B.6 GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

1. Objective

Dakshin recognises that there are systemic and structural practices that create barriers to the achievement of equality and inclusion at the workplace and within our programmes. This policy outlines and affirms Dakshin's strong commitment to eliminate discrimination, bias, and gender-based harassment across all our worksites/offices and aspects of our work. The policy seeks to ensure equal opportunity and fair treatment in recruitment, career progression, leadership and decision-making, programme design and implementation, and organisational culture. The purpose of the policy is also to promote awareness and understanding, encourage greater engagement with equality and inclusion issues, and to provide opportunities to discuss, act and create a safe environment for open dialogue and inclusive practices for all staff.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff of Dakshin (includes employees, consultants, freelance contractors, interns, and volunteers) and to their programmes, projects, field interactions and interventions.

3. Procedures & processes to enable GEDSI within the organisation

Dakshin has a zero-tolerance approach to any discrimination and exclusion based on gender, disability, caste or other forms of identity. However, due to the specific nature of some roles within our organisation, there may be **inherent physical, cognitive, social or sensory requirements** that are essential to safely and effectively perform the job. These requirements are based strictly on operational necessity and are not intended to exclude or discriminate.

In order to promote equality and inclusion at Dakshin, the organisation:

a. Fosters a culturally diverse, gender and disability-sensitive workplace that is safe, which protects against discrimination and harassment and encourages full participation of all staff in the organisation.

b. Promotes diversity, equity and inclusion in the organisation by providing equal employment and internship opportunities by removing unlawful or unreasonable barriers to participation.

c. Integrates equality and inclusion principles into our processes, management, leadership and performance framework.

d. Ensures all staff have access to awareness building material on gender equality and unconscious gender biases to ensure they are able to work in alignment with this policy and Dakshin's inclusion strategies. The HR team coordinates/conducts the training. HR also reviews sex/gender disaggregated data on staff and submits an annual report to the Director on trends in gender ratios across programmes, leadership and decision-making roles etc, to measure the effectiveness of current diversity and inclusion processes.

e. Ensures that the workplace is characterised by high levels of professionalism and inclusion sensitivity. All inappropriate language or behaviour will be called out when it occurs.

f. Provides a safe workplace environment that promotes safety and security. Dakshin does not tolerate violence being perpetrated in and from the workplace and will be dealt with strictly as per our disciplinary measures. This is outlined in the Code of Conduct.

g. Ensures the leave policy includes maternal and paternal leave arrangements.

4. Policies that reinforce our commitment

Dakshin's commitment to diversity and equality is also articulated in other policies apart from GEDSI with corresponding accountability mechanisms that allow employees to provide feedback or raise concerns or complaints.

a. Code of conduct - Dakshin's Code of conduct focuses on our duty towards creating a safe and respectful work culture and to carry out our work across regions with honesty and integrity

b. Staff hiring and increments - All hiring, promotions, increments are based solely on their qualifications, experience and ability and our policy ensures that there is no discrimination in making these decisions.

c. Prevention of sexual harassment (POSH) at the workplace - Our POSH policy addresses sexual harassment at the workplace and ensures that staff are able to work in a safe environment free from sexual harassment. This policy is in line with the law around the Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (POSH)(2013) and includes regular training of all staff on gender equality, unconscious bias and prevention of sexual harassment.

d. Grievance Redressal policy - We are dedicated to the creation of a safe and respectful environment. However, we are cognisant of the fact that grievances and concerns may arise in the course of work, and we are committed to addressing them promptly, fairly and confidentially. This policy outlines the procedures that need to be followed to raise and resolve concerns within the organisation.

5. Guiding Principles for Dakshin's programme design and implementation

a. **Inclusion as a core goal:** We believe that change is more likely to be achieved through a focus on equitable and democratic governance of natural resources, which can lead to better environmental outcomes as well as improved social and economic outcomes. Our programmes are intended to reach marginalised and excluded people and therefore should address inequalities. Programmes that do not address inequalities in their design and theory of change are unlikely to be successful in the long term and may inadvertently cause harm.

b. **Power analysis:** Programme design and implementation should be grounded in contextual analysis of gender and other power relations, which draws on technical expertise, research and, crucially, lived experience. Approaches should be adaptive and iterative in response to monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

c. **Meaningful participation and representation:** We differ from conventional conservation organisations by incorporating the rights of local communities to sustainably utilise natural

resources and to exercise their cultural rights and worldviews into our conservation strategy. We believe people are the experts on their own lives and must be involved in design and implementation of projects, through their representative organisations and directly. Consultation can happen at many levels and in many ways, but it must be genuine, meaningful, reciprocal, and systematic.

d. **Do no harm**: A 'do no harm' approach addresses the risks inherent in the work we do. Marginalisation and stigma are often accompanied by backlash and violence, considerations that can only be navigated through careful and well-designed programming. This includes the risk of 'doing nothing'.

e. **Intersectionality:** Inequalities cannot be treated separately, as they are linked and often compounding.

f. **An organisational approach:** Unless inclusion is deeply and systematically embedded into an organisation's culture, structure and the attitudes of its staff, it is likely to remain a policy aspiration.

g. **Accessibility:** Practical access is a crucial enabler of participation in decision-making. If a women's focussed programme does not account for childcare, then none of the above will be achieved. Accessibility, however, is not an accident: it must always be planned for and resourced. This also includes considerations of languages used in outreach material, campaigns and meetings.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for implementing this policy lies with all levels of the organisation. The Director is accountable for ensuring organizational compliance and culture. Programme personnel must integrate GEDSI into design and implementation. The Human Resources team ensures inclusive recruitment, training, and pay parity within the organisation. Community facilitators, field staff, and researchers are expected to adhere to inclusive engagement practices, model respectful behavior, and proactively create safe environments for dialogue and action.

7. Policy Review and Continuous Improvement

This GEDSI Policy will be reviewed in response to significant social, legal, or organizational changes. The review will be participatory and draw from feedback, implementation experiences, and evolving best practices. Amendments will be approved by the Board of Trustees and disseminated to all stakeholders.