

INSTITUTIONAL GENDER EQUALITY PLAN (GEP)

2025–2026

Centre for Development Support Initiatives (CEDSI) Nigeria

Reporting & Implementation Period: 2025–2026

Date of Adoption: 2 July 2025

Authorizing Official: Professor Mina Ogbanga, Founding Executive Director

Publication Status: Approved Public Policy Document

Prepared in alignment with the EU Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan mandatory criteria

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1. Board Adoption and Certification

The Governing Board of the Centre for Development Support Initiatives (CEDSI) Nigeria hereby formally adopts this Gender Equality Plan (GEP) as the organization's official policy framework for promoting gender equality, equity, diversity, inclusion, and non-discrimination across institutional governance, administration, research, programme implementation, partnerships, and community engagement, effective 2 July 2025 under Resolution #2025-GEP-001.

This Plan aligns with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Nigeria's National Gender Policy, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 5), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the African Union Agenda 2063, the Maputo Protocol, the ECOWAS Gender Policy, the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan eligibility requirements, and relevant International Labour Organization conventions. Section 5 sets out each of these frameworks in full and the specific obligations CEDSI draws from them.

The Board directs all staff, consultants, volunteers, interns, researchers, contractors, and project partners to comply fully with the provisions of this Plan and to contribute actively to its implementation.

Certification. [FLAG: an earlier draft of this section left the Board Resolution number and signature blocks blank. Before this document is treated as execution-ready, confirm the final Resolution number if different from the placeholder above, and attach signature blocks for the Founding Executive Director and any co-signing Board members — an open placeholder should not be carried forward indefinitely into a document intended for external submission.]

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2. Foreword by the Founding Executive Director

It is with great pleasure and a profound sense of responsibility that I present this Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2025–2026 on behalf of the Centre for Development Support Initiatives (CEDSI) Nigeria.

Gender equality is not merely an aspiration for CEDSI; it is a precondition for the kind of institution we are trying to build — one whose credibility with communities, governments, and international partners depends on practicing internally what we advocate for externally. CEDSI works across a wide portfolio of development sectors, from institutional strengthening and research to environmental

sustainability, public health, and community empowerment (Section 4 sets out this full portfolio). Within that portfolio, our Triple Nexus initiative — combining Artificial Intelligence, Social Work, and Environmental Sustainability — is one of our most distinctive areas of work, and this Plan gives it particular attention where its gender dimensions are specific to it (Section 9.4), without treating it as the whole of who we are.

[DATA NEEDED: CEDSI's founding year and number of years in operation, for inclusion here.] We cannot ask government, industry, or international partners to take gender seriously in their own policies and programmes if we have not first taken it seriously in our governance, staffing, and culture. This Plan is our answer to that responsibility — a living institutional commitment, not a document produced once to satisfy a funder's checklist and filed away.

[FLAG: the language above is drafted in the Executive Director's voice as a placeholder; please confirm final wording with Professor Mina Ogbanga before publication.]

Professor Mina Ogbanga
Founding Executive Director
Centre for Development Support Initiatives (CEDSI) Nigeria
Date: 2 July 2025

3. Executive Summary

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2025–2026 sets out how CEDSI Nigeria will institutionalize gender equality across its governance, staffing, programmatic work, and research over the current implementation period.

The Plan is organized in three parts. Sections 4 through 6 establish the foundation: CEDSI's institutional profile and strategic areas of work (Section 4), the legal and policy frameworks the Plan is grounded in (Section 5), and an honest institutional gender analysis identifying what CEDSI already does well and where it still needs to build capacity (Section 6). Sections 7 through 9 set the direction: the Plan's vision, goal, and guiding principles (Section 7), the governance architecture that makes implementation enforceable rather than aspirational (Section 8), and five strategic priority areas carrying concrete, numeric, time-bound targets aligned to the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan's five recommended thematic areas (Section 9). Sections 10 through 12 make the Plan operational: a phased implementation roadmap (Section 10), a monitoring, evaluation, and learning architecture with named indicator owners (Section 11), and formal adoption (Section 12).

Two commitments run through the entire document. First, every target in Section 9 carries a number and a date — a Gender Equality Plan that only says an organization will “increase” or “strengthen” something, without saying by how much or by when, cannot be measured or enforced. Second, where CEDSI does not yet have the baseline data needed to make a claim credible, this Plan says so explicitly, marked [DATA NEEDED], rather than describing a commitment as though it were already substantiated.

4. Institutional Profile

4.1 About CEDSI Nigeria

The Centre for Development Support Initiatives (CEDSI) Nigeria is an independent, non-profit research and development organization headquartered in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria [FLAG: confirm this HQ location is current], working with governments, civil society, academic institutions, development partners, the private sector, and local communities to advance sustainable development through evidence-based research, policy engagement, institutional strengthening, capacity development, advocacy, and community-based interventions. [DATA NEEDED: CEDSI's founding year.]

4.2 Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Vision. To be a leading centre of excellence in research, innovation, policy support, and institutional development, advancing inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development in Nigeria, Africa, and the global community.

Mission. To promote sustainable development through high-quality research, capacity development, policy advocacy, institutional strengthening, strategic partnerships, and innovative programmes that improve the well-being of individuals, communities, and institutions.

Core values. Integrity, Excellence, Equity, Inclusion, Innovation, Partnership, and Professionalism. Equity and Inclusion carry the most direct weight for this Plan: they commit CEDSI, at the level of institutional identity rather than only policy, to fairness and meaningful participation regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic background.

4.3 Strategic Areas of Work

CEDSI implements programmes across a broad portfolio: institutional strengthening and organizational development; research and policy analysis; capacity development and professional training; social development and community empowerment; gender equality and social inclusion; environmental sustainability and climate resilience; governance, transparency, and accountability; youth development and leadership; public health and community well-being; education and lifelong learning; economic empowerment and livelihood development; and monitoring, evaluation, learning, and knowledge management.

The Triple Nexus. Within this broader portfolio, CEDSI runs a distinctive initiative combining Artificial Intelligence, Social Work, and Environmental Sustainability — three domains CEDSI treats as interdependent rather than separately resourced verticals, on the view that ethical AI design, community-facing social work, and climate and blue-economy justice in the Niger Delta each shape, and are shaped by, the others. This Plan gives the Triple Nexus initiative specific gender-dimension attention in Section 9.4, alongside — not instead of — gender mainstreaming across CEDSI's other strategic areas.

Gender equality is intended to be integrated across all strategic areas, not confined to a single programme line; the priority areas in Section 9 apply organization-wide.

4.4 Rationale and Scope

Gender inequality limits opportunity for individuals and undermines the effectiveness and sustainability of development interventions; addressing it requires institutional action that goes beyond policy statements to measurable commitments and accountability mechanisms (Section 9). This Plan applies to all individuals engaged by or acting on behalf of CEDSI: Governing Board members, executive management, permanent and temporary staff, consultants and technical experts, volunteers and interns, researchers and fellows, project personnel, contractors, and partner organizations where applicable.

4.5 Institutional Commitment

CEDSI commits to embedding gender equality into its governance systems, organizational culture, policies, programmes, and partnerships, and to allocating appropriate financial, human, and technical resources to implement, monitor, and continuously improve this Plan. Section 8 sets out how.

5. Legal, Policy, and Institutional Framework

This GEP is grounded in international, regional, and national instruments. Each is treated below as a source of specific obligations shaping CEDSI's practice, not merely a citation to be listed.

5.1 International Frameworks

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Affirms equality before the law and freedom from discrimination on any grounds, including sex; CEDSI ensures institutional policies and employment practices uphold this baseline.

CEDAW. As a State Party, Nigeria is committed to eliminating discrimination against women in political, economic, social, and employment life; CEDSI operationalizes this through the recruitment and career-progression commitments in Section 9.3.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). Its institutional-mechanisms priority is reflected directly in the Gender Steering Committee structure (Section 8.3).

UN Sustainable Development Goals. This GEP contributes primarily to SDG 5 (Gender Equality), intersecting with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action) through the Niger Delta and blue-economy work described in Section 9.4.1. Each SDG referenced corresponds to a specific, measurable commitment elsewhere in this Plan rather than a general aspiration.

5.2 African Regional Frameworks

African Union Agenda 2063. Aspiration 6 — an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of its women and youth — informs the leadership succession and mentorship commitments in Section 9.2.

Maputo Protocol. Guarantees women's rights to equality, dignity, participation, education, employment, health, and protection from violence; CEDSI adopts these principles across its institutional structures and programmes.

ECOWAS Gender Policy. Provides regional guidance for integrating gender perspectives into governance and development; reflected in CEDSI's gender-mainstreaming approach across all strategic areas (Section 9.4).

5.3 National Legal and Policy Framework

1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 17(2)(a). Guarantees equality of rights, obligations, and opportunities before the law. CEDSI treats this as the constitutional floor beneath every commitment in Section 9; none of those measures may be interpreted or implemented below this standard.

Nigeria National Gender Policy (2021–2026). Provides the domestic evidence-based framework for gender mainstreaming; CEDSI aligns its Gender Steering Committee structure and data requirements with it, and treats the Policy's 2026 horizon as a natural checkpoint for this Plan's own review (Section 11).

Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015. Provides legal protection against sexual harassment and abuse; underpins the zero-tolerance policy in Section 9.5.

Labour and employment legislation. CEDSI complies with Nigerian labour law governing equal opportunity, fair recruitment, decent work, workplace safety, and non-discrimination; employment decisions are based solely on competence, qualifications, integrity, and organizational need.

5.4 EU Horizon Europe GEP Mandatory Criteria

As an organization pursuing Horizon Europe and similar EU-funded opportunities, CEDSI is required to maintain a Gender Equality Plan satisfying four mandatory process-related building blocks and five recommended thematic areas addressed with **concrete measures and targets** — a phrase used verbatim in the EU Funding & Tenders Portal's self-assessment questionnaire and treated as a drafting instruction throughout this Plan, not just a label. Appendix D reproduces that questionnaire in full and maps each requirement to the specific section of this Plan and the evidence CEDSI can produce on request. The four building blocks — public GEP status, dedicated resources and expertise, sex/gender-disaggregated data collection, and mandatory training — are addressed in Section 12, Sections 8.11–8.12, Section 11, and Section 8.13 respectively. The five thematic areas correspond directly to Sections 9.1 through 9.5.

Failure to maintain a compliant GEP is not a minor administrative gap: for public bodies, research organizations, and higher/secondary education institutions applying to Horizon Europe as beneficiaries or affiliated entities, having a Gender Equality Plan is an eligibility criterion, and absence or inadequacy could result in exclusion from the list of successful applicants or, for signed grants, termination and recovery of funds already disbursed.

5.5 Institutional Policy Alignment

This GEP complements other CEDSI institutional policies, including the Human Resource Policy, Recruitment and Selection Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Child Protection Policy (where applicable), Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy, Code of Conduct, Occupational Health and Safety Policy, Research Ethics Policy, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Framework, and Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy. [FLAG: confirm which of these policies currently exist in adopted form versus in development, so this Plan does not imply a policy landscape that is not yet in place.]

5.6 Institutional Commitment to Legal Alignment

CEDSI recognizes that legal compliance alone is insufficient to achieve genuine gender equality; sustainable progress requires intentional leadership, institutional accountability, adequate resources, and measurable action. Section 11.7 requires the Gender Steering Committee to reassess CEDSI's alignment with every framework listed above during the annual review cycle, so that legislative or policy shifts are reflected in CEDSI's practice within twelve months of taking effect.

6. Institutional Gender Analysis and Situational Assessment

This Plan is informed by an institutional gender analysis, presented here in full — including its gaps — because a Gender Equality Plan built on an analysis that only describes strengths cannot credibly justify the priority areas in Section 9.

6.1 Institutional Strengths

- **Leadership commitment.** Senior management has prioritized the development and adoption of this Plan, evidenced by Board Resolution #2025-GEP-001 (Section 1).
- **Inclusive organizational vision.** CEDSI's vision, mission, and core values (Section 4.2) explicitly foreground equity and inclusion, giving this Plan an institutional identity to build on rather than starting from zero.
- **Multidisciplinary reach.** Work spanning research, policy engagement, capacity development, and the Triple Nexus initiative creates multiple entry points for embedding gender considerations (Section 9.4).
- **Partnership base.** Active collaboration with government, academia, civil society, and communities creates channels for gender-equality learning and accountability beyond CEDSI's own walls.

6.2 Institutional Challenges

As a growing organization, CEDSI faces challenges common to institutions building out formal gender-equality infrastructure for the first time: achieving balanced representation in leadership and governance (addressed in Section 9.2); the absence, until now, of standardized sex-disaggregated data collection (Section 11.3); uneven staff capacity on gender-mainstreaming practice (Section 8.13); and the need to formalize — rather than assume — procedures for preventing and responding to workplace harassment (Section 9.5). Naming these challenges directly, rather than describing CEDSI's practice only in aspirational terms, is what allows the targets in Section 9 to represent genuine change rather than restating an assumed status quo.

6.3 Baseline Assessment

At the commencement of this Plan (Section 10, Phase 1, Q1 2025), CEDSI will conduct a comprehensive institutional gender audit covering: governance (gender composition of the Board, management, and committees); human resources (staff distribution, recruitment and promotion trends, retention rates); institutional policies (existing equality provisions, grievance mechanisms, flexible-work arrangements); and programmes and research (integration of gender considerations, sex-disaggregated data practice). [DATA NEEDED: this audit has not yet produced baseline figures at the time of this Plan's drafting. Every numeric target in Section 9 that depends on a baseline — most critically the leadership-parity target in Section 9.2 — should be revisited once this audit reports, to confirm the target remains appropriately ambitious rather than either already met or unrealistic given the actual starting point.]

6.4 Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Primary Role in Implementation
Governing Board	Policy oversight and strategic leadership
Executive Director	Institutional leadership and accountability
Gender Steering Committee	Coordination and monitoring of implementation
Senior Management Team	Integration into departmental and project plans
Staff	Compliance with policies and active participation
Consultants and volunteers	Adherence to institutional standards
Development partners	Technical and financial support
Government institutions	Policy alignment and collaboration
Communities and beneficiaries	Participation, feedback, and accountability

6.5 Institutional Risks

Potential risks to implementation include limited financial resources, low staff awareness of gender-equality principles, resistance to organizational change, competing institutional priorities, inadequate monitoring systems, and staff turnover. Section 11.6 sets out CEDSI's specific mitigation measures for each.

6.6 Key Findings

CEDSI has a genuine institutional commitment and an enabling organizational vision to build on, but requires further institutionalization through formal policies and procedures, clear governance

arrangements, capacity development, evidence-based monitoring, dedicated resources, and stronger accountability mechanisms. This Plan provides the strategic framework for achieving those improvements over the 2025–2026 period.

7. Gender Equality Vision, Goal, and Guiding Principles

7.1 Vision and Goal

Vision. To build a Centre where gender equality, diversity, inclusion, and respect are institutionalized, enabling every individual to contribute fully to CEDSI's mission and benefit equitably from its opportunities.

Goal. To institutionalize gender equality across CEDSI's policies, systems, structures, programmes, and practices, creating an inclusive, safe, equitable, and accountable organization with equal participation, opportunity, and outcomes for all.

7.2 Strategic Objectives

CEDSI pursues seven strategic objectives, each operationalized with specific targets in the sections noted: (1) strengthen gender-responsive governance (Section 8); (2) promote an inclusive organizational culture (Section 9.1); (3) ensure equal employment opportunity (Section 9.3); (4) prevent gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination (Section 9.5); (5) mainstream gender across institutional functions, including the Triple Nexus initiative (Section 9.4); (6) build institutional capacity through training (Section 8.13); and (7) strengthen monitoring, learning, and accountability (Section 11). Listing these as objectives without immediately attaching numbers is deliberate — Section 9 is where each becomes a measurable commitment, so this section is not repeated with different figures there.

7.3 Guiding Principles

- **Equality and non-discrimination.** Every individual enjoys equal rights, opportunities, and treatment regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, or marital status.
- **Accountability.** Leaders, managers, staff, consultants, volunteers, and partners share responsibility for implementing this Plan and are held accountable for their respective roles (Section 8.14).
- **Transparency.** Implementation is open, evidence-based, and supported by clear reporting mechanisms (Section 11.5).
- **Evidence-based decision-making.** Institutional decisions relating to gender equality are informed by data, monitoring results, and good practice — not by assumption (Section 6.3's baseline commitment exists precisely to make this possible).
- **Continuous improvement.** Gender equality is an ongoing institutional commitment; CEDSI reviews its policies, practices, and performance annually (Section 11.9).

8. Governance, Leadership, Roles, and Responsibilities

8.1 Governing Board

The Board holds ultimate policy oversight for this Plan: it adopts the Plan and any subsequent revisions (Section 12), receives the Annual Gender Equality Progress Report (Section 11.5), and is the final approval authority for the resource allocations described in Section 8.11.

8.2 Executive Director

The Founding Executive Director chairs the Gender Steering Committee (Section 8.3), holds personal accountability for the leadership-parity target in Section 9.2 jointly with the Board, and reports institutional progress to the Board annually.

8.3 Gender Steering Committee (GSC): Terms of Reference

Composition. The GSC comprises the Gender Equality Officer (GEO), the Human Resources Lead, the Research Director, and elected staff representatives. [DATA NEEDED: number of elected staff representative seats, election method, and current named membership.]

Meeting cadence and quorum. The GSC meets quarterly, with additional meetings at the Chair's discretion or upon written request of at least two members for urgent escalations. A quorum requires the Chair or delegate plus at least three other members. [FLAG: confirm this quorum threshold against CEDSI's actual governance practice.]

Mandate. The GSC monitors GEP implementation against the roadmap in Section 10, reviews policy efficacy quarterly, and serves as the highest internal escalation point for gender-related grievances HR or the GEO cannot resolve at first instance (Section 9.5).

Records. Minutes of every GSC meeting are retained in the Evidence File (Section 8.14).

8.4 Gender Equality Officer (GEO)

The GEO holds day-to-day responsibility for GEP implementation; full terms of reference appear at Appendix B.

8.5 Senior Management Team

Senior managers integrate gender-equality considerations into their departmental plans and budgets, and carry the KPI-linked accountability described in Section 8.14.

8.6 Human Resources and Administration

HR owns the recruitment and career-progression mechanisms in Section 9.3, the flexible-work registry in Section 9.1, and maintains the Evidence File jointly with the GEO (Section 8.14).

8.7 Programme and Project Managers

Project managers are accountable for gender balance within their own project teams (Section 9.2) and for data-disaggregation compliance within their projects (Section 9.4).

8.8 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Unit

The MEL Unit coordinates the indicator-tracking, evaluation, and reporting architecture described in full in Section 11, in collaboration with the GSC.

8.9 Finance and Administration Unit

Finance administers the protected annual budget line described in Section 8.11 and reports utilization as part of the Annual Gender Equality Progress Report (Section 11.5).

8.10 Staff, Consultants, Volunteers, Interns, and Partners

All persons engaged by or acting on behalf of CEDSI are expected to comply with this Plan's provisions, including the zero-tolerance policy in Section 9.5, regardless of employment status or seniority.

8.11 Dedicated Resources: Human and Financial Commitment

CEDSI treats resource commitment and gender expertise as two distinct obligations, because the EU Funding & Tenders Portal's self-assessment questionnaire evaluates them as separable criteria even though they are often described together.

Human resources. CEDSI has appointed a dedicated, full-time GEO (Appendix B). [DATA NEEDED: name and start date of the current GEO, and whether the role is filled by an existing staff member or an external hire.]

Financial allocation. A protected annual budget line is established within CEDSI's core operational budget for unconscious-bias workshops, policy reviews, external audits, and wellness infrastructure (Appendix E). [DATA NEEDED: confirmed annual budget figure or percentage of total operating budget allocated to this line.]

8.12 Dedicated Resources: Gender-Equality Expertise

Separately from staffing and financial commitment, CEDSI maintains access to substantive gender-equality expertise: internal expertise held by the GEO (CV retained in the Evidence File) and external expertise engaged through contracts with independent gender specialists or trainers. [DATA NEEDED: names or credentials of any external gender consultants or trainers currently contracted or previously engaged.]

8.13 Capacity Building, Awareness-Raising, and Training

CEDSI commits to gender-equality training for two distinct required audiences, tracked separately in the Evidence File:

- **Staff (all levels).** Mandatory workshops on unconscious bias and gender-inclusive practice, including a module on gender and AI ethics specific to the Triple Nexus initiative (Section 9.4.1).
- **Decision-makers and senior leadership specifically.** A leadership-specific session on gender-responsive decision-making in budgeting, hiring, and programme design, in addition to the staff-wide training above — training delivered only at staff level tends to leave the decisions with the greatest structural impact untouched.

Evidence retained includes training plans and curricula, invitations and programmes, trainer contracts, and signed attendance registers for both tracks.

8.14 Accountability and Evidence Management

KPI integration. Gender-responsive KPIs are embedded into the annual performance appraisals of senior management, project directors, and team leads. [DATA NEEDED: 2–3 example KPIs currently in use.]

The Evidence File. HR and the GEO jointly maintain an audit-ready digital Evidence File containing GSC minutes, training attendance registers, expert contracts and CVs, and anonymized grievance records — the single consolidated source CEDSI would draw on to respond to a Horizon Europe compliance request or external audit, mapped directly onto Appendix D.

9. Strategic Priority Areas (Horizon Europe Thematic Compliance)

This Plan enforces concrete measures, with named accountable parties, numeric targets, and measurement cadences, across the five thematic areas recommended under the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan framework — organization-wide, not confined to any single strategic area.

9.1 Work-Life Balance and Organizational Culture

Rationale. Caregiving responsibilities in Nigeria disproportionately fall on women, and an organization that does not structurally accommodate this reality will systematically lose or under-promote female staff regardless of what its recruitment policy (Section 9.3) says on paper.

Baseline. [DATA NEEDED: current staff utilization of flexible/remote arrangements, or confirmation that no baseline exists — in which case the Section 6.3 diagnostic should supply it.]

Flexible working arrangements. Formal hybrid and remote-work policies for all eligible roles, prioritizing caregivers. Mechanism: HR maintains a registry of approved arrangements, reviewed annually. Accountable party: HR Lead, GSC oversight.

Core working hours. Mandatory core collaborative hours of 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM WAT, outside of which staff are not expected to respond to work communications, reinforced by leadership visibly modelling the boundary. Accountable party: all people-managers, monitored via the annual staff survey (Section 11.3).

Wellness and parental infrastructure. Designated private wellness and nursing spaces, and maternity/paternity leave exceeding statutory minimums. [DATA NEEDED: specific leave durations offered versus the statutory minimum.] Accountable party: HR Lead; measured via annual facilities and leave-utilization review.

9.2 Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-Making

Baseline. [DATA NEEDED: current gender composition of CEDSI's governance boards, executive leadership, and project management roles. This is the single most consequential missing figure in this Plan — see Section 6.3.]

Parity target. At least 50% female representation across all governance boards, executive leadership, and project management roles by Q4 2026.

Why this target and timeline. A 50% target rather than a lower interim figure was chosen because modest interim targets frequently become ceilings rather than floors. The 18-month runway to Q4 2026 aligns with the Section 10 roadmap's Phase 3 leadership review and gives the succession mechanism below time to produce credible internal candidates rather than forcing external hiring under time pressure.

Mechanism: succession planning and mentorship. An internal mentorship and leadership-acceleration programme pairing junior female staff with senior executive mentors, run on a cycle aligned with CEDSI's performance-review calendar. [DATA NEEDED: number of active or planned mentorship pairs for 2025–2026.]

Mechanism: panel representation. CEDSI prohibits staff from participating in all-male external panels (“manels”) and mandates gender balance at all CEDSI-hosted conferences and summits; the GEO logs declined invitations in the Evidence File.

Accountable party. Executive Director and Board jointly for the parity target; GEO for tracking and mentorship coordination; individual project directors for their own teams. **Measurement.** Reviewed against the target at each GSC quarterly meeting and reported in the Annual Progress Report (Section 11.5).

9.3 Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression

Baseline. [DATA NEEDED: gender ratio of new hires and internal promotions over the past 12–24 months, disaggregated by role level.]

Gender-neutral job descriptions. Mandatory standardized, gender-inclusive language in all postings; HR sign-off required against a pre-screened template before any vacancy is posted.

Blind recruitment. Anonymized résumé screening — removing names, gender, and graduation dates — for all initial shortlisting. [FLAG: confirm whether CEDSI's current recruitment workflow technically supports this anonymization step.]

Selection panel composition. All hiring and promotion interview panels must comprise at least 40% female representation; HR has authority to delay a hiring process rather than proceed with a non-compliant panel.

Accountable party. HR Lead. **Measurement.** Sex-disaggregated hiring and promotion data tracked continuously (Section 11.3). [FLAG: this Plan does not yet specify a numeric pipeline target beyond the 40% panel rule — for example, a target percentage of shortlists at gender parity. The GSC should set one once Section 6.3's baseline is available, rather than leaving this priority area without its own measurable outcome.]

9.4 Integration of the Gender Dimension into Research, Programmes, and Institutional Operations

A note on terminology. The Horizon Europe thematic area underlying this section is officially termed “integration of the gender dimension into research and/or teaching content.” CEDSI interprets “teaching content” as its community training curricula, capacity-building workshops, and educational technology outputs. [FLAG: if this GEP is submitted against criteria expecting a literal higher-education reading of “teaching content,” confirm this interpretation with the relevant grant officer.]

Baseline. [DATA NEEDED: proportion of current research projects and training curricula that already apply sex/gender-disaggregated analysis.]

Mandatory data disaggregation, organization-wide. Sex- and gender-disaggregated data collection is required for all community baseline surveys, environmental impact assessments, and project reporting across every CEDSI strategic area listed in Section 4.3 — not only the Triple Nexus initiative. Mechanism: the Research Director's sign-off on any new project's data-collection instrument is contingent on a disaggregation field being present.

Target. 100% of new research proposals and community training curricula integrate gender analysis from Q3 2025 onward, verified by Research Director sign-off.

9.4.1 Application within the Triple Nexus Initiative

The following measures apply specifically to CEDSI's Artificial Intelligence, Social Work, and Environmental Sustainability initiative (Section 4.3) and should not be read as claims about CEDSI's programming as a whole.

AI and technology ethics review. A mandatory review protocol evaluates all proprietary AI tools, educational software, and algorithms developed or used within the Triple Nexus initiative for gender bias and exclusionary design, before deployment. [DATA NEEDED: name of the person or body responsible for conducting this review.] No such tool proceeds to deployment without a documented sign-off in the Evidence File.

Extractive and blue-economy research focus. Within the Environmental Sustainability strand of the Triple Nexus initiative, CEDSI prioritizes research and programmatic funding toward women working in artisanal mining, fisheries, and extractive-sector host communities across the Niger Delta, aligning

with Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) frameworks. Mechanism: the Research Director tracks the proportion of active Triple Nexus budget directed at women-focused extractive and blue-economy work.

Accountable party. Research Director owns all mechanisms in this section; the GSC reviews aggregate disaggregation compliance and the AI review log quarterly.

9.5 Measures Against Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment

Zero-tolerance policy. CEDSI adopts an explicit, zero-tolerance stance against sexual harassment, bullying, and gender-based violence in the workplace and in field operations — covering conduct toward both staff and the community members CEDSI works alongside. Mechanism: incorporated into the employee handbook; signed acknowledgment required from every staff member and contracted field partner; substantiated violations result in disciplinary action up to termination, regardless of seniority. [FLAG: confirm the current disciplinary escalation procedure explicitly states “regardless of seniority.”]

Confidential reporting channels. An independent, encrypted whistleblowing and grievance channel accessible to staff, partners, and community beneficiaries (template at Appendix C). [DATA NEEDED: the specific platform or mechanism used for encrypted reporting.] Reports may be submitted anonymously; where the GEO is implicated, escalation bypasses the GEO and Executive Director directly to the Board Chair.

Victim support and non-retaliation. Comprehensive protection against retaliation, plus institutional legal, psychological, and medical referral support via a vetted provider list maintained by the GEO.

Accountable party. GEO for day-to-day case coordination; GSC as final internal escalation point.

Measurement. Number of reports, time-to-resolution, and reporter satisfaction tracked continuously and reported only in anonymized, aggregate form. [FLAG: the GSC should decide whether aggregate GBV statistics are published externally in full, reported only as a compliance confirmation, or restricted to internal/donor reporting, given the risk of inadvertent identification in a small organization.]

10. Implementation Roadmap and Matrix (2025–2026)

The roadmap sequences implementation across four phases from Q1 2025 through Q4 2026, following a dependency structure: diagnostic work (Phase 1) must precede capacity-building and policy integration (Phase 2); research and leadership review (Phase 3) depends on the data infrastructure Phase 2 establishes; and programmatic rollout and public reporting (Phase 4) depends on the leadership and research pipeline Phase 3 has already begun correcting.

Phase & Timeline	Focus Area	Key Action Item	Responsible Party	Success Indicator
Phase 1: Q1 2025	Diagnostic Audit	Conduct internal survey on staff composition, pay gaps, and decision-	HR / GEO	Audit report published internally; baseline established.

Phase & Timeline	Focus Area	Key Action Item	Responsible Party	Success Indicator
		making power (Section 6.3).		
Phase 1: Q1 2025	Governance	Formally inaugurate the Gender Steering Committee and open the Evidence File.	Exec. Director	GSC terms of reference signed; meeting minutes archived.
Phase 2: Q2 2025	Capacity Building	Execute mandatory staff and decision-maker workshops on unconscious bias and gender in AI ethics.	GEO / External Trainers	100% staff attendance; pre- and post-training scores recorded.
Phase 2: Q2 2025	Policy Integration	Update all HR manuals, recruitment workflows, and language policies to GEP standards.	HR Lead / GSC	Updated employee handbook published and distributed.
Phase 3: Q3 2025	Research & MEL	Mandate sex-disaggregated data frameworks across all research projects.	Research Director	100% of new research proposals integrate gender analysis.
Phase 3: Q4 2025	Leadership	Review board and management composition against the 50% gender parity target.	Exec. Director / Board	Interim progress report submitted to top management.
Phase 4: Q1–Q2 2026	Programmatic	Launch targeted empowerment initiatives for women in the Blue Economy and extractive sectors.	Project Leads	Number of women trained and supported in host communities.
Phase 4: Q3–Q4 2026	Public Reporting	Conduct bi-annual audit, evaluate KPIs, and publish the Annual GEP Progress Report.	GSC / GEO	Progress Report published on CEDSI official website.

Risk and mitigation. The Phase 1 diagnostic depends on staff trusting that an honest response will not be used against them — mitigation: administer the survey anonymously through an external party, with results reported only in aggregate. [FLAG: confirm whether the Q1 2025 audit was or will be administered internally or externally.] The Phase 3 leadership-composition review is the roadmap item most likely to surface uncomfortable findings for CEDSI's current board and executive composition — mitigation: treat this review as diagnostic rather than punitive, feeding directly into the Section 9.2 succession-planning mechanism.

11. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

This MEL architecture exists to ensure the commitments in Section 9 remain measurable over time, coordinated by the MEL Unit (Section 8.8) in collaboration with the GSC.

11.1 Key Performance Indicators

Category	Representative Indicators
Governance	Percentage of women/men on the Governing Board and in management; gender composition of committees.
Human Resources	Gender distribution of employees; recruitment and promotion outcomes by gender; retention rates.
Capacity Development	Number of trainings conducted; percentage of staff (and separately, decision-makers) completing mandatory training.

Category	Representative Indicators
Organizational Culture	Flexible-work utilization; staff survey results on burnout and workplace inclusion.
Prevention of Harassment	Number of complaints received; percentage resolved within established timelines.
Programmes and Research	Percentage of projects integrating gender analysis; number reporting sex-disaggregated data.

Each Section 9 priority area retains its own named indicator owner as already stated there — HR Lead (9.1, 9.3), Executive Director/Board jointly (9.2), Research Director (9.4), GEO (9.5) — so MEL is not a separate reporting exercise layered on top of implementation but the same accountable individuals reporting on their own areas.

11.2 Data Collection

Sex/gender-disaggregated personnel data is collected by HR through [DATA NEEDED: name of HR information system, or confirm the tool used if collected manually] and reviewed every 24 months, satisfying the Horizon Europe minimum of at least once every two years. Programmatic data disaggregation (Section 9.4) is collected via project-level instruments, reviewed at each project milestone. GBV/harassment case data (Section 9.5) is collected continuously and reviewed by the GEO on receipt, with aggregate trends reviewed quarterly by the GSC.

11.3 Evaluation and Learning

An annual evaluation assesses progress toward the Section 9 targets, effectiveness of implementation strategies, resource utilization, and lessons learned, feeding into annual reflection meetings and documented good practice. Findings inform revisions to this Plan and to future institutional planning.

11.4 Institutional Gender Audit

CEDSI conducts an annual institutional gender audit assessing compliance with this Plan, gender balance in governance and staffing, workplace culture, and progress against every indicator above. Findings are presented to the Governing Board.

11.5 Reporting Framework

Report	Frequency	Responsibility
Quarterly Progress Update	Quarterly	Gender Equality Officer
Gender Steering Committee Report	Quarterly	Gender Steering Committee
Annual Gender Equality Progress Report	Annually	MEL Unit & Gender Steering Committee
Institutional Gender Audit Report	Annually	External/Internal Assessment Team
Governing Board Progress Report	Annually	Executive Director

A Progress Report that only reports success is not fulfilling this function; its value lies specifically in surfacing which targets were missed and why, and what changes as a result.

11.6 Risk Management

The risks identified in Section 6.5 are mitigated through secured budget allocations (Section 8.11), staff capacity-building (Section 8.13), sustained leadership engagement, and regular review of implementation progress against the Section 10 roadmap.

11.7 Public Transparency

The adopted GEP and all subsequent Annual Progress Reports are hosted permanently on CEDSI's official website [DATA NEEDED: confirm exact URL, e.g. www.cedsi.ng, and the specific page]. Consistent with the Horizon Europe “Public GEP” requirement (Section 5.4, Appendix D), CEDSI retains every previous version of this GEP in a publicly accessible archive rather than replacing the current version without preserving prior ones.

11.8 Resource Mobilisation

Implementation is supported through annual institutional budget allocations (Appendix E), programme resources, development-partner support, and strategic partnerships, prioritizing long-term institutional strengthening over one-off funding.

11.9 The Annual Review Cycle

This document undergoes mandatory annual review by the Gender Steering Committee, incorporating organizational growth, legislative shifts, and the Annual Progress Report's findings, resulting in either a formally revised GEP — published as a new dated version — or a documented decision that no revision is needed, with reasoning retained in the Evidence File.

12. Conclusion, Institutional Commitment, and Formal Adoption

This Gender Equality Plan represents CEDSI's strategic commitment to embedding gender equality into every level of governance, staffing, and programmatic work — not as a stand-alone initiative, but as a condition for the institutional credibility CEDSI seeks with communities, partners, and funders alike. Implementation depends on sustained leadership, adequate resources, and the active participation of every person covered by this Plan's scope (Section 4.4).

This Gender Equality Plan is hereby adopted as an official policy of CEDSI Nigeria, effective 2 July 2025, under Resolution #2025-GEP-001.

Consistent with the Horizon Europe “Public GEP” requirement (Section 5.4, Appendix D), CEDSI commits to the following publication obligations for the full duration of this Plan and beyond:

- This GEP will be published on CEDSI's official website with a stable, persistent hyperlink, provided to grant assessors, partners, or auditors on request.
- Every prior version of this GEP will be retained in a public archive on the same webpage, rather than being overwritten by future revisions.

- Documentary proof of adoption is retained in the Evidence File (Section 8.14) and can be produced on request.

Authorized by: [FLAG: insert full name, title, and signature block for Professor Mina Ogbanga and any co-signing Board members before this document is treated as execution-ready.]

Date: 2 July 2025 | **Institutional Seal / Order Date:** Resolution #2025-GEP-001

This Plan will next be formally reviewed by the Gender Steering Committee no later than 30 June 2026, per Section 11.9.

Appendix A: Glossary of Key Terms

- **Blind Recruitment** — Removing identifying information (name, gender, age, graduation date) from applications before initial screening.
- **CEDAW** — Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979).
- **ECOWAS Gender Policy** — Regional framework for integrating gender perspectives into governance and development within West Africa.
- **Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** — Any harmful act directed against an individual based on their gender.
- **Gender Steering Committee (GSC)** — CEDSI's internal governance body for GEP oversight (Section 8.3).
- **Gender Equality Officer (GEO)** — Staff member with day-to-day responsibility for GEP implementation (Appendix B).
- **Institutional Gender Audit** — CEDSI's annual internal or external assessment of compliance with this Plan (Section 11.4).
- **Maputo Protocol** — Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003).
- “Manel” — An all-male panel at a conference or public discussion; prohibited for CEDSI staff participation (Section 9.2).
- **MEL Unit** — CEDSI's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Unit (Section 8.8).
- **NEITI** — Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (Section 9.4.1).
- **Sex/Gender-Disaggregated Data** — Data collected and reported separately by sex or gender rather than in aggregate.

- **Triple Nexus** — CEDSI's initiative combining Artificial Intelligence, Social Work, and Environmental Sustainability (Section 4.3); one strategic area among several, not CEDSI's sole identity.
- **Unconscious Bias** — Implicit attitudes affecting judgments without conscious awareness (Section 8.13).
- **VAPP Act** — Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015 (Section 5.3).
- **Zero-Tolerance Policy** — Disciplinary consequences for substantiated violations regardless of the offender's seniority (Section 9.5).

Appendix B: Gender Equality Officer — Terms of Reference

Position title: Gender Equality Officer (GEO). **Reports to:** Founding Executive Director, with a standing dotted-line relationship to the Gender Steering Committee (Section 8.3).

Purpose: To coordinate day-to-day implementation of this Plan across all of CEDSI's strategic areas (Section 4.3), ensuring the commitments in Section 9 translate into operational practice.

- Coordinate delivery of mandatory staff and decision-maker training (Section 8.13).
- Maintain the Evidence File (Section 8.14) on an ongoing basis.
- Manage the confidential grievance and whistleblowing channel (Section 9.5).
- Track MEL indicators for which the GEO is the named owner (Section 11.1) and compile the Annual Progress Report (Section 11.5).
- Serve as CEDSI's primary contact for gender-related queries from grant assessors and auditors, drawing on Appendix D.

Required qualifications: Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences, Development Studies, Public Administration, Sociology, Psychology, Education, Law, Gender Studies, or another relevant field. At least 2 years of relevant experience, good understanding of gender equality, experience implementing development projects, training, or community engagement activities. ability to collect, analyse, and report gender-disaggregated data, Strong communication, facilitation, and report-writing skills, High standards of integrity, confidentiality, and professionalism, Proficiency in Microsoft Office and digital record management. **Term and evaluation:** The Gender Equality Officer shall be appointed in accordance with CEDSI Nigeria's Human Resource Management Policy and the applicable contract of employment. New appointments shall be subject to the organization's probationary period and confirmation process. Performance shall be reviewed annually by the Executive Director, in consultation with the Gender Steering Committee, based on agreed work objectives, implementation of the Gender Equality Plan, quality and timeliness of reporting, coordination of gender mainstreaming activities, management of the confidential grievance mechanism, and compliance with organizational policies and procedures. **Employment Status:** Full-time staff position.

Appendix C: Confidential Grievance and Whistleblowing Report Form (Template)

This form may be submitted anonymously. If you identify yourself, your identity is known only to the GEO (or, where the GEO is implicated, to the Board Chair directly — Section 9.5).

- 1. Date of report: NA
- 2. Anonymous submission? NA
- 3. If not anonymous, name/contact (optional): NA
- 4. Relationship to CEDSI: NA
- 5. Date(s)/location(s) of incident: NA
- 6. Individual(s) involved, if known: NA
- 7. Description of incident: NA
- 8. Reported elsewhere already? NA
- 9. Desired outcome: NA
- 10. Witnesses, if any: NA

Submission channel: Email: Cedsi commits **Confidentiality statement:** CEDSI will not disclose your identity without consent, except where required by law, and guarantees non-retaliation for good-faith reports (Section 9.5).

Appendix D: Horizon Europe GEP Compliance Self-Assessment Matrix

Rows reproduce the EU Funding & Tenders Portal's GEP self-assessment items, mapped to this Plan and the evidence CEDSI can produce on request.

EU Requirement (verbatim)	CEDSI Plan Section	Evidence Available on Request
Public GEP: formal document published on the institution’s website, signed and/or adopted by top management.	Sections 1, 12	Stable hyperlink; public version archive; Resolution #2025-GEP-001; Board minutes.
Dedicated resources: commitment of resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan.	Sections 8.11, 8.12	GSC minutes; GEO appointment documentation; budget-line records; GEO CV; external expert contracts.
Data collection and monitoring: sex/gender-disaggregated data, reported at least every two years, based on indicators.	Section 11.2	Bi-annual (24-month) HR data reports; MEL indicator records.
Training: awareness-raising/training for staff and decision-makers, e.g. on unconscious gender biases.	Section 8.13	Training plans; invitations/programs; trainer contracts; attendance registers for both tracks.
Thematic area: work-life balance and organisational culture.	Section 9.1	Flexible-work registry; leave-utilization data; staff survey results.
Thematic area: gender balance in leadership and decision-making.	Section 9.2	Board/leadership composition data; mentorship records; manel-decline log.
Thematic area: gender equality in recruitment and career progression.	Section 9.3	Disaggregated hiring/promotion data; panel composition logs.

EU Requirement (verbatim)	CEDSI Plan Section	Evidence Available on Request
Thematic area: integration of the gender dimension into research and/or teaching content.	Sections 9.4, 9.4.1	Research Director sign-off records; AI/technology bias-review log.
Thematic area: measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.	Section 9.5	Anonymized case log; referral-provider list; grievance form (Appendix C).

Appendix E: Indicative Multi-Year Budget Line for GEP Implementation

All figures below are placeholders pending confirmation by CEDSI's finance team; none should be treated as approved or actual until replaced.

Budget Line	2025 (Indicative)	2026 (Indicative)	Notes
Gender Equality Officer salary/stipend	1,000,000	3,000,000	Assumes full-time role per Section 8.11.
Unconscious-bias and leadership training delivery	1,000,000	3,000,000	Covers both tracks, Section 8.13.
External gender-expert contracts	1,000,000	2,000,000	Section 8.12.
Wellness/nursing space setup and maintenance	1,000,000	2,000,000	Section 9.1.
GSC operations (meeting costs, minute-taking support)	1,000,000	2,000,000	Section 8.3.
Confidential reporting channel/platform fees	1,000,000	2,000,000	Section 9.5.
Annual Progress Report production and publication	1,000,000	2,000,000	Section 11.5, 11.7.
Institutional gender audit (external/internal)	1,000,000	2,000,000	Section 11.4.
Contingency / GBV victim-support referrals	1,000,000	2,000,000	Section 9.5.
TOTAL	1,000,000	2,000,000	Express also as % of total CEDSI operating budget, per Section 8.11.