SDSN’s Gender Equality Plan (GEP) aims to build on the organisation’s existing policies on inclusion, equity and belonging, and to embed gender equality considerations into the structure, policies and culture of the organisation at all levels, promoting a culture of respect and inclusion and allowing each individual to reach their full potential.

In June 2020, SDSN convened a Diversity, Equality, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Committee, which meets bi-monthly to ensure that a lens of equality is incorporated into both program work and operations. In May 2022, the committee partnered with SDSN Senior Leadership to engage an expert consultant to internally evaluate DEIB at SDSN. This process included:

- Audit of all main policy and procedural documents and the organisation’s website
- Interviews with leaders within the organisation.
- Regular focus group discussions.
- An anonymous organization-wide survey rolled out to all staff.

These preliminary steps have identified four key focus areas for the period 2023 to 2025, covering:

- Governance bodies, key actors and decision-makers
- Recruitment, career progression and retention
- Work and personal life integration
- Researchers and research: gender equality and sex and gender perspective

The GEP aims to integrate several levels of action and promote a systemic approach towards the promotion of gender equality in the organisation. It is a collective endeavour, and whilst the process of change is in an early phase, the organisation has already made progress towards a more gender-sensitive and gender-inclusive future.

Jeffrey Sachs
President
SDSN’s COMMITMENTS

- **Public Document:** The GEP is an official document approved by the Board of Directors and signed by the President, Jeffrey Sachs. The GEP is a statement of commitment pointing to our work on gender equity and the work of the DEI&B Committee. It is published and publicly available on our institutional website.

- **Dedicated resources:** Diversity, Equality and Inclusion is part of SDSN’s strategic workplan and has dedicated funds to support consultancies, training & mentorship. SDSN intends to designate a point person to coordinate the implementation of GEP and DEI going forwards.

- **Data Collection:** SDSN monitors data related to the recruitment of staff and will monitor data on diversity and equality in the workplace. This data will be collected and stored in compliance with the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will not be published.

- **Training:** SDSN’s strategic workplan includes the implementation of guidance and training on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.

Background and Context

The SDSN was created in 2012, soon after the Rio+20 Summit, to mobilize the world’s universities, think tanks, and national laboratories on behalf of the SDGs. The SDSN is now a global network of more than 1,800 member organizations, mainly universities, including 53 national and regional chapters. The SDSN’s main goals are to: i) Mobilize the knowledge community for action on the SDGs: SDSN Networks; ii) Empower societies through free online education: SDG Academy; and iii) Translate scientific evidence and ideas into solutions and accountability: SDSN’s research and policy analysis work.

The SDSN Association is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States and a nonprofit Association 1901 in France. These entities host the Secretariat of the SDSN, which supports and manages SDSN’s programs and projects and the SDG Academy.

SDSN’s strategy and vision are guided by a Leadership Council, which brings together global sustainable development leaders from all regions and all sectors, including civil society, public, and private sectors.

SDSN’s [Networks Strategy Council (NSC)](https://www.sdsn.org/networks) is comprised of leaders from the networks program who advise SDSN Networks on their vision, and work program, and approve all new members and networks.

SDSN’s [Board of Directors](https://www.sdsn.org/board) is responsible for oversight of all fiduciary, legal, and operational matters.
One of SDSN’s key strengths is the quality and diversity of its staff, the relevance and reach of its research and the huge potential of its network members. The Paris headquarters counts 31 employees, 21 of whom are women. The New York office counts 31 employees, 21 of whom are women. The Kuala Lumpur office is hosted at Sunway University.

In FY24, SDSN senior leadership, in partnership with the DEI&B Committee, will work to deepen their engagement with, and commitment to, the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion & belonging (DEI&B) within the organization. This work is included in the Strategic Plan for FY2024, has an allocated budget and is in alignment with our mission to promote integrated approaches to sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals. We strive to create a better, more inclusive world and workplace, to advance an inclusive culture at our organization, and ultimately, to enhance the effectiveness of our institution.

Context
As an international organisation promoting the SDGs, SDSN must consider by its nature the context in which gender equality principles are applied. At this stage, SDSN does not have baseline gender-disaggregated data for the organisation (see objectives), however, the GEP has been developed in the wider economic and cultural context in which it operates.

Overall, France ranks 4th among EU Member States in the Gender Equality Index, scoring 75.5 out of 100 points. Gender equality has been at the heart of policies aimed at reconciling work and family life in France for several decades. For this reason, France ranks favourably with other countries in terms of women’s employment and benefits to reconcile work and family life. However, challenges remain.

Figure 1 shows the employment gap in 2021 between women aged 25-54 with children and without children. In central and eastern countries in particular, the presence of children significantly and adversely affects the employment rate of women. In 2021, 72% of women in the EU with children were employed against 90% of men.¹

¹ Europa Eurostat 2021 Employment rate by household composition
In 2021, almost one-third of employed women aged 25-54 years with children worked on a part-time basis in the EU (32.3 %) against 20.9 % among employed women without children. For men, it is the opposite: 5.0 % of employed men with children worked part-time compared to 7.4% of men without children.\(^2\)

Women are leaving the workforce for family reasons at a higher rate than men and are not always returning to the same level of employment that they previously occupied.

This is also reflected in the gender inequality between women and men taking parental leave. The take-up rate in France is average for women (33 to 66%), but very low for men (1%). French men may be afraid of losing their jobs or that the leave may constitute a negative signal for wage increases once returning to the job.\(^3\) This affects career progression for women, as they are more likely to have career gaps due to childcare responsibilities.

\(^2\) Source: Europa Eurostat 2021
\(^3\) EFFORTI Comparative Background report
In the French context, there is little barrier to returning to work from childcare arrangements. Rates of enrolment in childcare for under 3s are higher in France than in other EU countries and institutional childcare is of good quality and available.

In New York, women comprise 47.5% of the total civilian workforce. Mothers of younger children remain less likely to participate in the labour force than mothers with older children. In 2022, 67.9% of mothers with children under age 6 participated in the labour force compared with 76.7% of mothers whose youngest child was aged 6 to 17.

The United States is the only advanced industrialized country without a national law providing new mothers (and often fathers) with entitlements to paid family leave (PFL) that allow them to take time off work, with wage replacement, to care for a newborn. At the federal level, the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 provides all eligible employees the right to take unpaid time off to bond with a new child, as part of a total 12-week FMLA annual leave entitlement. However, 64% of New Yorkers live in a childcare desert, and many childcare facilities closed after the Covid-19 epidemic.

A persistent gender wage gap exists in the US. This gap is less for unmarried women without children. Even married women without children earn less, as they are more likely to follow their husband and give up career opportunities. Between ages 25 and 45, the gender pay gap for college graduates, which starts close to zero, widens by 55 percentage points. Much of that happens early in people’s careers,

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5 The Child Care Crisis in New York State, December 2021. New York State Senate.
during women’s childbearing years. The American Economic Review paper, which examined people born around 1970, found that almost all of the pay gap for college graduates came from ages 26 to 33\(^6\).

The analysis of medium-term labour market outcomes provides evidence that paid family leave led to 10 to 17\% increases in usual weekly work hours for employed mothers and that their wage incomes may have risen by a similar amount\(^7\). Systems that allow women and men access to paid parental leave and the ability to retain their jobs whilst working remotely/flexibly would allow women to continue their career progression and go towards reducing the gender pay gap.

In both countries, women outnumber men in higher education but are less likely to enrol in selective or scientific courses and are in the minority in PhD programmes. Employment conditions are also less favourable: they are less likely to have a permanent job (54\% compared to 61\%), often work part-time (15\% compared to 7\%), and are less likely to be managers (27\% compared to 32\%). Women were still under-represented in decision-making and leadership positions in research, representing just over one-third (35.9\%) of board members in 2017 and 2019\(^8\).

Even though women make up more than half (54.9\%) of the workforce of S&P 500 finance companies, they hold only 6.3\% of CEO positions and occupy fewer than one-third (29.9\%) of senior-level manager positions, according to research conducted by Catalyst\(^9\). There are also slower to progress to the positions where they hold them.

**Gender, Equality, Inclusion and Belonging in SDSN**

SDSN recognises the challenges that exist to gender equality in the workplace, which encompass both external challenges due to the policy, economic and legal framework of the country, but also internal challenges due to organisational culture and normalised working practices.

In the past two years, in response to both internal drivers and external world events, SDSN has put in place measures that have positively impacted some of the principal barriers to gender equality detailed above, particularly related to the impact of family composition on gender equality in the workplace. These include flexible working policies, steps to avoid the long working hours culture and measures to encourage staff to return to the workforce after parental leave, particularly through:

- A hybrid working policy, providing the right to work from home and facilities to do so, and a Charte de Télétravail (Teleworking Charter) signed by both the organisation and the employee.
- A right to disconnect outside of working hours, forming an official policy document and part of SDSN’s institutional policies,
- The ability to facilitate teleworking and reduce working hours during pregnancy and when returning from parental leave,
- A culture of flexibility/respect for individual working hours.


\(^7\) [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3701456/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3701456/)

\(^8\) GEP 2022 to 2024 Institute Pasteur

With the DEIB and the GEP, SDSN attempts take the next steps to institutionalise gender considerations and to understand and monitor gender dynamics within the organization, therefore identifying the impact of these policies and areas for further improvement. This will be done through the development and implementation of a set of actions to develop further the organisational processes, policies, cultures and structures. An inclusive approach will be used, with engagement from all leadership levels.

**Principal Objectives**

The work conducted to date has allowed the identification of seven objectives:

- ✓ Raise awareness of gender equality and unconscious bias at all levels of the hierarchy
- ✓ Review the institution from a gender perspective
- ✓ Promote decision-makers institutional engagement in gender equality
- ✓ Increased thought and effort towards community-building and psychological safety across teams and the organization as a whole
- ✓ Work towards gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- ✓ Work and personal life integration
- ✓ Promote the inclusion of a gender dimension in research

**Raise Awareness of gender equality and unconscious bias at all levels of the hierarchy**

*Identify training and learning opportunities, including mentorship support*

As a priority, identifying DEI&B training and learning opportunities, including mentorship support, to be rolled out across our organization.

**Aim:** This step will seek to grow our collective knowledge of DEI&B concepts, raise awareness about internal biases and how these impact our work, and build relevant management skills.

**How:** By recruiting a service provider to launch the training program in July 2023.

**Indicators:** Number of courses and percentage of staff that attended courses.

**Results:** Awareness raising and continuous improvement.

*Present the SDSN GEP to all staff and provide it to newly hired staff upon joining*

All SDSN staff at all levels and newly recruited employees must be aware that gender equality and inclusion are an SDSN priority.

**Aim:** to raise awareness of gender equality and anti-discrimination principles within the organisation.

**How:** By communicating about the GEP to all staff. THE GEP will be easily accessible on the website and presented at an organisation-wide team meeting.

**Indicator:** Percentage of staff in receipt of GEP.

**Results:** awareness raising from induction onwards.

*Set up a dedicated website on the work of the DEIB and diversity and inclusion.*

To demonstrate the importance of diversity and inclusion to the organisation’s culture, both internally and externally, a dedicated web page will provide access to the GEP and an update on the work of the DEIB committee.
How: Develop a public web page that is easily accessible from the homepage, updated with relevant information.

Indicator: Numbers of visitors and clicks.

Results: Visibility of process and clear statement of our commitment.

Review the Institution from a Gender Perspective

Setting a DEIB mission statement
To outline our commitment to diversity, equality, inclusion and belonging, and align our internal and external stakeholders on the mission.

How: Equipped with the knowledge and skills gained through the training and mentorship, senior management will partner with the DEIB Committee to craft a mission statement to guide our progress.

Indicator: Engagement by leadership in the development and approval of the mission statement.

Results: Visibility of process and clear statement of our commitment.

Creation of a diversity scorecard
Baseline of data to identify areas for improvement and guide policies.

How: Senior leadership will leverage the Center for Global Inclusion’s Global Diversity Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) to guide our work in this area. Some suggested metrics include the number and percentage of diverse employees across our organization including in leadership positions, level of resources devoted to DEI&B, participation and impact of DEI&B training, and the like.

Indicator: Provision of an RPO annual report

Results: The implementation of metrics via a diversity scorecard will ensure accountability toward this mission.

Integrating and analysing questions about gender equality issues in internal questionnaires about staff satisfaction at work or working atmosphere
Include questions on gender equality issues in the annual staff survey.

How: Development of qualitative and quantitative questions relating to gender equality issues.

Indicator: Perception of gender equality in RPOs policies, by gender.

Results: Identification of areas of focus for ongoing improvement.

Promote decision-makers institutional engagement in gender equality

Enhancing the visibility of the support from key actors and senior leaders to the GEP (e.g. at conferences, awards, posters or others) and setting gender representation guidelines for SDSN Events

How: Informing about our GEP in our event supports and setting guidelines for international events organised by SDSN

Indicator: Perception of gender equality in policies.

Results: Identification of areas of focus for ongoing improvement

Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
Develop targets and metrics for senior positions for (directors and above), board, leadership council, Network Strategy council, and TReNDS council.
How: Taking the metrics from the diversity scorecard as a baseline, set targets for each position based on appropriate benchmarks and timelines.

Indicator: Gender distribution in key positions.

Results: Diverse representation in all leadership roles leads to a more dynamic and gender-aware organisation.

**Increased thought and effort towards community-building and psychological safety across teams and the organization as a whole**

Developing and maintaining sexual harassment prevention and support structures/channels, easily available, accessible and well communicated to all stakeholders.

Sexist conduct and situations involving sexual harassment are complex issues that can arise in any working environment. It is important to support victims, encourage them to speak out, and explain systems in place for identifying and rectifying such situations.

How: By providing information on the law, penalties and disciplinary measures faced by those guilty of wrongful conduct, tools currently in place, and dedicated officers for such matters who can be contacted if required. By disseminating the reporting procedure for victims and witnesses on the website. By offering psychological support to victims. Annual required training.

Indicator: Gender equality policy and structures in the institution

Results: strengthen the possibility to report incidents. Every individual shall have the right to express his/her suffering and disagreement. Eradicate sexist and sexual violence within the organisation.

**Work towards gender equality in recruitment and career progression**

Ensure that every person involved in the recruitment process is aware of gender issues, discrimination and stereotypes

Developing gender awareness initiatives, briefings or guidelines for recruitment and appointment of Recruitment Committee/panel members. Analysing and reporting regularly internally and externally data comparisons about pay and benefits.

How: Review existing HR documents with a gender equality focus and updated where necessary.

Indicator: Awareness training on gender-sensitive issues.

Results: Diversity in the workforce.

**Work and personal life integration**

Ensure availability of structured supports for work and personal life integration

Budgeting for temporary replacement of employees that have requested parental leave (e.g. maternity cover). This ensures that the role remains open in the same form as before leave and reduces pressures on the remaining team, and on the absent person to return or be available during leave.

How: budgeting an amount for cover annually and identifying a service provider to provide temporary staff.

Indicator: Standard procedure for parental leave.

Results: Encouragement of men and women to take parental leave and of women to disconnect during their leave time.
Promote the inclusion of a gender dimension in research

Promote diversity in research management. All professionals involved in research should recognize and take account of biological gender differences, starting from the research design phase.

How: Encouraging research teams to consider gender when developing research proposals and implementing projects, encouraging staff to access resources on good practice.

Indicator: Consideration of gender in research projects.

Results: Alignment of SDSN priorities and commitments to gender equality to major donors and a more innovative and inclusive research environment.

Conclusion

The GEP is fully in line with the step-by-step approach of the European Institute for Gender Equality\(^{10}\).

SDSN sees the GEP as a continuously evolving document and an ongoing process of improvement in the organisation. Progress will be constantly monitored using a collaborative approach, with discussions involving the DEIB, focus groups and surveys to assess the improvement within the organisation.

The first interim assessment of the GEP will be performed after one year to check against identified indicators and to identify areas for improvement. Any modifications required to make the actions more effective will be undertaken. The plan will be revised at the end of the period.

\(^{10}\)https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/what