relations of women and men and how this results in differences in power relations, status, privileges and needs.

**Gender Equality:** Refers to a situation where women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human rights and potential; are able to contribute equally to national, economic, social and cultural development; and benefit equally from the results. Gender equality entails that the underlying causes of discrimination are identified and removed in order to give women and men equal opportunities.

**Gender Equity:** Refers to the full and equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms and equal access to resources, opportunities, and outcomes, by women, men within HISP.

**Gender sensitive:** Refers to the state of knowledge of the socially constructed differences between women and men, including differences in their needs, as well as the use of such knowledge to identify and understand the problems arising from such differences and to act purposely to address them.

**Representation** refers to the substitution of an individual or class in place of a person, the action of representing or the fact of being represented especially in a statutory body.

## 1. Introduction

Since 1994, the principle of gender equality influenced legislation development and policy formulation in all sectors. Section 9(3) and (4) of the constitution prohibits unfair discrimination by another person on the ground of gender, race and other factors. The South African Government has been at the

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<sup>1</sup> Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000

<sup>2</sup> Glossary of Terms and Concepts UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia November 2017

forefront of the battle against inequality since then. Progressive policies, laws and monitoring institution have been set up and the government has unequivocally committed itself to ending discrimination. This task will not be accomplished overnight in South Africa, with the acknowledgement that one of the biggest challenges in this country is the struggle to achieve gender equity. South Africa currently have a Commission of Gender Equity which is an independent statutory body established in terms of Chapter 9 of the<sup>3</sup>Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 108 of 1996.

In compliance with the constitution provisions, HISP-SA developed a Gender equality plan which serves as a guideline and is applicable to all employees. The purpose of the plan is to establish a clear framework which will serve to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in HISP-SA. As an organisation, the health and prosperity for all is very important.<sup>4</sup> HISP believes in *building better lives with digital* solutions. We have embarked on a journey that will assist our teams to produce digital products and services that enable rich personal experiences. Our purpose is to reach more lives to improve health and prosperity. HISP has made a start in the health sector, supporting governments to make stronger, data-driven decisions, that strengthen the health system. This Business Strategy moves us further along this journey. HISP is in the business of *building better lives together* with our staff, clients and the users of our digital solutions. Through our goal of building better lives with digital, we aim have put in place means to ensure that our workplace allows for the GEP we have put in place to be implemented.

The HISP Gender Equality plan looks at the issues of gender within the organisation in order to create and encourage a gender aware workforce and also develop and implement actions that will promote gender awareness within the organisation.

## 2. Defining Gender

Gender is defined in a range of different ways. The following provide some useful definitions for the purposes of this plan. The distinction between sex and gender is crucial when looking at the issue of gender. The term sex refers to the biological differences between men and women. The term gender refers to the different roles and responsibilities that societies and cultures impose on men and women, because of their biological differences. The behaviours expected from women and men are based on a perception that certain qualities and roles are "natural" for women, whilst other qualities and roles are "natural" for men. These non-biological factors influence who we are, how we should behave and what we can aspire to. Patriarchal gender relations support men over women. They are perpetuated and reinforced through sexist behaviour and institutional practices. Non-profit organisations are not exempt from this practice. In a developmental context, the term gender equity is about ensuring that women and men have equal understanding of, access to and control over social and political and economic resources in post-apartheid South Africa.

Empowering women is key to reducing poverty and food insecurity which are central to women being vulnerable. There is a strong correlation between hunger and gender inequalities. The Marginalised Groups Indicator 2019<sup>5</sup> report shows that, on average, 40,6% of female-headed households were

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<sup>3</sup> Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 108 of 1996, chapter 9

<sup>4</sup> HISP-SA 2021 Strategy Document

<sup>5</sup> The Marginalised Groups Indicator 2019

without an employed household member. Gender equality is regarded as an important determinant of food security.<sup>6</sup> However, during 2019 approximately one-tenth of female-headed households (11,1%) reported having suffered from hunger as compared to 9,7% of male-headed households. HISP endeavours to ensure that we do not fall into the trap of perpetuating the above narrative, whether consciously or subconsciously. Ensuring that we work hard at closing the gender pay gap, which is contained in our Employment Equity Plan (EE Plan), is one such means to deal with the gender inequalities.

### 3. Gender equality as a historical core value

Gender equality has always been a core value of the struggle for a democratic South Africa. This value was immediately adopted into the country's governance processes with the establishment of the new dispensation in 1994 and has been enshrined in the 1996 Constitution of South Africa. It is the strong political commitment to this value that has moved the South African government to craft gender sensitive national priorities.

The commitment to achieving gender equality has:

- motivated South Africa to accede to regional and international instruments promoting gender equality, increased awareness of gender issues in all spheres of life
- enhanced the integration of gender considerations into government policies and programmes.

### 4. Work/Life balance in the workplace

Work-life balance is an important aspect of a person's life, moreover for employed women. HISP recognises this and encourages women to plan their time well in fulfilling normative expectations by taking responsibility for child-rearing and domestic work.

Defining work-life balance involves looking at how working people manage time spent at and outside of work. Time outside of work may include managing relationships, family responsibilities, and other outside interests and hobbies.

HISP-SA encourages our female employees to have a healthy balance between work and their personal life. Some of what the organisation does:

- Offer flexible and remote working arrangement
- Encourage managers to focus on productivity rather than hours
- Encourage employees to take breaks in between their daily work hours
- Regularly review of employee workload
- Managers encourage to lead by example
- Encourage employees to take more time off during the year (managers monitor leave taken)
- Increase support for parents within the organisation
- Wellness days are organised annually in the organisation where employees benefit from health screening?

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<sup>6</sup> Gender Equality and Food Security - Women's Empowerment as a Tool against Hunger 2013

- Body Mass Index (BMI), Glucose, Cholesterol, Blood Pressure
- Employees also benefit from a Health Risk Assessment and learn more about
  - Exercising habits
  - Smoking habits
  - Eating habit
  - Chronic illness

## 5. Why is Gender Equity important in the workplace?

The workplace is an important site of human development. Many women and men spend a large part of their lives in the workplace and the conditions of employment have a strong influence on the quality of life that they experience. Added to this challenge is the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic forcing women to shift their priorities regarding taking care of their families. Women with school going kids have been affected by, reopening which is largely determined at a regional level which might be a different location to their workplace. This is also implemented with diverse approaches and varying levels of success. Furthermore, in-person instruction for students and the reopening of day-cares is not a done deal proposition.<sup>7</sup> So, while parents, but especially women who have taken on even more during the pandemic, may get a temporary relief, outbreaks continuously force children and their families to quarantine, schools or day-cares to close temporarily, or more long-term moves to online instruction. HISP employees work primarily from home. Managers are then urged to be flexible with time when considering school and childcare demands such as dropping of and fetching children from school and day-care.

HISP has a wellness service provider, the Independent Counselling and Advisory Services (ICAS), offered to both employees and their immediate family. The organisation empowers its employees on gender equality issues through newsletters by this service provider. ICAS is a one of the resources that enhances the gender equality mandate within the organisation. Gender equality issues are also discussed in the organisations' Management committee and employee monthly meetings where employees are empowered on such matters.

### 6.1 Employment Equity Committee

HISP has an established gender inclusive Employment Equity Committee (EEC) which manages and supports the organisational 5-year Employment Equity plan (EE plan). The EEC deals with wide ranging equity issues, including gender equity.

The role of the committee is to ensure a diverse organisation which provides equal opportunities for all genders. The committee serves as a monitoring body for unfair discrimination against employees especially women and people living with disability. The committee interprets and analyses recruitment, promotion, staff movement, training and development reports by race, gender, and people with disabilities, to monitor progress against the EE plan.

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<sup>7</sup> Why has COVID-19 been especially harmful for working women? Nicole Bateman and Martha Ross

## 6.2 Leadership

HISP has appointed an all-inclusive management team, creating a safe environment for matters of gender equality within the organisation to be handled.

- Our policies are aligned with good Corporate Governance, to ensure non-infringement of employee’s wellbeing.
  - Furthermore, the policies ensure that employees are not discriminated against based on their gender.

### Women in Senior Management at HISP



**Ms Elmarie Claasen**  
*Engineering Manager*



**Ms Phumzile Manyoni**  
*Human Resources Manager*



**Dr Melissa Andrews**  
*Digital Transformation Manager*

## 6.3 South African National targets vs HISP planned targets

Race and Gender Group	National EAP Targets	Current Profile		Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5	
		Current	Profile %	Planned	Profile %	Planned	Profile %	Planned	Profile %	Planned	Profile %	Planned	Profile %
		2021		2022		2023		2024		2025		2026	
African Female	36.20%	23	28%	28	29%	36	33%	36	33%	38	35%	39	48%
Coloured Female	4.40%	1	1%	3	3%	4	4%	4	4%	4	4%	5	6%
Indian Female	1.00%	5	6%	5	5%	4	4%	3	3%	3	3%	2	2%
White Female	3.80%	6	7%	6	6%	6	6%	6	6%	6	6%	4	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>61%</b>

Female Numerical Goals 2021 – 2026

The table above shows that the African female category is below the National and Regional Economically Active Population (NEAP) target. HISP anticipates reaching the targeted 36.2% in year 4 (2024).

At the time of drafting of the EE Plan, HISP was on 1% in the coloured female category. The organisation has since moved to 2% and anticipate increasing this number.

Even though HISP promotes gender equality through the implementation of gender prioritised recruitment, the Indian and White female categories will be closely monitored since they are slightly

higher than the NEAP targets. The Human Resources team continues to get empowered with knowledge on how to capacitate employees in dealing with gender-based issues.

#### 6.4 Other issues monitored by the GEP at HISP

- 5.1.1. Equal pay for equal work – HISP’s response to this is the implementation of remuneration based on performance and not on gender
- 5.1.2. Eliminate discrimination – Ensuring that the organisation does not practice discrimination at all levels
- 5.1.3. Family responsibilities – Implementation of this leave type for primary care givers of which in many cases are women, when they require more time off to care for sickly family members (especially children).

#### 6.5 Sexual Harassment

HISP strongly condemns all forms of sexual harassment especially. We strive to create and maintain a working environment in which the dignity of employees is respected. Most cases of sexual harassment are levelled against women and HISP endeavours to make its working environment as free from such as possible.

We have a sexual harassment policy that promotes a climate in the workplace in which complainants of sexual harassment will not feel that their grievances are ignored or trivialized, or fear reprisals.

### 6. Gender equality at HISP

Below are our objectives according to the current Employment Equity Plan (EE Plan).

TIMEFRAME		OBJECTIVES
YEAR 1	1 Mar 2021 – 28 Feb 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Gender Equality Plan and make sure it gets approved by Senior Management</li> <li>2. Implement gender prioritized recruitment for the current vacant positions</li> <li>3. Identify and target key positions for women within the organisation</li> <li>4. Prioritise recruitment and retention of women from previously disadvantaged individuals</li> <li>5. Increase understanding of and address obstacles to women’s participation in teacher unions across all regions</li> <li>6. Implement affirmative action measures for the employment equity plan from 2021 – 2022.</li> </ol>
YEAR 2	1 Mar 2022 – 28 Feb 2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implementation of further affirmative action measures for women in the workplace</li> <li>2. Engage with all teams across the organisation to close the gender pay gap</li> <li>3. Evaluate HISP’s workforce profile, and the numerical goals and numerical targets on an ongoing basis to ensure women representation at all levels.</li> </ol>



TIMEFRAME		OBJECTIVES
		4. Determine the extent of under-representation of women especially those from the designated groups in the different occupational categories of the workforce.
YEAR 3	1 Mar 2023 – 28 Feb 2024	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create and maintain a climate of diversity and mutual respect, which will be measured by climate surveys and feedback from HR and the EE Committee.</li> <li>2. Implement Succession Planning to enhance women within the organisation</li> <li>3. Prioritise the implementation of learnerships for people with disability as a way of increasing the internal pool of scarce skills</li> </ol>
YEAR 4	1 Mar 2024 – 28 Feb 2025	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Utilize grants and SETA incentives for the enhancement of Women in the organisation.</li> <li>2. Develop a strong talent pool and competent leaders.</li> <li>3. Ensure that all practices are assessed in terms of gender fairness</li> </ol>
YEAR 5	1 Mar 2025 – 28 Feb 2026	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote a learning culture through training and development of HISP employees.</li> <li>2. Conduct a good qualitative barrier assessment of the 2026 situation at HISP SA to prepare the next five-year EE plan.</li> </ol>

As we can see in the table above, HISP has incorporated issues of Gender equity within the organisation into the EE Plan

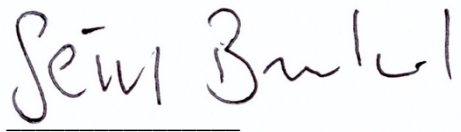
## 7. How will HISP continue to promote Gender Equity

1. Encourage full representation of women in all levels of HISP:
  - Management
  - Technical staff
  - Key positions
  - The implementing workforce
2. Empower managers on issues of gender sensitivity
3. Facilitate a culture that encourages inclusive and effective participation among women in the organisation
4. Ensure that the HISP policies take into consideration issues of gender equality
5. Drive a strategy that explicitly gives gender differentiated objectives, Encouraging gender sensitive integrated developments throughout the business
6. Regularly have employee surveys where we can assess if the organisation is still perceived as being pro gender equity.

## 8. Conclusion

Diversity, respect and dignity are important HISP values. Combined, they are part of what helps HISP to succeed in achieving our purpose and are intrinsic parts of our organisational culture. Gender equity

is a key part of this and integrated into all our activities, within our integrated employment equity plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Broomhead". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. Below the signature is a thin horizontal line.

**Dr Sean Broomhead**

*HISP-SA, CEO*

## References

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