

Policy on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Azad Foundation

1. Purpose

Azad Foundation recognises Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) as core to its vision, mission and values. The purpose of this policy is to create and sustain a workplace that is equitable, inclusive, respectful and free from discrimination.

The Organisation affirms that all individuals associated with Azad Foundation shall be treated with dignity and fairness, regardless of gender, caste, class, race, ethnicity, colour, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or any other personal characteristic. Through this policy, Azad Foundation seeks to address systemic inequities and consciously foster inclusive practices across all levels of the organisation.

2. Definition

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion refers to the principles and practices that ensure:

- **Diversity:** Representation and participation of people from varied social, cultural and identity backgrounds.
- **Equity:** Fairness in policies, processes and outcomes, recognising different needs and structural barriers.
- **Inclusion:** Creating a work environment where all individuals feel respected, valued and able to participate fully.

This policy affirms every individual's right to the full and indivisible enjoyment of human rights and the constitutional rights guaranteed under the laws of India within the workplace.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all persons associated with Azad Foundation, including:

- Employees (permanent and contractual)
- Interns, trainees and volunteers
- Consultants and vendors
- Any other individuals engaged in work for or on behalf of the organisation

The policy applies across all offices, programmes and locations of Azad Foundation.

4. Policy Statement

Azad Foundation is committed to building a workplace culture that:

- Is free from discrimination, harassment and exclusion
- Promotes equal opportunity and fair treatment
- Recognises and addresses unconscious bias

- Encourages participation, voice and leadership from marginalised communities

The Organisation adopts a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination in any form.

5. Key Commitments and Practices

5.1 Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination

Azad Foundation is an equal opportunity employer. Discrimination on the basis of caste, gender, disability, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other identity is strictly prohibited.

This applies to all aspects of employment, including recruitment, training, performance management, promotion, benefits and termination. Discriminatory conduct by external stakeholders such as vendors, partners or visitors towards employees will also not be tolerated.

5.2 Inclusive Recruitment and Workforce Diversity

The Organisation actively encourages applications from individuals belonging to marginalised and underrepresented communities. Where appropriate, affirmative measures may be taken to improve representation, including in leadership roles, while adhering to principles of fairness and competence.

5.3 Awareness, Training and Communication

Azad Foundation undertakes regular sensitisation and capacity-building initiatives on diversity, equity and inclusion for employees, interns, trainees and volunteers. Leadership and organisational communications reinforce inclusive values through meetings, internal communications and public platforms.

5.4 Accessibility

The Organisation strives to ensure accessibility in physical spaces, digital platforms, learning opportunities and workplace practices, to the extent reasonably possible, in order to create a barrier-free and enabling environment.

5.5 Advancing a Culture of Inclusion

Azad Foundation observes and commemorates significant national and international days related to gender justice, disability rights, caste equity and LGBTQIA+ inclusion, such as International Women's Day, International Day of Persons with Disabilities and Pride Month. These initiatives aim to deepen awareness and strengthen inclusive organisational culture.

5.6 Prevention of Sexual and Other Harassment

Azad Foundation is committed to providing a safe work environment free from sexual harassment and other forms of unlawful harassment. The Organisation follows applicable laws and has a dedicated policy and mechanism for prevention, prohibition and redressal of sexual harassment at the workplace.

6. Implementation

To operationalise this policy, Azad Foundation will:

1. Encourage applications from marginalised communities through recruitment communications.
2. Aim to progressively increase representation of marginalised groups across roles and leadership levels.
3. Conduct periodic DEI orientation and refresher sessions for all categories of workers.
4. Provide equitable access to wellbeing, care and support mechanisms.
5. Take conscious steps to create inclusive and dignified office environments.

7. Roles and Responsibilities:

Board of Directors

- Provide strategic oversight and reinforce the Organisation's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Ensure that DEI principles are embedded within organisational policies and governance frameworks.

Senior Leadership / Management

- Demonstrate leadership commitment to DEI through actions and decision-making.
- Ensure fair, inclusive and non-discriminatory practices across programmes, teams and locations.
- Allocate resources and support initiatives that promote inclusion and equity.

Human Resources (HR)

- Integrate DEI principles into recruitment, performance management, learning and development, and employee wellbeing processes.
- Facilitate orientation, sensitisation and capacity-building programmes on DEI.
- Receive, document and address grievances related to discrimination or exclusion in a confidential, fair and timely manner.
- Monitor implementation of this policy and recommend improvements as required.

Managers and Supervisors

- Foster inclusive team environments and address bias or exclusionary behaviour promptly.
- Ensure equal access to opportunities, feedback and professional growth for team members.
- Act as the first point of support for employees raising concerns related to inclusion or discrimination.

All Employees, Interns, Volunteers and Consultants

- Uphold the principles of dignity, respect and inclusion in all workplace interactions.
- Refrain from discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour.
- Report concerns or violations of this policy through appropriate channels.

Vendors and External Partners

- Adhere to the Organisation's DEI principles while engaging with Azad Foundation staff.
- Refrain from any conduct that is discriminatory, harassing or disrespectful.

8. Grievance Redressal

Azad Foundation has an internal grievance redressal mechanism through which any individual covered under this policy may raise concerns related to discrimination, harassment, denial of opportunity or unfair treatment.

Complaints may be raised with the Human Resources team or through designated State Leads and National Leadership team Members. The Organisation will ensure confidentiality, fairness and timely action during the grievance redressal process. Where violations are established, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with organisational policies and applicable laws.

8. Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its relevance, effectiveness and alignment with legal requirements and organisational values