



Australia Awards

Australia Awards

South Asia & Mongolia

Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
Approach and Action Plan
2024–2025



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Abbreviations and acronyms

Term	Meaning
ADIS	Alumni Development Impact Survey
APO	Australian Professional Opportunity
AASAM	Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
GEDSI	Gender equality, disability and social inclusion
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex and asexual (or allies)
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
OPD	Organisation of People with Disability
PDB	Pre-departure briefing
PSEAH	Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SOGIESC	Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization

Gender Equality, Disability & Social Inclusion (GEDSI) terminology

Term	Meaning
Cis/cisgender	A person who identifies with their gender assumed or sex assigned at birth. Someone who does not identify as trans or as non-binary. ¹
Disability	Disability is an evolving concept. Disability results from the interaction between people with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. People with disability include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.²
Equality	Equality affirms that all human beings are born free and equal. Equality presupposes that all human beings have the same rights and deserve the same level of respect. All people have the right to be treated equally. This means that laws, policies and programs should not be discriminator. Non-discrimination is an integral part of the principle of equality. It ensures that no one is denied their rights because of factors such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth. In addition to those grounds, discrimination on certain other grounds may also be prohibited. These grounds include age, nationality, marital status, disability, place of residence within a country and sexual orientation. Sometimes it may be necessary to treat people differently to achieve equality. This is because differences between people may make it difficult for them to enjoy their rights without support. Different treatment may not amount to prohibited discrimination if the criteria for the differentiation are reasonable and objective and if the aim is to achieve a purpose which is legitimate under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.³ In recognition of this, the United Nations <i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</i> (CEDAW) takes a three-dimensional view of gender equality that it calls 'substantive equality'. Instead of considering equality only in formal and legalistic terms, and saying that laws and policies ensure equality between men and women simply by being gender-neutral, CEDAW requires that their actual impact and effect also be considered. The substantive model of equality therefore requires using the actual conditions of women's lives, rather than the wording used in laws, as the true measure of whether equality has been achieved.⁴

¹ Edge Effect (2020) [42 Degrees Glossary and Lexicon](https://www.42d.org/2020/07/21/42-degrees-glossary-and-lexicon-2/), 42 Degrees website, accessed 30 April 2021. <https://www.42d.org/2020/07/21/42-degrees-glossary-and-lexicon-2/>

² United Nations General Assembly (2006) [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html), United Nations, accessed 30 April 2021. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html>

³ Attorney-General's Department (n.d.), Australian Government [Rights of equality and non-discrimination](#), accessed on 18 May 2021

⁴ UN Women (n.d.) [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) about CEDAW](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/cedaw-human-rights/faq), UN Women, accessed 30 April 2021. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/cedaw-human-rights/faq>

Term	Meaning
Equity	Equity is the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically. Equity is a process that aims to redress the unequal position of different individuals and groups.⁵  The illustration consists of three panels. The first panel, titled 'Equality', shows three people of different heights (tall, medium, and short) standing on boxes of the same height to look over a fence at a game. The tallest person can see easily, the middle person can just see, and the shortest person cannot see at all. The second panel, titled 'Equity', shows the boxes being redistributed: the tallest person's box is removed, the middle person's box is moved to the shortest person's position, and the shortest person's box is removed. Now everyone can see. The third panel, titled 'Justice', shows the fence being removed entirely, so everyone can see the game without any boxes.
Gender expression	Usually, but not always, the external presentation of someone's gender identity, expressed in many ways (including through clothing, haircut, voice, bodily movements, the ways one interacts with others and how one identifies). Gender expression can differ from that which is stereotypically associated with a person's sex assigned at birth and often changes over time.⁶
Gender identity	Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experiences of gender, which may or may not correspond with the gender assumed or sex assigned at birth, including their personal sense of their body and self. Gender identity is not fixed nor is it along binary lines, and a person's gender identity can change, shift or alter over time.⁷
Impairment	<i>Impairment</i> can refer to any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiologic or anatomic structure or function.⁸
Intersectionality	Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.⁹
Intersex	A person born with physical sex characteristics (including genitalia, hormones or chromosomes) that do not align with medical definitions or societal expectations of female or male bodies. Intersex characteristics may be apparent at birth, may not be detected until later in life (e.g. when a person begins puberty or becomes pregnant) or may never be detected at all.¹⁰

⁵ World Health Organization (WHO) (n.d.) [Equity](https://www.who.int/healthsystems/topics/equity/en/), WHO website, accessed 30 April 2021.

⁶ Edge Effect (2020) [42 Degrees Glossary and Lexicon](https://www.42d.org/2020/07/21/42-degrees-glossary-and-lexicon-2/), 42 Degrees website, accessed 30 April 2021.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ WHO (n.d.) [Disability](https://www.who.int/health-topics/disability#tab=tab_1), WHO website, accessed 30 April 2021.

⁹ Victorian Government (2021) [Understanding intersectionality](https://www.vic.gov.au/understanding-intersectionality), Victorian Government website, accessed 30 April 2021.

¹⁰ Edge Effect (2020) [42 Degrees Glossary and Lexicon](https://www.42d.org/2020/07/21/42-degrees-glossary-and-lexicon-2/), 42 Degrees website, accessed 30 April 2021.

Term	Meaning
Psychosocial disability	<i>Psychosocial disability</i> is an internationally recognised term under the United Nations <i>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</i> , which is used to describe the experience of people with impairments and participation restrictions related to mental health conditions. ¹¹
Sex characteristics	Sex characteristics are the genetic, hormonal and anatomical characteristics used to classify physical sex at birth. ¹²
Sexual orientation	A person's capacity for profound emotional, romantic and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals or people of a different gender, the same gender or more than one gender. ¹³
Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)	All people have SOGIESC. 'Diverse SOGIESC' to refer to non-cis-gendered, non-heterosexual and intersex people (also known as the LGBTIQ+ community). Using 'diverse SOGIESC' (rather than 'LGBTIQ+') draws attention to the fact that the human experience of sexuality and gender cannot always be neatly labelled. The LGBTIQ+ acronym is rooted in certain understandings and assumptions of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and does not hold space for specific cultural third-gender groups. ¹⁴
Social exclusion	There is no universally agreed definition or benchmark for social exclusion. Lack of participation in society is at the heart of nearly all definitions put forth by scholars, government bodies and non-governmental organisations. Overall, social exclusion describes a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state. ¹⁵
Social inclusion	Social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.

¹¹ World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (2008) [Implementation Manual For The United Nations Convention On The Rights Of Persons With Disabilities](#), World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

¹² Edge Effect (2020) [42 Degrees Glossary and Lexicon](#), 42 Degrees website, accessed 30 April 2021. <https://www.42d.org/2020/07/21/42-degrees-glossary-and-lexicon-2/>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2016) '[Identifying social inclusion and exclusion](#)' in [Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development. Report on the World Social Situation 2016](#), United Nations.

Term	Meaning
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	The SDGs are a universal set of 17 goals launched by the United Nations in September 2015 with targets that all United Nations member states are expected to adhere to when setting national development policies and frameworks up until 2030. The SDGs, as outlined in the <i>2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i>, place a strong emphasis on addressing inequity and exclusion and achieving social inclusion, by applying a human rights framework to development to promote universal access and equity in participation and benefit for all. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015) that focused on the world's poorest economies, the SDGs apply to all countries—each has the responsibility to ensure that those on the margins participate in and benefit from national development.



Inequalities pervade not only the economic, but also the social and environmental pillars of development. Differences in religion, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and economic and migrant status are used to exclude and marginalize.¹⁶

¹⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2016) [Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development. Report on the World Social Situation 2016](#), United Nations.

1 Introduction

1.1 Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia

Australia Awards are provided to build the skills and knowledge of individuals so that they can contribute to their country's development, and to support the ongoing development of links between Australia and the countries to which it provides aid. Australia Awards are an important part of the Australian Government's focus on public and economic diplomacy, and provide Scholarships, Fellowships and Short Courses, supported by a range of other capacity-building and training modalities.

The goal of Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia is to support the Program's partner countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – in achieving their development goals through education and knowledge transfer and to build enduring relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests.

To advance this goal, the Program aims to achieve two key outcomes:

- Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development.
- Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries.

Each country program articulates its own specific set of objectives to promote these outcomes; these objectives are set out in Country Plans.

1.2 Gender Equality, Disability & Social Inclusion in Australia Awards

The Australian Government's commitment to social inclusion is strongly articulated in specific policies of its overseas aid program, particularly in the areas of women's empowerment and gender equality (which includes people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics [SOGIESC]), disability inclusion, child protection, indigenous peoples' rights, and social protection. Inclusion is managed as a cross-cutting issue in all aspects of Australia's aid investments. Australia's trade agenda and economic development agenda in the Indo-Pacific Region are strongly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). An explanation of key terminology used in the Approach and Plan is provided on pages iiiii-vi.

The Program approach to Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) aligns with the following existing DFAT policies:

- *Development for All 2015–2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program* (May 2015)
- *DFAT Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan May 2019 – June 2022* (May 2019)
- *Disability Inclusion in the DFAT Development Program Good Practice Note* (April 2021)
- *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy* (February 2016)
- *Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Analysis Good Practice Note* (October 2023)
- *International Development Policy* (August 2023).

2 The Gender Equality, Disability & Social Inclusion Approach

This *Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Approach and Action Plan* (henceforth Approach and Action Plan) for Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia builds on the experiences and achievements of the previous phase of the Program.

The Approach and Action Plan will ensure that all Program participants have the same opportunities to contribute and benefit fairly and equitably, and are cognisant of how to promote inclusion, equality, equity and fairness in their professional and personal lives.

The understanding of social inclusion that informs the Approach and Action Plan reflects current international concepts and trends, particularly the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. It aligns with and supports Australia's international development assistance policy and program priorities globally, as well as specifically for the South Asia & Mongolia region and Australia Awards.

The Approach and Action Plan is grounded in the principle of intersectionality. Rather than naming and identifying different aspects of a person's identity, this Approach and Action Plan recognises that there are common barriers faced by diverse women and men that need to be addressed and that there are specific barriers resulting from intersecting identities that also need to be considered. For example, gendered social norms affect women's access to leadership. These gendered norms intersect with norms around disability, exacerbating challenges faced by women with disability in accessing leadership positions. There is an increased focus on providing all Program participants with strategies to promote inclusion. This information will be included in promotional and communications materials, and in any Program-related professional development and learning opportunities.

In delivering on the disability inclusion aspects of this Approach and Action Plan, the Program will be partnering with Maven. Maven is Palladium's in-house disability inclusion consultancy service. Maven consultants—all people with disability—are specialists in providing tailored services to enable government, civil society and private sector organisations to fulfil their access and inclusion goals. Internally, Maven provides access and inclusion support to Australia Awards South – Asia & Mongolia at an organisational and Program level.

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Approach and Action Plan are:

- to enable all to participate, contribute and benefit fairly and equitably, particularly focusing on people who experience intersecting forms of marginalisation and exclusion
- to strengthen the awareness and knowledge of participants and staff about social exclusion issues and inclusion strategies, through professional learning opportunities and Program communication
- to improve capacity and commitment to applying inclusive and non-discriminatory practices throughout the Program
- to spotlight the successes of scholars and alumni in integrating gender, disability and social inclusion in to their personal and professional lives.

2.2 Key principles

The **key principles** that guide implementation are:

- **Commitment to intersectionality:** Intersectionality is a critical framework that provides us with the mindset and language for examining interconnections and interdependencies between various social identities. Intersectionality helps us to understand why heterogeneous members of specific groups (such as women) might experience disadvantage and exclusion differently depending on social locations. Sensitivity to such differences enhances insight into issues of inequality, thus maximising the opportunity for the Program to be more inclusive. The work that we do and how we promote it explicitly foregrounds gender equality and social inclusion.
- **Voice and participation:** Through working in a genuinely participatory and culturally-located way, the views and perspectives of those that the Approach and Action Plan aims to include will inform the way that strategies and priorities are set and implemented, and will contribute to the measurement and interpretation of results and lessons learnt.
- **Localisation to the country context:** Each country program will interpret the region-wide strategy by setting their priorities and implementation plans for GEDSI as appropriate to their setting, while consistently applying a social inclusion framework in all aspects of their activities, in alignment with global Australia Awards policies.
- **Whole of organisation approach:** Implementation must be embedded into the organisation's culture, structure and attitudes of staff—through policies and systems and ensuring accountability.
- **Accessibility:** Practical access is a critical enabler of participation and must be planned for and also resourced with a dedicated budget.
- **Ongoing improvement:** The planning and implementation of high-quality inclusive practice will be underpinned by evidence and based on robust context-specific research and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data.
- **Do no harm:** The 'do no harm' approach ensures that strategies to promote inclusion will not adversely affect those that the Approach and Action Plan aims to include, other Program participants, or the quality and reputation of the Program. The Program recognises that exclusion has negative effects and therefore inaction is not an option. In order to do no harm, we overlook nothing and proactively address disadvantage that leads to exclusion.

2.3 Approach

The approach to implementation will be to:

1. **Apply a broader concept of social inclusion**
Instead of specifically targeting certain identity groups to be included in the scope of the Program, we will remove barriers that prevent their fair and equal participation—noting that these barriers will differ between each of the eight countries in the Program, as will the legislation, cultural sensitivities and risks in each country.
2. **Employ a twin-track approach to inclusion**
The twin-track approach involves ensuring that the Program is GEDSI-inclusive (by mainstreaming GEDSI in all aspects of delivery) and that it offers GEDSI-specific initiatives (by implementing specific affirmative actions to improve the participation of people from marginalised groups).

3. **Enhance learning opportunities**

Learning opportunities related to social inclusion will be incorporated into Program activities and events, including the Short Courses, pre-departure briefings, reintegration workshops, and alumni events and activities.

4. **Strengthen capacity**

We will build the capacity of Australia Awards South Asia & Mongolia staff, DFAT staff and subcontractors to consistently and effectively implement inclusive practices.

5. **Implement the Approach and Action Plan incrementally**

This will ensure there are sufficient levels of knowledge, skills and experience for effective practice, and will minimise risks related to quality of the Program and to Australia Awards recipients.

2.4 Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of the Approach and Action Plan are that:

- high-quality inclusive practice is implemented in all aspects of the Program
- scholars and alumni apply knowledge gained on issues of social inclusion in their professional and personal lives to positively affect the lives of marginalised and excluded groups
- staff have knowledge about issues of intersectional gender equality that they apply in their professional and personal lives
- the Program is recognised and respected for its high-quality inclusive practices.

3 Gender Equality, Disability & Social Inclusion Action Plan 2024-25

3.1 Pre-departure training for Australia Awards scholars

Activity	Inputs/capacity
Deliver pre-departure training sessions on GEDSI and Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (October/November 2023)	- GEDSI Short-Term Adviser - GEDSI Coordinator - Maven

3.2 Scholar enrichment and alumni engagement

Activity	Inputs/capacity
In partnership with the Scholar and Alumni Engagement team, deliver up to three webinars on GEDSI for scholars and alumni	- Deputy Team Leader - Country program staff - Scholar Enrichment team - GEDSI Short-Term Adviser - GEDSI Coordinator
Support delivery of the Scholars Forum 2024, including through the delivery of a session on integrating gender equality principles into Development Impact and Linkages Plans	- Deputy Team Leader - Coordinator - Scholar Enrichment - GEDSI Short-Term Adviser - GEDSI Coordinator
Support preparation of content for the next Regional Alumni Workshop on inclusive leadership	- Deputy Team Leader - Regional Alumni Engagement Coordinator - GEDSI Short-Term Adviser - GEDSI Coordinator

3.3 Short Courses and Australian Professional Opportunities

Activity	Inputs/capacity
Support the Continuing Professional Development team in developing two Concept Notes for Short Courses/APOs in disability inclusion and preventing violence against women	- Continuing Professional Development Solutions team - GEDSI Short-Term Adviser - Maven - GEDSI Coordinator - GEDSI Working Group
Undertake a rapid review of Short Courses to strengthen the integration of GEDSI into the Short Course life cycle – from Concept Note to Return-to-work Plan	- Continuing Professional Development Solutions team - Senior Program & Operations Manager - GEDSI Short-Term Adviser - GEDSI Coordinator

3.4 Communications: spotlighting scholar and alumni successes

Activity	Inputs/capacity
Manage a GEDSI webpage that includes snapshots of scholars and alumni integrating GEDSI principles into their personal and professional lives	▪ Communications team ▪ GEDSI Working Group ▪ GEDSI Coordinator
Promote the 'Spotlight on GEDSI' podcasts developed in 2023-24	▪ Communications team ▪ Country teams ▪ GEDSI Working Group
Conduct up to two Regional Women in Leadership Network online events to showcase the work of alumni integrating GEDSI principles into their personal and professional lives	▪ Deputy Team Leader ▪ Regional Alumni Engagement Coordinator ▪ GEDSI Short-Term Adviser ▪ GEDSI Coordinator
Develop media and communications materials for International Women's Day, 16 Days of Activism, International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, and International Day of Persons with Disabilities	▪ Communications team ▪ Country teams ▪ GEDSI Short-Term Adviser ▪ GEDSI Coordinator ▪ GEDSI Working Group

3.5 Women in leadership

Activity	Inputs/capacity
Support the Regional Women in Leadership Network to deliver on its program of work	▪ Deputy Team Leader ▪ Regional Alumni Engagement Coordinator ▪ GEDSI Short-Term Adviser ▪ GEDSI Coordinator
Support the country-based Women in Leadership Networks to deliver on their plans	▪ Deputy Team Leader ▪ Regional Alumni Engagement Coordinator ▪ Country teams ▪ GEDSI Short-Term Adviser ▪ GEDSI Coordinator ▪ GEDSI Working Group
Support the capacity building of the Male Allies for Gender Equality Community of Practice	▪ Deputy Team Leader ▪ Regional Alumni Engagement Coordinator ▪ GEDSI Short-Term Adviser ▪ GEDSI Coordinator ▪ GEDSI Working Group

3.6 Disability-inclusive practice

Activity	Inputs/capacity
Refine the work of the Alumni Disability Advisory Group in supporting and improving disability-inclusive practice in the Program; highlighting contributions and leadership stories of people with disability that can inspire all Australia Awards alumni; and discussing key issues on disability inclusion that Australia Awards alumni can help address.	- Deputy Team Leader - GEDSI Coordinator - Maven - Alumni Disability Advisory Group
Ongoing assessment of accessibility of venues for in-country and in-Australia Program activities and events	- Country teams and Australia-based Program staff - Maven - Alumni Disability Advisory Group
Establish/renew engagement with peak bodies for people with disability to promote the Program	Country teams and Australia-based Program staff

3.7 Staff capacity—knowledge, skills development and performance

Activity	Inputs/capacity
Convene the GEDSI Working Group (throughout year).	- GEDSI Short-Term Adviser (support) - GEDSI Practice Leader - GEDSI Coordinator - GEDSI Working Group members
Develop and deliver an 'Introduction to GEDSI' foundational workshop as part of the Staff Learning and Development Program	- GEDSI Short-Term Adviser - GEDSI Coordinator - Maven - GEDSI Working Group
Deliver two practice forums on GEDSI as part of the Staff Learning and Development program in Aug-Sept 2024	- GEDSI Short-Term Adviser - GEDSI Coordinator - Maven - GEDSI Working Group members

3.8 Thought leadership

Activity	Inputs/capacity
Organise a half-day dialogue among GEDSI advisers/staff from across the Australia Awards network to share good practice in integrating GEDSI into Australia Awards programs	- GEDSI Short-Term Adviser - GEDSI Coordinator - GEDSI Practice Lead

3.9 Program management

Activity	Inputs/capacity
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Conduct a Gender Audit of one country program (February 2025)	▪ GEDSI Short-Term Adviser ▪ GEDSI Coordinator ▪ Country Program Manager
Review and update PSEAH risk assessment for events	▪ GEDSI Short-Term Adviser ▪ GEDSI Coordinator ▪ GEDSI Working Group
Develop resources to support event participants to disclose and report on SEAH	▪ GEDSI Short-Term Adviser ▪ GEDSI Coordinator ▪ GEDSI Working Group

4 Risks and risk management

The Program has identified the following key risks—and associated prevention and mitigation measures—relating specifically to the Approach and Action Plan and its implementation.

Risks	Prevention and mitigation measures
Risk #1: Strategic risk Targeting participation by people from marginalised groups might create a mistaken perception that Australia Awards are less prestigious than other international scholarships being offered in Program countries.	- Continue to use the current objective of at least 50% participation by women, and actively seek and encourage applicants from the broader range of identity groups without setting specific targets. - Ensure there is adequate staff capacity and resources to effectively and safely manage the targeting, promotion and inclusion adjustments in Program activities in ways that are likely to ensure quality participation and success of individuals. - Carefully manage the equity measures and affirmative actions taken during the selection process, ensuring that the adjustments are realistic and that the individual, through appropriate affirmative action, will succeed and benefit from participating in the Program. - Support Australia Awards recipients in Australia to ensure that they receive the necessary adjustments and support available from their university or Short Course provider. - Profile successful Australia Awards recipients and alumni from socially excluded and marginalised identity groups in Program public communications, ensuring that this does not increase risk of exposure to negative feedback.
Risk #2: Capacity risk The Program may not be able to provide appropriate staff levels, resources, or systems and processes necessary to support high-quality inclusive practices. This may lead to Australia Awards applicants, recipients and alumni feeling disappointed, excluded or discriminated against. Staff may also feel under pressure and unable to meet their responsibilities, which could contribute to reduced quality and effectiveness of their practice.	- Provide staff with professional development opportunities on social inclusion to ensure they have sufficient levels of knowledge and skills. - Ensure external local resources and technical capacity are available for staff to refer to and use to assist them in their work. - Ensure the budget and personnel available are sufficient to implement activities that align with the Approach and Action Plan. - Invest in research, enquiry, analysis and learning to inform and improve practice. - Ensure that the GEDSI Working Group meets regularly so that the experience and advice of Group members is applied in the Program. Ensure that there is scope to draw on advice from outside the Group (e.g. other DFAT staff, Australia Awards recipients and alumni, and other Palladium staff).

Risks	Prevention and mitigation measures
Risk #3: Reputational risk The Program may not be able to consistently provide high-quality, inclusive and non-discriminatory practices in all areas of the Program. This could lead to Australia Awards applicants, recipients and alumni having negative experiences with the Program, and could reinforce feelings of marginalisation and discrimination.	▪ Ensure all staff have sufficient knowledge, technical and information resources to apply consistent inclusive practices in their areas of responsibility. ▪ Ensure subcontractors and those contracted to implement selection and interview processes understand the issues related to social inclusion and have the skills and knowledge to apply them in their practice. ▪ Review the Program's communication media and update as needed to ensure appropriate language is used and all formats are accessible. ▪ Ensure the corporate policies relating to recruitment, employment and procurement reflect and support social inclusion and non-discrimination.
Risk #4: Development risk In some countries, national legislation and cultural and religious sensitivities may mean that seeking to target and include certain identity groups may be difficult, dangerous or not possible. If care is not taken how inclusion is communicated and implemented, this may reduce the commitment of government and particular civil society organisations or private sector partners to participate in the Program. It may also create personal risk for individual Australia Awards recipients and Program staff.	▪ Implement the Approach and Action Plan in a localised way, working within legal frameworks and respecting the religious and cultural sensitivities of each country. ▪ Ensure appropriate standard operating procedures are in place with regard to disclosure (e.g. of SOGIESC, HIV/AIDS or psychosocial disability status, which may be known to Program staff but not to fellow Australia Awards recipients). ▪ Focus on the situation and social inclusion of some identity groups in Australia in the information available on the website and in other public promotional and communication materials. ▪ Aim to broaden participation from a wider range of identity groups but only set participation targets that are in line with DFAT's own policy priorities (e.g. 50% participation for women and increasing participation rates by people with disability and from certain geographical areas).

5 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

5.1 Overview

The AASAM MEL Plan 2024-25 sets out the way in which the Program will collect, manage, analyse and use data to support program management, learning, accountability and improvement, including with regard to GEDSI. Included in the MEL Plan are a number of guiding Evaluation Questions which specifically address GEDSI:

Evaluation Q9: How well are women and LGBTQI+ people, people with disability, and other marginalised people included in the Program (e.g. in promotions, access, participation)?

Evaluation Q10: How well has the Program ensured the minimisation and avoidance of harm?

Evaluation Q11: How equitably are the benefits of the Program being experienced?

Evaluation Q 12: To what extent is the Program supporting women's participation in a range of sectors and supporting them to increasingly play leadership roles?

The MEL system also includes a Framework of Indicators which captures disaggregated data on the participation, outputs and outcomes relating to people from diverse identity groups: women, people of diverse SOGIESC, people with disability, people living in geographically isolated areas and from marginalised tribal/ethnic groups. Disaggregation of data by country, location, gender and target groups enables monitoring of the access, participation and outcomes for each group compared with overall data, and with other diverse identity groups in South Asia & Mongolia and globally.

There is no intention to further disaggregate quantitative output data for the additional identity groups included in the Approach and Action Plan. This is because there will be no specific targets set for participation by these groups in the different activities, and because participants will not be requested or required to declare (e.g. on application forms) whether they identify with these groups. However, applicants will be encouraged to disclose any factors that they feel are relevant to help ensure the Program delivers on the Approach and Action Plan.

Outcome data from the biannual Alumni Development Impact Survey (ADIS), case studies, change stories, etc. that represents the range of diverse identity groups participating in the Program will be collected and shared. In doing so, the confidentiality and safety of participants will be carefully managed and respected.

The Program will monitor progress towards achievement of the four planned outcomes of this Approach and Action Plan. This information will help demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategies used and will highlight positive results and/or challenges.

Risk will be monitored through an up-to-date risk register, and mitigation and prevention strategies will be revised as necessary in response to findings from the monitoring data.

The bi-monthly meetings of the GEDSI Working Group will provide an important opportunity for analysis, reflection and learning regarding the quality and effectiveness of the processes used to implement the Approach and Action Plan, and the results being achieved. The findings and advice from this Group will inform Program management, staff and DFAT, as well as the MEL Working Group and will support the annual Program planning and budget.

5.2 Key indicators and data sources

This section summarises the key M&E data specific to the Approach and Action Plan that will be collected and analysed. Wherever possible, this process will use existing MEL data sources, collection and analysis processes, and resources.

Outcome 1: High-quality inclusive practice is implemented in all aspects of the Program

Indicators	Data sources
Participation rates disaggregated for women, people with disability and people living in particular geographically isolated areas in each activity area of the Program	Current monitoring data
Completion rates disaggregated for women, people with disability and people living in particular geographically isolated areas in each activity area of the Program	- Current monitoring data - Pre-departure survey - ORIMA survey
Personal achievements of alumni from target inclusion groups and range of different Australia Awards activities	- Success stories and case studies - ADIS
Design of new policies and processes, and changes made to existing ones	- Minutes of the GEDSI Working Group - Program reports - Minutes of the Alumni Disability Advisory Group
Satisfaction of participants at each stage and activity of the Program	- Post-activity evaluations - Pre-Departure Briefing (PDB) Survey - ADIS

Outcome 2: Scholars and alumni apply knowledge gained on issues of social inclusion in their professional and personal lives to positively affect the lives of marginalised and excluded groups

Indicators	Data sources
Changes in scholars' and alumni's knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes towards issues of social exclusion and inclusion	- Reintegration workshop (discussions and evaluation) - Short Course follow-up workshops - Tracer surveys of Scholarship and Short Course alumni - Stories and case studies - ADIS

Outcome 3: Staff have knowledge about issues of intersectional gender equality that they apply in their professional and personal lives

Indicators	Data sources
Confidence and capacity reflected by staff	- Staff survey - Evaluation of GEDSI training for staff - Annual professional performance review

Outcome 4: The Program is recognised and respected for its high-quality inclusive practice

Indicators	Data sources
DFAT's assessment of quality of GEDSI in the Program	▪ Ratings and comments in the Annual Partner Performance Assessment ▪ Ratings and comments in the Annual Investment Monitoring Report
Perspectives of Australia Awards applicants, recipients and alumni	▪ ADIS
Independent assessment	▪ End-of-Program review

Annex A GEDSI Working Group Terms of Reference – 2024

A.1 Purpose

To provide oversight, guidance and support in the design, implementation and ongoing improvement of the Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia *GEDSI Approach and Action Plan*.

A.2 Key responsibilities

The Working Group will:

- provide guidance and support to the GEDSI Short-Term Adviser responsible for the revision and redesign of the GEDSI Approach by providing inputs and support (via email, Teams conference calls and some individual face-to-face meetings) for the consultation, analysis and drafting of the revised Approach document
- provide ongoing guidance and monitoring inputs to implementation of the GEDSI Approach and activities through a minimum of six-monthly review and planning meetings that will be facilitated by the GEDSI Short-Term Adviser via Teams conference calls
- identify and communicate key lessons learnt in relation to the implementation of GEDSI in the Program, by working with the GEDSI Short-Term Adviser and MEL Short-Term Adviser, ensuring that the issues identified assist colleagues to make improvements for the Program overall, and—as appropriate—are shared more widely with partners, stakeholders and DFAT
- advocate for GEDSI practices to be continuously embedded in core Program activities and day-to-day operations by way of guidance, advice and input to Program team activities
- identify gaps and risks relating to the GEDSI Approach and activities and (as part of responsibilities on guidance and quality) provide advice to management and the GEDSI Short-Term Adviser on areas to improve
- develop, promote and use creative ways of engaging other Working Groups in the pursuit of gender equality and disability and social inclusion
- develop GEDSI-related material as required
- continuously review and update the GEDSI Activity Plan, ensuring it is in line with the Program's GEDSI objectives and strategy
- provide a report of operations and activities every two months to the Team Leader
- provide support for specific milestone events such as International Women's Day, International Day of Persons with Disability and others as applicable in achieving public diplomacy objectives
- contribute to developing/updating GEDSI Professional Development Resources. This includes encouraging regular learning and knowledge management on GEDSI through sharing activities, holding forums, and periodically monitoring and evaluating programs for GEDSI results against the goals
- develop and employ good practice guidelines and indicators to access, analyse and document GEDSI outcomes.

A.3 Membership

The Working Group was initiated in January 2020 under Australia Awards – South and West Asia. Membership has since been extended to volunteer participants from Australia Awards – Africa, Australia Awards – Myanmar and Australia Awards – Timor-Leste, programs also managed by Palladium on behalf of DFAT.

Membership is reviewed annually to ensure appropriately balanced representation.

A.4 Management and coordination

The Working Group will meet every two months, during the first or second week of the relevant month. Meetings will be chaired by the GEDSI Practice Leader. The meeting link and agenda will be circulated by the coordinator – GEDSI Working Group before each meeting. Members are free to add agenda items and observers are free to join.

The Working Group is a resource that the Team Leader may call upon to provide specific advice and support.

A.5 Reporting

Meeting minutes will be shared with the Working Group following each meeting, and Management reports will be shared with the Team Leader every two months. All documentation will be regularly uploaded to SharePoint.

Annex B Alumni Disability Advisory Group Terms of Reference 2024

B.1 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the Alumni Disability Advisory Group is to support and improve disability-inclusive practice on the Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia program; and to highlight member contributions and leadership stories. The group also provides a forum for discussion surrounding key issues in disability inclusion in South Asia and Mongolia and seeks innovative solutions to eliminate barriers to participation in the Program..

The objectives of the group are:

- to work with Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia during the Scholarship cycle (promotion, application, selection, mobilisation, placement and reintegration) to provide support to people with disability
- to facilitate the participation by a greater number of people with disability in Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia by ensuring the availability of information in accessible formats, creating a network that encourages people with disability to apply for Australia Awards, and building the confidence of people with disability to apply
- to promote Australia Awards among Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and support country offices to liaise with OPDs, paying special attention to women with disabilities
- to support the Program in its public diplomacy initiatives to promote the visibility of Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia across the region
- to support with alumni engagement activities in fostering people-to-people links across the region and in Australia.

B.2 Key responsibilities

- Provide support to scholar and alumni for specific UN and other Days of Significance such as International Day of Persons with Disability and International Women's Day, and for other scholar/alumni engagement activities.
- Collaborate with the GEDSI Working Group and the wider Program on specific thematic issues.
- Provide support to the country offices and Hub team on scholar and alumni engagement activities.
- Provide a report of operations once every two months to the GEDSI Adviser and Regional GEDSI Coordinator. The reports will be due on the 25th of each reporting month in February, April, June and so on.

B.3 Membership

Membership to the Alumni Disability Advisory Group is sought through nominations representing each country program. Nominees are then confirmed via an official invitation letter from Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia.

Membership can be for a maximum of two years' consecutive tenure. Members are expected to officially hand over to the incoming member representing their country prior to stepping down.

For the expertise provided and the time commitment, members receive an honorarium of AUD 500 per year.

B.4 Role of members

- Attend Alumni Disability Advisory Group meetings.
- Complete tasks assigned as per the workplan.
- Respond to emails requesting inputs/feedback.
- Allocate 1-2 days a month to Alumni Disability Advisory Group work (including attending meetings, responding to emails and completing tasks assigned as per the workplan).
- Take minutes of the Alumni Disability Advisory Group meetings on a rotating schedule (each member is required to take minutes at least once a year). If a member is not able to take the minutes on their allocated meeting, they need to organise a replacement from the group.
- Member participation at meetings will be recorded and members are bound by the workplan activities once developed and endorsed. These workplans will be monitored by the Group Co-Chairs and Program staff members associated with the Group.

B.5 Performance and engagement

In the following circumstances, a member's **membership will be automatically revoked**. A follow up conversation will be had upon the member's request.

- Failure to attend two meetings in a row
- Failure to respond to emails and other correspondence within a one-week period
- Failure to provide necessary reports and updates about work completed for the Group.

Failure to execute these responsibilities may result in members being requested to return all or part of the annual honorarium.

B.6 Management & Coordination

The meetings will be co-chaired by the GEDSI Adviser and Maven Associate, and coordinated by the GEDSI Coordinator. Support can be provided by the Maven Senior Manager on request.

B.7 Reporting

Meeting minutes will be shared with the Group following each meeting.

A report on activities will be submitted to the Team Leader every quarter.

