Training Manual: Gender equality in CSO leadership (Boards)

1. Background

Although Civil Society and Volunteering in general is often perceived as inclusive, data reveals significant disparities in participation and leadership roles. Factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, education, and social networks contribute to this imbalance, with women facing fewer opportunities for managerial positions, mirroring broader societal gender inequalities (Kristiansen, 2002; British Council, 2016).

Gender-diverse leadership can bring significant advantages to organisations. When gender equality is not prioritised, organisations miss out on the benefits of varied leadership styles, innovative ideas, and enhanced effectiveness.

Organisations that overlook the importance of gender balance in leadership roles risk reinforcing existing disparities and missing valuable opportunities. Persistent systemic challenges—such as institutional biases, inadequate mentorship, and insufficient support systems—can hinder the advancement of women into leadership roles. These issues not only affect organisational dynamics but also perpetuate broader societal inequalities.

Moreover, the lack of female representation in leadership roles affects societal perceptions of women as leaders and role models. This underrepresentation limits the visibility of women's leadership capabilities and impacts future generations' aspirations. To address these challenges effectively, organisations need to adopt comprehensive strategies that promote gender equality and dismantle existing barriers.

This training session has been developed under the CERV Operating Grant Framework Agreement "REVIVE" (Revealing European Values in Volunteering in Europe) and the 2024 Specific Agreement "Volunteering, Equality, Rights and Action" (VERA 2024). The aim is to strengthen the capabilities of member organisations and other stakeholders in enhancing gender equality in leadership roles (Boards). By focusing on identifying barriers, exploring equity strategies, and addressing specific organisational challenges, this training seeks to support

Volunteering Equality
Rights Action
VERA 2025

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Volunteer organisations in fostering a more inclusive and effective leadership environment. The materials have a particular focus on the increased inclusion of women, but also highlight the importance of an overall inclusive approach and encouragement to also consider the issue from a less binary position.

2. Participants

This training session is designed for staff and volunteers of volunteer-involving organisations seeking to enhance their skills and understanding of improving **Gender Equality** in their Boards and other volunteer leadership positions and roles, identifying barriers, exploring strategies for equity, and addressing specific challenges within their organisations.

3. Learning Objectives

1. Understand the principles, benefits, and challenges of Gender Equality in leadership within volunteer-involving organisations, including relevant policies and frameworks.
2. Recognise and analyse barriers to Gender Equality in leadership roles within CSOs, and explore strategies for addressing these challenges.
3. Explore practical frameworks and tools that can be used to promote Gender Equality in leadership roles, with a focus on laying the groundwork for future solutions.

4. Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to explain the principles and significance of Gender Equality in leadership and understand its role in improving the effectiveness of volunteer-involving organisations.
2. Participants will gain insights into the barriers that prevent Gender Equality in leadership roles within CSOs and will explore initial strategies for addressing these barriers.
3. Participants will gain the skills to begin developing and implementing practical solutions to advance Gender Equity in leadership within their organisations

and actively contribute to fostering more inclusive and supportive environments for all genders.
4. Participants will recognise the value of these skills and knowledge for their organisations and demonstrate a commitment to applying and sharing their insights, with the aim of fostering a culture of gender equality and inclusive leadership.

5. Evaluation of the Training Session

Evaluation is crucial for assessing the effectiveness and impact of collaborative efforts by examining several key aspects:

- <u>Teamwork</u> - Evaluating how effectively the team collaborated, communicated, and supported each other throughout the process.
- <u>Environment</u> - Assessing whether a supportive and open environment was established, allowing participants to freely share their thoughts and experiences.
- <u>Knowledge Attainment</u> - Measuring the extent to which participants gained new insights, skills, and understanding relevant to their roles and objectives.
- <u>Strategic Pathways</u> - Identifying potential new directions and strategies that the organisation can pursue based on the outcomes of the work.
- <u>Advocacy for Change</u> - Evaluating how the work can influence and drive advocacy efforts for change within the national or local context, ensuring that the organisation contributes to broader systemic improvements.

https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/CERV_2021-2027
Reference of the project (project number): 101194233
Type of activity: Training
Title of the event: Gender equality in CSO leadership (Boards)
Duration of the event in days: 0.3
Did the event take place physically or was it online?:

6. Proposed Training session agenda for 2025

9:30 - 9:35	**Welcome, introduction and Context** *The trainers will introduce themselves and explain why they are delivering this session and in what context i.e. CEV VERA 2025 project co-funded by the CERV programme. The trainer will describe the physical or online training space and explain any key features.*
9:35 - 9:45	**Getting to know each other** *If participants know each other from before, use exercises where they will share some interesting facts e.g. "speed date" or pair up participants and give them 2 minutes to introduce themselves and share why they are passionate about volunteering. Consider asking participants for their preferred pronouns in this part of the event.*
9:45 - 9:55	**Motivations and Expectations. Group rules.** *Exercise to explore motivation to presence in the training session and expectations on the outcomes. Agree and establish group rules*
9:55 - 10:00	**Present the agenda and objectives of the training** *Clearly highlighting which expectations will not be met at this time or perhaps adjusting the course and programme where possible to include some of the expectations and levels of experience with and awareness of the topics.*
10:00 - 10:10	**Exploring Initial Associations with Gender Equality** *Participants share their first association with gender equality. This can be done using DIXIT cards, Resilio or other associative cards; using Mentimeter; writing on a Post-it or sharing verbally in plenary. At this moment establish the importance of the*

	context of the group and how they identify with the theme and the concepts (gender, gender equality, gender identity, etc).
10:10 - 11:00	Theoretical content and exploration of case studies to reach the learning objectives. Find the slides **here**. **Theoretical input by the trainer on the main topics:** ● **Understanding the problem** ● **Understanding Key Concepts** ● **The Role of Gender-Equal Leadership in Civil Society** ● **Factors & Challenges influencing leadership roles** ● **Practical Strategies and Solutions for Gender Equality in CSO Leadership** ● **Monitoring and Evaluation for Gender Equality** ● **Case studies** ● **Resources and Further Reading on Gender Equality in CSOs** *If time allows, this input could be broken up into smaller sections punctuated by non-formal learning techniques such as role play to further explore the topic and issues in a more interactive way.*
11:00 - 11:20	**What can be done: brainstorming on ideas** *Focus on reflection and drafting/proposing ideas for organisational and personal action plans and the next steps. Ideas can be shared in plenary, collected via online tools such as Mentimeter or written individually. Since gender issues and gender identity can be a complex and deeply personal topic for as much time as possible for reflection and discussion is recommended.*
11:20 – 11.30	**Evaluation of the training session/Validation of Learning**

Be careful to pay attention in this section to address any need for particular support participants might need in disengaging from the session. Being aware of the effects of any triggering moments that might have occurred and additional support that can be needed to overcome challenging feelings and reactions and offering possible solutions and sources of further support will also be important.
Closing Remarks

7. Key Concepts

- Sex: Refers to the biological classification of a person as male or female, assigned at birth based on physical anatomy (typically external genitalia) and traditionally viewed as binary.
- Gender: A social and cultural construct that assigns roles, behaviours, and expectations to individuals based on their perceived sex. Gender norms vary across cultures and societies and are not strictly tied to biological sex.
- Binary Concept of Gender: The traditional classification of people into two distinct categories—"men" and "women"—based on their biological sex and socially assigned roles. This perspective often overlooks non-binary and gender-diverse identities.
- Non-Binary: A gender identity that does not fit strictly into the categories of male or female. Non-binary individuals may identify as both, neither, or somewhere in between.
- Gender Identity: Each person's deeply felt internal experience of gender, which may or may not align with the sex assigned at birth. Gender identity includes a person's personal sense of their body, which may involve modification of bodily appearance if chosen. It also encompasses expressions such as dress, speech, and mannerisms. Gender identity can fall outside the traditional male-female binary.

- LGBTI+: An acronym representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, including queer, non-binary, and asexual identities.
- Gender Mainstreaming: A strategy for achieving gender equality by systematically integrating the perspectives, needs, and priorities of all genders into an organisation's policies, programs, and activities, from planning to implementation and evaluation.
- Gender-Disaggregated Data: The practice of collecting, analysing, and reporting data separately for different genders to ensure that gender-specific impacts and needs are accurately captured and addressed.
- Gender Analysis: A method of critically assessing how differences in gender roles, responsibilities, and opportunities affect individuals in a given context. It examines power relations and how these influence access to resources, decision-making, and rights among women, men, girls, boys, and gender-diverse people.
- Intersectionality: A framework for understanding how multiple identities (such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class) intersect and shape an individual's experiences, particularly in relation to discrimination or privilege.
- Gender Equality in Decision-Making: The fair and balanced representation of all genders in leadership and decision-making roles within organizations, including NGO boards.
- Gender Representation on NGO Boards: The active pursuit of gender balance in the composition of NGO boards is crucial for promoting gender equality in decision-making.
- Gender Balance Quotas: In some contexts, gender quotas are implemented to ensure that a minimum percentage of leadership or board positions are held by women or individuals from underrepresented gender identities. These quotas are viewed as a temporary measure to correct historical imbalances in leadership roles.

8. Resources and Further Reading

- CEV: [Gender analysis and inequality in volunteering](#)
- CEV Report: [CEV Volunteering in Europe 2022](#)
- NCVO Gender in Leadership Report: [NCVO Gender in Leadership](#)
- CIVICUS Blog on Women Leaders: [Why We Need More Women Leaders](#)
- Civil society organisations and gender equality: mainstreaming and empowerment in the public policies towards civil society. Lopes, Monica & Ferreira, Virgínia & Ferreira, Silvia & Coelho, Lina. (2015): https://feji.us/dqcmke
- Video: Why gender equality is good for everyone, Michael Kimmel | TEDx https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_kimmel_why_gender_equality_is_good_for_everyone_men_included?subtitle=en
- EU TACSO 3 Checklist: https://library.tacso.eu/download/1318/guidelines/2082/eu-tacso-3-checklist-for-fstp-implementers.pdf
- Global Standard for CSO Accountability: [Global Standard Guidance Materials](#)
- EU Strategy for Gender Equality: [EU Gender Equality Strategy](#)
- OSCE Commitments on Gender Equality: [OSCE Gender Equality](#)
- UN Women's Agenda for Gender Equality: [UN Women Gender Equality](#)
- EIGE Gender Equality Report: [EIGE Report on Gender Equality and Women Leadership](#)
- EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024: [EU Action Plan](#)
- Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023: [Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy](#)
- Gender Equality Standards: [Council of Europe Gender Equality Standards](#)
- Recommendation on Gender Equality and Media: [Recommendation on Gender Equality and Media](#)
- France Volontaires Gender Equality Initiatives: [France Volontaires Publications](#)
- Female Factor on Gender Leadership Gap: [Closing the Gender Leadership Gap](#)

- Alliance Magazine on Women's Leadership in CSOs: [Building Women Leadership in Civil Society](#)
- Coursera Courses on Leadership and Gender Analytics: [Organizational Leadership in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) and [Gender Analytics](#)
- CARE International Gender Equality Policy: https://www.care-international.org/files/files/publications/Final%20CI%20Gender%20Equality%20Policy%202018.pdf
- Conservation International (CI) Gender Equality Policy: https://www.conservation.org/about/our-policies/gender-equality-policy
- NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/equity-diversity-inclusion
- Norwegian People's Aid Gender Equality Policy: https://www.npaid.org/files/Publications/Development-and-Humanitarian-Cooperation/NPA_GENDER_POLICY.pdf
- Oxfam Women's Leadership Participation Overview: [Oxfam Leadership Report](#)
- Council of Europe Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People: [Compass Manual](#)

GENDER EQUALITY IN CSO LEADERSHIP (Boards)
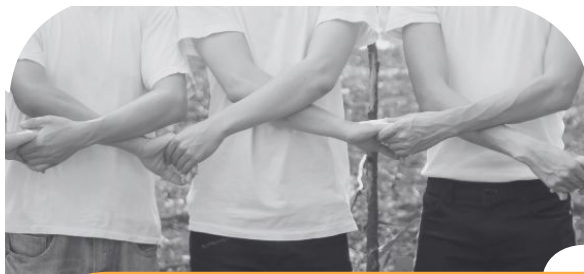
Centre for European Volunteering
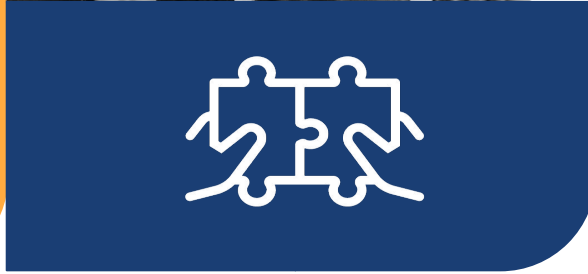
Volunteering Equality Rights Action
VERA 2025

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Problem statement

CEV research has show that even though women dedicate more time to volunteering than men, they are less likely to have a representative/ leadership role in organisation Boards.

CIVICUS Insights on Women Leaders in Civil Society

Need for More Women Leaders

CIVICUS emphasizes the global need for more women leaders in civil society organizations to enhance effectiveness and promote Human Rights.

Benefits of Women's Leadership

Diverse representation in leadership leads to better outcomes and more effective CSOs.

Action Steps

CIVICUS recommends promoting women's leadership through targeted initiatives and support systems.

www.csostandard.org

Understanding Key Concepts: Sex, Gender, and Identity

Sex refers to biological differences between males and females, including reproductive anatomy and secondary sexual characteristics. It is typically categorized as male or female and assigned at birth based on physical characteristics. It's important to note that sex is not synonymous with gender identity.

Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and expectations society considers appropriate for men and women. It is a social and cultural construct that includes categories like male, female, and non-binary. Gender varies across different cultures and societies and is not strictly tied to biological sex.

Gender identity is a personal sense of one's own gender, which may or may not align with the sex assigned at birth. It can be male, female, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. Gender identity is a personal and internal experience that may or may not align with societal norms or expectations.

Intersectionality & Human Rights:
A Framework for Understanding Inequality

Definition	Key Points	Importance	Human Rights-Based Approach
Intersectionality is a framework that examines how various forms of discrimination (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation) intersect and compound to create unique experiences of oppression or privilege.	Intersectionality highlights the interconnected nature of social categorizations and acknowledges that individuals experience multiple, overlapping identities. It provides a more nuanced understanding of inequality and systemic issues.	Understanding these concepts is crucial to address gender disparities effectively, create inclusive policies and practices, and ensure that all voices and experiences are considered in gender equality efforts.	Integrating international human rights principles into CSO practices, ensuring equality and non-discrimination.

Factors & Challenges Influencing Leadership Roles

Education & Occupation

Age & Gender

Fields Affected

Institutional Biases

Lack of Mentorship

Work-Life Balance

CEV, 'Gender analysis and inequality in volunteering'

Practical Strategies and Solutions for Gender Equality in CSO Leadership

Policies	Training	Enhanced Support	Equal-Recognition & Equal Opportunities	Work life balance
Develop and enforce comprehensive gender equality policies within CSOs, specifically for leadership positions. Ensure adequate resource allocation for implementing comprehensive strategies.	Implement training programs that: - Address and reduce institutional biases within CSOs. - Focus on inclusivity and collaborative leadership styles. - Focus on gender equality and leadership skills	Create mentorship programs and support networks specifically designed for women in CSO leadership roles.	Adopt practices that ensure diverse candidates are considered for leadership positions within CSOs. Ensure fair opportunities for responsibility progression and leadership roles for all genders in CSOs. Ensure fair recognition and visibility for all roles, regardless of gender.	Develop policies that support work-life (volunteer-life) balance and provide equal opportunities for career advancement. Offer flexible engagement arrangements to accommodate diverse needs.

Monitoring and Evaluation for Gender Equality

Monitoring Progress in Gender Equality		Monitoring and Evaluation Tools for Gender Equality in CSOs	
Gender Representation Tracking	Impact Assessment	Metrics and Indicators	Regular Reviews
Regularly monitor and report on the gender distribution in leadership roles within CSOs.	Evaluate the impact of gender-equal leadership on organisational success and effectiveness.	Utilize specific tools to measure gender representation and impact within CSOs.	Conduct periodic assessments to track progress and adjust strategies as needed for better gender equality outcomes.

Case Study: Austria Volunteering Sector

Focus	Findings		Factors Influencing Advancement
	Gender Disparities	**Field-Specific Ratios**	
Social inequality in volunteering across four fields: politics, social services, religion, and sports.	Women are generally underrepresented in management roles, particularly in sports, politics, and social services.	**Religion/faith-based volunteering:** There is higher female participation (66.4%), and women hold 55.9% of managerial roles. **Social Services:** 55.3% female participation, but fewer women in senior positions. **Sports:** Only 16.7% of management are women despite 30.7% female participation. **Politics:** 29.1% female participation with a similar disparity in managerial roles.	Education and occupational status can improve access to higher positions, but gender continues to be a major factor in determining leadership roles.

CEV, 'Gender analysis and inequality in volunteering'

Case Study: Stockholm Volunteer Organization

Context	Gender Imbalance	Key Concepts	Findings
Analysis of a volunteer rescue organization in Stockholm.	76% of volunteers are men. Leadership and supervisory roles are predominantly held by men.	**Homosocial Reproduction:** Men are included and promoted over women, creating a male-dominated environment. **Masculine Norms:** Tasks and roles are gendered, favoring masculine attributes and excluding women.	**Discrimination:** Women face both organizational and cultural discrimination. **Stereotyping:** Women's competence is often questioned; they must work harder to gain recognition. **Structural Barriers:** Organizational norms prioritize work over family responsibilities, disadvantaging women. **Impact:** Women are less likely to advance or be taken seriously in a male-dominated setting.

CEV, 'Gender analysis and inequality in volunteering'

Case Study: France Volontaires

Achieved 54% women in leadership roles through inclusive recruitment and development programs.

Overview

France Volontaires is a prominent organisation supporting international volunteering.

Gender Representation

Women hold 54% of leadership roles within the organisation.

Initiatives

Inclusive recruitment practices and leadership development programs specifically empowering women volunteers.

Impact

Enhanced decision-making processes and overall organizational effectiveness.

Case Study: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

Reached 55% women in leadership positions through diversity strategies and targeted development initiatives.

Overview

NCVO is a leading umbrella body for voluntary organisations in England.

Gender Representation

Women hold 55% of leadership roles within NCVO.

Initiatives

Diversity and inclusion strategies promoting gender parity at all levels, and specific leadership development programs supporting women's advancement.

Impact

More dynamic and effective leadership within the organization.

National Specific Case Study - Organisations

What can be done?

- Reflection

- Drafting/proposing ideas for personal action plans and the next steps

Resources and Further Reading on Gender Equality in CSOs

International Policies

[EU Strategy for Gender Equality](), [OSCE Commitments on Gender Equality](), [UN Women's Agenda for Gender Equality]()

Reports and Data

[EIGE Gender Equality Report](), [Centre for European Volunteering Report](), NCVO Gender in Leadership Report, [CIVICUS Blog on Women Leaders]()

Online Resources

[Global Standard for CSO Accountability, EU TACSO 3 Checklist](), [Council of Europe Gender Equality Standards](), [Oxfam Women's Leadership Participation Overview]()

Other Useful Resources and Further Reading on Gender Equality in CSOs

- CIVICUS Blog on Women Leaders: [Why We Need More Women Leaders](#)
- Global Standard for CSO Accountability: [Global Standard Guidance Materials](#)
- EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024: [EU Action Plan](#)
- Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023: [Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy](#)
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EU SURVEY

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Reference of the project (project number): 101194233

Type of activity: Training

Title of the event: Training on Gender Equality in CSO Leadership (Boards)

Duration of the event in days: 0.3

Did the event take place physically or was it online?