

Position paper on Entrepreneurs du Monde, its ecosystem¹ and its programmes on gender

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Gender equality issues are at the heart of the international agenda and of the Goals for Sustainable Development (Goal 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"). They are recognized as a true vehicle for social justice and effectiveness, essential to sustainable development. In recent years, they have also been at the heart of international donors' financing strategies such as the Agence Française de Développement, which has made them a cross-cutting priority in its interventions.

Entrepreneurs du Monde fully recognizes itself in these social justice objectives and believes that taking better consideration of gender equality issues contributes to the success of its action. The organisation has been reflecting on gender issues for several years and in a more active way since 2017, with the creation of a working group within the employee team. The topic is also part of the 2017-2021 strategic planning (inclusion of equity among the association's principles; inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the definition of "gaining autonomy", an expression which appears in Entrepreneurs du Monde's mission).

In 2018, with the support of specialized consultants, Entrepreneurs du Monde conducted a "Diagnosis on gender equality within Entrepreneurs du Monde" which was presented to the Board of Directors and to the teams during several feedback sessions. This diagnosis has been the starting point for implementing a gender equality strategy that encompasses both the internal and organizational aspects of Entrepreneurs du Monde, its ecosystem and programmes, as well as the operations lead in the various countries where there organisations work.

This paper describes how Entrepreneurs du Monde and its network mainstream gender empowerment and equality in their missions. It is an official and strategic document.

A. Definitions and framework Entrepreneurs du Monde refers to on gender²

Gender is a sociological concept that allows us to think about the social construction of differences between masculine and feminine, men and women, in a given society at a given time. It distinguishes between biological sex (which is called "sex") and social sex (called gender).

However, the attributes associated with women and men, with feminine and masculine, are not on an equal footing³. Thus, not only are differences between women and men socially constructed, they are hierarchical in representations and in facts at the expense of women.

The "gender" approach allows us to understand that inequalities between women and men are the product of a social construction resulting from the social norms specific to each society. It makes

¹ The ecosystem includes Microfinance Solidaire SAS, Entrepreneurs du Monde's Foundation, Entrepreneurs du Monde's endowment fund and the investment vehicle currently being created (NVI).

² Main source: F3E, Fiches pratiques vivre le genre, 2018 <https://f3e.asso.fr/ressource/vivre-le-genre-9-fiches-pratiques-pour-faire-progresser-egalite-de-genre/> (in French)

³ Françoise Héritier, Michelle Perrot, Sylviane Agacinski, Nicole Bacharan, La plus belle histoire des femmes, Seuil, 2011 : "Everywhere, at all times and in all places, the masculine is considered superior to the feminine".



it possible to question and deconstruct power relations and stereotypes attributed to women and men and fight against inequalities and discrimination by making them visible in order to take them into account in policies and project development.

The gender approach seeks equality between women and men in terms of rights and opportunities in all areas of life, particularly on the following subjects:

- Access to and control of economic resources;
- Access to education;
- Participation in family and community decisions;
- Presence and influence in local and national decision-making structures;
- Control of one's body and health;
- The right to live in safety and without violence.

The gender approach also aims to support the **self-sufficiency and empowerment** of individuals and of women in particular. Empowerment refers to a process of awareness, of deconstruction and reconstruction that enables people to acquire power over their lives and over their environment, community or society. It refers to the ability to act independently, to make choices for oneself but also to make decisions in one's family, in one's community, and then to promote changes around oneself, in one's society for example.

Empowerment takes into account the needs, interests and differentiated roles of women and men when necessary, in order to meet both their practical needs and their strategic interests⁴.

Practical needs	Strategic interests
<p>The practical needs are the improvement of living conditions in terms of access to healthcare, housing, income, childcare....</p> <p>Practical needs can generally be met by material contributions. Meeting these needs does not necessarily change situations of gender inequality.</p>	<p>Strategic interests are the advancement of social status and equal rights and opportunities.</p> <p>They are linked to political, cultural, socio-economic contexts which create inequitable situations.</p> <p>Progress in meeting women's strategic needs, such as access to and control of economic resources, participation in decision-making, wage non-discrimination and the reduction of violence against women is likely to reduce gender inequalities.</p>

B. Entrepreneurs du Monde's mission and vision on gender

Entrepreneurs du Monde's vision is that of *"a fair and sustainable world in which everyone has access to basic services, opportunities for entrepreneurship and self-empowerment and the means to take care of themselves, their families, their communities and the planet"*.

As for its mission, *"Entrepreneurs du Monde supports the social and economic development of vulnerable communities in Africa, Asia, Haiti and France by setting up and incubating sustainable local organisations which in turn help their communities to empower themselves through entrepreneurship, energy access and climate change adaptation"*.

Several elements of Entrepreneurs du Monde's mission are directly linked to gender issues:

⁴ The distinction between practical needs and strategic interests was developed by sociologist Maxine Molyneux. (Mobilisation without Emancipation? Women's Interests, States and Revolution in Nicaragua; *Feminist Studies* II, 2, 1985.)

- Women are over-represented in extremely poor families⁵, a major cause of vulnerability.
- In most countries, women have less access than men to land and property ownership and have limited freedom to enjoy human rights. They generally support children and carry out most domestic activities⁶.
- For the same reasons, more limited rights and opportunities, the path to autonomy is definite and particularly difficult for women.
- Entrepreneurs du Monde creates and/or supports local organizations that seek to reconcile economic balance with a social mission. It is a vision of a different economy, innovative in most countries and which sometimes disrupts established practices. It also means best practices regarding the equal treatment of employees of all gender.

Entrepreneurs du Monde has a vision of social transformation and societal change that goes hand in hand with equality and access to rights and opportunities for all, promoted by the gender mainstreaming approach.

It seeks to take into account both the practical needs and strategic interests of women and men.

It strives to share its vision of gender in all contexts where the organization and its partners operate.

C. A global approach that covers both organizational and operational aspects

The gender strategy applies to Entrepreneurs du Monde's whole ecosystem, as well as to programmes in all countries.

The chosen approach is global and dual:

- It covers **organisational issues**, including issues relating to human resource management, equal access to decision-making bodies, organisation of work and the prevention and management of gender-based and sexual violence at work.
- It also has an **operational focus** that allows for the promotion of a gender mainstreaming approach to the activities carried out.

Organizational component

Through its commitment to gender equality, Entrepreneurs du Monde looks to promote an egalitarian and inclusive organisation of work in all countries, whatever the cultural context.

In this context, Entrepreneurs du Monde is committed to:

- Prevent all forms of discrimination at work, particularly in recruitment, promotion and access to positions of responsibility. It pays special attention to the management of maternity leave (including return to work), parental leave and equal pay for women and men.
- Promote equal access for women and men to decision-making spaces and elected bodies by seeking parity in the appointment of members of governance bodies.
- Prevent and manage all forms of gender-based and sexual violence by organizing awareness-raising and communication activities and setting up a procedure for alerting and dealing with situations of violence at work.

Operational component

⁵UN Women, The Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 : Women are more likely than men to live among the poorest 20 per cent of households in 41 of the 75 countries for which data are available.

⁶Women carry out 66% of the world's work (including unpaid work), produce 50% of the food, but receive only 10% of the income and possess only 1% of the property (World Bank, 2012b).

Entrepreneurs du Monde aims to promote an integrated approach to gender in its ecosystem and its four units: social microfinance, professional integration and support for the development of very small businesses, access to energy and agro-entrepreneurship, by:

- The formalization of a vision, mission and social objectives integrating a gender perspective for each programme
- Social performance management and operations management systems including:
 - procedures to ensure the respectful and equitable treatment of women and men using the products and services;
 - The collection of disaggregated data enabling the assessment of the differentiated needs of women and men, as well as of their practical needs and strategic interests;
 - The adaptation of the products and services offered to take into account the practical needs and strategic interests of women and men in a logic of empowerment;
 - The evaluation of changes in the beneficiaries' daily lives, integrating gender;
- Integration into networks committed to gender equality and empowerment, collaboration with specialized structures on these issues.

Based on these general operational commitments, each unit and ecosystem element develops a method to address the gender issues specific to its operations.

D. Transversal implementation ensured by gender focal points

The gender strategy is implemented by a network of gender focal points appointed for each of Entrepreneurs du Monde's programmes or countries it operates in and coordinated by a gender focal point based in Entrepreneurs du Monde's headquarters.

These individuals are trained on gender issues and have the mandate to be a source of proposals and to support the gender initiatives carried out by their organisation.

See the gender focal points' mission letter attached.

Mission of gender focal points
at NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION
June 2022

The mission of the gender focal point(s) is to train and support their organizations so that they are aware of gender issues and participate in achieving the same rights and opportunities for all.

This document defines the role and missions assigned to the gender focal points of NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION.

A. Context

Gender issues and gender equality are recognized as a real vector of social justice and efficiency, essential for sustainable development. Entrepreneurs du Monde adopted a position paper on gender in 2019, and since then, a common dynamic developed among its partner programs and organizations regarding gender.

Add 2-3 lines referring to the ORGANIZATION's commitments and reference documents related to gender (mission, principles, charter... possibly HR survey, social audit where findings have been made in relation to the subject)

B. Appointment

There is one focal point per program or organization, or more than one for large organizations or those facing particular challenges or ambitions.

The gender focal points are appointed on a voluntary basis. They do not necessarily belong to the management of their organization. Ideally, they have been with the organization for several months and plan to stay for the medium term (>18 months). They demonstrate the following qualities:

- Interest in gender inequalities, social justice, access to rights,
- Willingness and ability to move limits,
- Reliability,
- Tact.

The mission covers x% of the person's working time, i.e. x days per month. The mission is included in the job description and paid at the usual salary level. The assignment of this mission does not change the remuneration but implies a reorganization of the working time and the tasks/responsibilities previously assigned.

The accomplishment of the gender focal point's mission and the achievement of the objectives that may be set are reviewed each year in the same way as the person's main responsibilities, according to the organization's usual evaluation process.

The mission may be withdrawn from the person by his or her management, in conjunction with Entrepreneurs du Monde gender focal point(s), if the person does not fulfil his or her mission or if his or her reputation or actions are incompatible with this mission.

C. Mission

The gender focal point intervenes both :

- on the **organizational side** in relation to human resources issues, work organization, non-discrimination and prevention of gender-based and sexual violence within the organization.
- on the **operational side**, i.e. on the integration of gender into the operational projects and activities carried out by the organisation.

More specifically, the gender focal point must:

1. Be a resource person on gender by :

- Identifying resource persons and organizations, tools and documentation on gender issues and sexual and gender-based violence in his/her country and sector of intervention.
- Providing advice and support to the organization's employees facing gender issues

2. Promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills on gender issues by :

- Contributing to the creation of awareness-raising and training materials.
- Facilitating awareness-raising activities for colleagues and beneficiaries on gender issues and the prevention of gender-based and sexual violence.

3. Support and encourage his/her organization to take gender into account in its internal functioning and activities by:

- Participating in the organization's key moments and mechanisms where a gender approach is expected: charter, social audit, HR policies and internal surveys, complaint mechanism, surveys with partners, new services, etc.
- Integrating gender related topics in the training plans for partners
- Establishing partnerships with organisations engaged in gender equality
- and any other relevant action.

D. Code of Conduct

In addition to respecting their organisation's code of conduct, Gender Focal Persons pay a particular attention to:

- being respectful to all ;
- being neutral and fair ;
- respecting confidentiality.

E. Work arrangements

Training for the role

Gender focal persons receive training and capacity building on gender and related issues (discrimination, gender-based and sexual violence, etc.). These trainings are done with the other gender focal persons of Entrepreneurs du Monde's network.

In this context, they need access to a computer and a good internet connection provided by their organization.

Hierarchical and functional links

The gender focal persons are appointed by their management and report to them in a way to be agreed upon: training and meeting reports, yearly or monthly reports on the activities organised, etc. They have also a trans-functional link to Entrepreneurs du Monde's gender focal point(s).

Gender focal points are involved in the operational planning process of their organization, to highlight actions that will be subject to specific work in light of gender and to specify their contribution and the technical support expected from Entrepreneurs du Monde. They steer the action plan that results from this planning.

Visibility and transversality of the mission within the organization

The mission requires that the gender focal person be known within the organization and have easy access to all teams. This person is therefore formally introduced to the teams and has the support of the management to ensure his/her mission in the whole organisation.

Networking

The person collaborates with the other gender focal points of Entrepreneurs du Monde's network and can rely on the skills existing in the network. S/he contributes to knowledge transfer and skills development in the network.

Entrepreneurs du Monde's gender focal point(s) ensures the coordination of the network of gender focal points.

Date: xxx

Signature of the gender focal person

xxx

Signature of the management

xxx