

GUIDE TO  
**INCLUSIVE  
COMMUNICATION**  
FOR THE GENERAL  
SECRETARIAT OF THE OAS



**OAS | CIM**

The **Organization of American States (OAS)** brings together the nations of the Western hemisphere to promote democracy, strengthen human rights, foster peace, security and cooperation and advance common interests. The origins of the Organization date back to 1890 when nations of the region formed the Pan American Union to forge closer hemispheric relations. This union later evolved into the OAS and in 1948, 21 nations signed its governing charter. Since then, the OAS has expanded to include the nations of the English-speaking Caribbean and Canada, and today all of the independent nations of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean make up its 35 member states.

The **Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM)** is the main hemispheric policy forum for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality. Created in 1928 - in recognition of the importance of women's social inclusion to democratic strengthening and human development in the Americas - CIM was the first inter-governmental organization established to promote women's human rights and gender equality.

*Guide to Inclusive Communication for the General Secretariat of the OAS*

This publication is an initiative of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM/OAS), coordinated by its Executive Secretary, Alejandra Mora Mora, with the contribution of Beatriz Piñeres and the support of the Department of Press and Communications (DPE) and the Department of Social Inclusion of the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity (DIS/SARE). This Guide was originally developed in Spanish. The process of translating and adapting the original Spanish version was carried out by an in-house working group that included representatives of the CIM/OAS, DPC/SCODMR, DIS/SARE and DCMM. CIM acknowledges the research and work carried out by consultant Silvina Molina in the preparation of this document.

**Design:** Sebastián Vicente

**Layout:** Patricio Bascuñán

**Organization of American States (GS/OAS)**

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**Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM)**

cim@oas.org

<http://www.oas.org/cim>

f /ComisionInteramericanaDeMujeres

t @CIMOEA

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# A

## ACRONYMS

<b>SCODMR</b>	Strategic Council for Organizational Development and Management by Results
<b>IACHR</b>	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
<b>CIM</b>	Inter-American Commission of Women
<b>DCMM</b>	Department of Conferences and Meetings Management
<b>DSI</b>	Department of Social Inclusion
<b>DPC</b>	Department of Press and Communications
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex persons
<b>OAS</b>	Organization of American States
<b>SARE</b>	Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity



# 1

## FOREWORD BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL

The Institutional Policy on Gender Equity and Equality, Diversity and Human Rights in the General Secretariat of the OAS and its Action Plan provide an opportunity for the Organization to strengthen its work towards achieving the objectives of equity, respect for human rights, equality, and non-discrimination in the support and assistance we provide to Member States as well as in the Secretariat's internal operations, including its organizational culture.

By making this tool available to personnel for consultation, the General Secretariat of the OAS (GS/OAS) seeks to ensure that its institutional image and all its communications are committed to and represent equality and the human diversity of the region. It will also emphasize the importance of counteracting the prejudices and stereotypes normalized in language by proposing changes through the conscious and proactive use of language and communications.

This tool is the result of the work performed jointly by the Executive Secretariat

of the InterAmerican Commission of Women (CIM), the Press and Communications Department of the Strategic Council for Organizational Development and Management for Results (DPC/SCODMR), and the Department of Social Inclusion of the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity (DSI/SARE), with the valuable input of the Language Section of the Department of Conferences and Meetings Management (DCMM). As a reference document, it is meant to provide the General Secretariat staff with practical, specific examples of communications that promote equality and respect for human rights, and that include the diversity of identities that have historically been excluded from the arenas of power and decision-making.

The General Secretariat remains committed to its work to guarantee "more rights for more people" throughout our region. To that end, we must also commit to doing so within our own Organization, in all our actions, and throughout the management of the institution.



**Luis Almagro**  
Secretary General  
Organization of American States

# 2

## PROLOGUE

Structural discrimination against women, who make up half of the population, and against other groups historically in situations of vulnerability, is manifested in actions, beliefs, stereotypes, and behaviors rooted in the collective unconscious, in both the public and private spheres. Our workplace is no exception, and in this context, language and communication are essential factors in developing content and approaches, and in shaping the situation within the OAS.

The General Secretariat of the OAS (GS/OAS), coordinated by the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) and the Press and Communications Department (DPC), with the support of the Department of Social Inclusion of the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity (DSI/SARE), have prepared this Guide to Inclusive Communication, which advocates for routine actions and modes of discussion and communication to foster equality, respect for human rights, and the recognition of the diversity inherent to human nature, in all its richness and dignity.

The Guide to Inclusive Communication offers concepts, definitions, terminology,

and guidelines for appropriately and respectfully referring to women and persons with nonconforming sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics, as well as to the diversity of persons with disabilities, children and adolescents, youth, older persons, migrant populations, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, and other groups that have historically been discriminated against.

By raising awareness and recognizing diversity, we promote human development, inclusion, and social justice, and thereby enrich our work environment so that our endeavors within the Organization will be more effective, respectful, and conducive to the changes we want to see in the region.

We must be guided by the aim of communicating with a gender, inclusion, equity, and human rights perspective, as a tool for ending the exclusionary and stigmatizing paradigms that have been established as “natural” in our use of language, and to make significant conceptual and collective contributions to humanizing and democratizing our region.



**Alejandra Mora Mora**  
Executive Secretary  
Inter-American Commission of Women

## INTRODUCTION

*“Thinking differently requires speaking differently.”*

*George Lakoff – Linguist*

The objective of this Guide to Inclusive Communication<sup>1</sup> for the General Secretariat of the OAS (GS/OAS) is to support the implementation of egalitarian, nondiscriminatory discourse, communications, and criteria in the Organization’s day-to-day work, by answering the most frequent questions regarding written, verbal, and visual communications. This Guide seeks to ensure that the institutional image and all communications of the General Secretariat of the OAS represent the equality and human diversity of the region, recognizing the importance of countering the prejudices and stereotypes that have been normalized through language, and

<sup>1</sup> This Guide was originally developed in Spanish. The present document, far from being a literal translation of the original version, is an adaptation that is specific to the English language and thus contains, in many sections, different guidelines and suggestions on how to communicate in an egalitarian, nondiscriminatory way. The process of translating and adapting the original Spanish version was carried out by an in-house working group that included representatives of the CIM/OAS, DPC/SCODMR, DIS/SARE and DCMM.

to propose changes through the conscious and proactive use of language and communication.

In the recognition that inclusion must be crosscutting and intersectional, this analytical and practical tool makes it possible to understand and respond to the ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how those intersections create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. It is therefore indispensable to the Organization’s work in the fields of integral development, democracy, security, and human rights with inclusion.

This Guide discusses inclusive, accessible language, as well as the richness of the GS/OAS’s use thereof. It includes an analysis of and provides tools for using nonsexist, inclusive language, with definitions and practical advice for different types of communications, including images. Further, it provides tools for appropriate communication regarding women, persons

with nonnormative sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics; persons with disabilities; migrants; children, and adolescents; older persons; indigenous peoples; and people of African descent. The Guide includes examples of discriminatory words and linguistic constructions as well as appropriate alternatives.

The Guide seeks to be accessible to the screen readers used by blind persons, persons with a visual impairment or reading disability, using red to indicate non-inclusive expressions and differentiating the word between asterisks; and green to indicate inclusive expressions, with the correct word between parentheses. This style is found throughout the document.

For the application of this Guide, it is important to take into consideration and recognize the context in which specific terminology and expressions are used, as their meaning may vary from one country to another and can change depending on the environment. The Guide recognizes the inter-American legal instruments adopted by the OAS, and their concepts and approved language. It also includes a glossary of concepts associated with equality, diversity, and inclusion issues, as well as a list of reference documents that provide additional definitions and tools for reinforcing the concepts discussed herein.



# 4

## SCOPE AND AREAS OF APPLICATION

The Guide to Inclusive Communication is a consultation tool that is available to the entire GS/OAS and its dependencies, including the offices and units of the General Secretariat in the Member States. All other bodies, including specialized agencies, subsidiary bodies, agencies, and entities of the GS/OAS, are invited to use this guide as a consultation tool.





# 5

## GENDER EQUALITY: DEFINITIONS IN TIMES OF CHANGE

### 5.1 Sexist concepts and gender stereotypes<sup>2</sup>

The sex/gender system typically marks and conditions relationships among human beings through stereotypes and gender roles and is a factor that foments exclusion and discrimination.

The binary vision of gender meets the need to uphold an established order, in which the ideas of how women should be, and act, are associated with their reproductive role and the domestic sphere, while masculinity is tied to the productive, breadwinning role, and to the public sphere. Any other identification or expression outside this framework is considered a deviation and as such, is excluded and punished.

The tools provided below seek to break away from these stereotypes and gender roles.

**NOTE:** Henceforth we will understand the word “women” to include lesbian, bisexual, trans, and intersex women, and the word “men” to include gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex men.

The **\* non-inclusive \*** options will be shown in red and between asterisks, and the **(inclusive)** in green and in parentheses.



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A complete glossary of terms can be found in Section 9 of this Guide.

## 5.2 Use of the generic male form and resources for avoiding it

When writing about activities in which women and people with other gender identities participate, it is incorrect to use the generic masculine form, because this univocal usage disregards groups of people that are already discriminated against. Everyone should be named. This involves questioning the androcentric logic that upholds—and insists on—the use of the so-called “generic male” form, which has even been posited to be “inclusive,” insofar as it would “represent” not only women, but all identities that transcend the binary, when used to name groups made up of individuals with diverse genders.

Some examples are<sup>3</sup>:

	<b>*Non-inclusive*</b>	<b>(Inclusive)</b> <sup>4</sup>
Use gender-neutral words	<b>Mankind</b>  <b>Chairman</b> <b>Ombudsman</b> <b>Congressman</b>	<b>Humankind, humanity, human race</b> <b>Chair, Chairperson</b> <b>Ombuds, Ombudsperson</b> <b>Legislator, Member of Congress, Congressional Representative</b>
Use plural pronouns/ adjectives	Before submitting your document, send it to the focal point for <b>his</b> review; <b>he</b> will return it to you with comments	Before submitting your document, send it to the focal point for <b>their</b> review; <b>they</b> will return it to you with comments
Use the pronoun one	A staff member in Antarctica earns less than <b>he</b> would in New York	A staff member in Antarctica earns less than <b>one</b> in New York
Use the relative pronoun who	If a complainant is not satisfied with the board’s decision, <b>he</b> can ask for a rehearing	A complainant <b>who</b> is not satisfied with the board’s decision can ask for a rehearing
Use a plural antecedent	A substitute judge must certify that <b>he</b> has familiarized <b>himself</b> with the record of the proceedings	Substitute judges must certify that <b>they</b> have familiarized <b>themselves</b> with the record of the proceedings

- 3 Some of the examples included in this section are taken from the United Nations Guide to Gender-Inclusive Language: <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/>. Examples were also taken from <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/gender-inclusive-lang>.
- 4 The words in red indicating non inclusive expressions will be set apart with asterisks for screen readers for people who are blind or have low vision. The words in green indicating inclusive expressions will be set apart between parentheses for screen readers.

Omit the gendered word	Requests the Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue <b>his/her</b> efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance  A person must reside continuously in the Territory for 20 years before <b>he</b> may apply for permanent residence	Requests the Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance  A person must reside continuously in the Territory for 20 years before applying for permanent residence
Use the passive voice	The author of a communication must have direct and reliable evidence of the situation <b>he</b> is describing	The author of a communication must have direct and reliable evidence of the situation being described
Always ask people the name and pronouns with which they self-identify	Assume a person's pronouns upon reading their first name	Use the name and pronoun preferred by the individual

### 5.3 Asymmetrical way of referring to women and men

This occurs when women are cited by their first names and men by their last names. Use of the first name is more intimate and familiar, while use of the last name reflects a more respectful tone. Often, men are referred to only with their last names, but women are referred to only with their first names (“Hillary,” “Cristina,” “Dilma”), or their first and last names. This asymmetry should be avoided, and men and women should be referred to in the same way.

### 5.4 Dual or apparent dual pairs

Apparent dual pairs are words whose masculine and feminine forms have different meanings. In the male form, they have a positive or neutral meaning, but in the female grammatical form, they indicate a lower or negative meaning, such as “man of the streets” (a populist) vs. “woman of the streets” (generally, a sex worker)

## 5.5 **Order of appearance of words**

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When both sexes are expressly mentioned in official documents, typically the male gender is placed before the female gender. This establishes an apparent hierarchical relationship that does not in fact exist. To address this issue, do not always place male before female, so that the female term also appears first, or use them in alternating order. Consider as well whether it is necessary to mention two sexes, or whether a neutral, collective term such as “people” may be more appropriate.

## 5.6 **Suggestions for avoiding linguistic sexism in writing**

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The tools explained below make it possible to optimize the use of inclusive language, associated with nonsexist practices. The explanations follow the methodology of **\*red\*** (and asterisks) for **\*noninclusive\*** expressions and **(green)** and **parentheses** for **(inclusive)** ones.

**Favor the use of neutral language:** language conditions individuals’ and groups’ attitudes, practices, and worldviews. Therefore, linguistic forms inherited from archaic social practices may limit human ideas and the value awarded to individuals, as well as their visibility. To counteract this exclusion, which has already been normalized in language, linguistic expressions should be made sex/gender neutral.

### ✓ **Valid forms that agree with self-perceived gender identities.**

When a communication is being sent to known recipients, always use the correct grammatical gender according to their self-perceived gender identities. Do not assume anything; rather, respect each person’s chosen name, which correlates with their self-identified gender.

#### **Example**

***“Dear Ms...”***

***“Dear Mr...”***



## ✓ Feminize terms

If the person to whom the communication is directed, or about which it reports, is female, or if she self-identifies as a woman.

### Example

*\*“To the Permanent Representative of Jamaica, Her Excellency Audrey Marks...”\**

## ✓ Do not describe social realities in a sexist way.

### • Do not always put the male term first

*\*“More than 88 million **men and women** will be registered to vote in Mexico.”\**  
(*“More than 88 million **women and men** will be registered to vote in Mexico.”*)

### • Avoid gender-biased expressions or expressions that reinforce gender stereotypes

Examples:<sup>5</sup>

“She throws/runs/fights like a girl”

“In a manly way”

“Oh, that’s women’s work”

“Thank you to the ladies for making the room more beautiful”

“Men just don’t understand”

“Man up”

“Who wears the trousers/pants”

“Boys will be boys”

Asking for the “maiden name”

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Some of the examples included in this section are taken from the United Nations Guide to Gender-Inclusive Language: <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/>.

## ✓ Avoid referring to women as dependent on, complementary to, subordinate to, or the property of men.

When the language used subordinates women's roles to a more prominent male role, even when they hold the same professional level, or describes women according to their relationship to men (daughter of, spouse of, wife of, widow of...), it reveals a significant sexist bias.

*"\*Professor Smith (surname and title for a man) and Madeline (first name for a woman)\* will attend the luncheon."*

*"(Professor Smith and Professor Jones) will attend the luncheon (surname and title for both)."*

## ✓ Discriminatory phrases.

These phrases use appositive and concessive conjunctions: "She's a good worker, even though she's pregnant," or "she's a woman, but she's very competent."

*"\*Despite being pregnant,\* the Minister of Health actively participated in all the meetings."*

*"\*Even though they are female,\* the indigenous women actively worked to rebuild their village after the earthquake."*

## 5.7 Referencing women as a separate category

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Language is also sexist when it refers to women as a separate, subordinate, or dependent category in politics, history, science, art, legislation, and religion, in both the private and public spheres.

This occurs when women are referred to as beings without decision-making powers or voices, or as objects about which men decide rather than as "persons" in their own right. Men are thus portrayed as doers and leaders, and women, merely as dependent or subordinate thereto. It is a clear expression of inequality when the language used primarily describes women as such, rather than as individuals.

This also occurs when women are identified as the spouse of, the daughter of, or the sister of some man; when only their roles in the private sphere are emphasized; when they are referred to as subordinate to their male peers; and when they are only identified as “objects” for pleasure, due to, for example, their beauty.

**Example:**

*\*Cultural activities will be organized for the wives of the congressmen.\**

Are all the congresspersons male? Are they are only accompanied by female spouses? Are they all married? Are they all heterosexual?

**Inclusive form:**

*(“Cultural activities will be organized for the individuals accompanying the members of Congress.”)*

## 5.7 Gender roles in language

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As discussed in section **5.1 Sexist concepts and gender stereotypes**, gender roles are the different roles for and expectations of women and men about how to be, how to feel, and how to act; these roles are assigned by society based on an exclusively binary and heteronormative perspective of sex and gender.

In a perpetually changing society, this cultural structure resists modification. In this context, nonsexist, inclusive language is one of the most fundamental means for naming all persons and their diversity, for deconstructing learned perspectives, and for demonstrating that roles should not be dictated by sex.

## How do we implement it?

- ▶ By using different forms of address for each sex, to break with the trend of making women's sex/gender their principal identity, above and beyond their social or professional status.

### Example:

*\*"Two women and three candidates entered the competition."\**

*("Five candidates, two women and three men entered the competition" or "Five candidates entered the competition").*

- ▶ Another typical form of gender role discrimination is when women are equated with children (infantilization), in the assumption that they have similar characteristics due to their bodily or biological diversity. These arbitrary attributions include, for example, the idea of women as weaker, meaning that they need to be protected and therefore, should take on passive roles in society. This ideological assumption based on bodily diversity also operates when we refer to other groups that are discriminated against, for example persons with disabilities and older persons, by their bodily differences, which we unconsciously associate with their characters and abilities.

### Example:

*\*"Area reserved for women and children"\**



# 6

## DIVERSE GROUPS, GROUPS IN SITUATIONS OF VULNERABILITY, AND/OR GROUPS THAT HAVE HISTORICALLY BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST

*“The limits of my language are the limits of my world.”*

*-Ludwig Wittgenstein*

Diversity enriches. The problem is that differences are not accorded equal worth, which leads to structural, normalized inequalities. Inclusive language helps raise awareness to move towards true equality, based on recognition and acceptance of the diversity inherent to human nature. It is thus important to understand the differences among the various terms used to point out this diversity, and for the language we use to recognize and equally value the diverse identities and their inherent dignity.

The discrimination based on sex, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, origin, or disability that is present in language is variable. The common factor is that it undermines people’s dignity as a result of their belonging to a certain

identity group or intersection thereof, and that it affects the exercise of their rights, their citizenship, and their inclusion in society.

Written, verbal, and audiovisual language includes prejudices, stigmas, and stereotypes that discriminate against groups and individuals based on their differences. This discrimination can be counteracted through knowledge and use of inclusive words for and depictions of persons with nonconforming sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics; persons with disabilities; migrants; older persons; indigenous people; and people of African descent.

These groups must be included and addressed in all GS/OAS communications

on any topic, not just ones that concern them directly or refer to them specifically. By communicating with a view to including the most vulnerable and excluded individuals, we will communicate for all people on an equal basis.

The way the Organization communicates internally and issues external communications on these groups or on any issue involving them, contributes to public debate, to strengthening more democratic and inclusive societies, and to eliminating stereotypes, prejudices, and the cycle of invisibility that has historically affected them.

**\*Non-inclusive\*** options will be shown in red and enclosed in asterisks, and **(inclusive options)** in green and in parentheses.

## 6.1 **LGBTI persons<sup>6</sup>**

To raise awareness of diverse gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, and sex characteristics, communications must specify to which group they are referring and always use the proper terminology. For example, it is a mistake to use the acronym LGBTI if not referring to all the identities specified therein.

It is essential to ask people how and with what pronoun they wish to be referred. It is up to the individual or group in question whether to mention their gender identity or sexual orientation, because these characteristics fall within the sphere of their private lives.

Do not use quotes, bold lettering, or italics to refer to LGBTI persons, as they can change the meaning or intention of the words and they draw an overt distinction that is uncalled for.

*Sexual orientation and gender identity are characteristics of human personality. Therefore, the right to freely live one's own sexual orientation or gender identity, and the right to express them without fear, are human rights.*

*Concept based on the Yogyakarta Principles*

Furthermore, there is no need to mention an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics if they are not pertinent to the message being transmitted. In this way we establish equal treatment. For example, couples, families, etc., should be referred to without specifying the sexual orientation of the individuals that form them. Their sexual orientation should only be noted if it is strictly necessary in order to understand the meaning of the information or because the individuals or families themselves choose to do so. Moreover, LGBTI persons should be mentioned not only when we want to note violations of their human rights or specific days of remembrance. Rather, it is important to include them in the various issues addressed by the OAS in a crosscutting, intersectional way.

<sup>6</sup> Since the terminology associated with these groups is not fixed and evolves rapidly, this section will use the abbreviation commonly used by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and its Rapporteurship on the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Persons (LGBTI), recognizing self-identification as the guiding principle and without ignoring other manifestations of sex characteristics, gender expression, gender identities, or sexual orientations.



pexels-anna-shvets

<b>*Incorrect* or discriminatory expressions.</b>	<b>(Inclusive expressions)</b>
Hermaphrodite, as a pejorative and inexact term for a person	Intersex
Sex change	Recognition of gender identity or sex or gender confirmation surgery
Transvestite or similar terms to refer to a trans person	Trans person
“Normal” person, to refer to someone with the predominant gender expression and sexual orientation, in contrast to an LGBTI person	Heterosexual person, cisgender person
Homosexual	Gay man or lesbian
Lesbian couple, gay couple, married homosexual couple, married trans couple, etc.	Couple (preferred terminology)  Married couple.  Another appropriate term is equal marriage, especially in contexts of the fight to access this right.  Same-sex couple
The gays	If referring to gay men, say “gay men”  If referring to gay women, say “gay women” or “lesbians”  If referring to LGBTI persons, say “LGBTI persons”
Sexual preference	Sexual orientation
Persons with different or other sexual orientations and/or gender identities.	Persons with nonconforming sexual orientations or gender identities/LGBTI persons
LGBTI community	LGBTI persons / Persons with nonconforming sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, or sex characteristics

## 6.2 Persons with disabilities

As noted earlier, diversity is an inherent part of human nature, and it makes society richer. Disability, like the concept of gender, is a constantly evolving **social construct**: it does not refer to people's individual, bodily, bio/psycho/social characteristics, but rather to the greater or smaller environmental barriers to the free development and expression in society of a person with those characteristics.

The social construct of disability gives rise to several myths and stigmas about what people with disabilities can and cannot do (which we call "ableism," as an ideological construct of oppression). These myths and stigmas have legitimized linguistic concepts and expressions used in discourse and communications that, based on prejudices and assumptions, do not often resolve (and more likely, hamper) these individuals' recognition of their rights and their need for political and social inclusion, in all their human diversity.

*The correct term is persons with disabilities or in a situation of disability.*

Persons with disabilities 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.

Accessibility to the physical, social, economic, and cultural environment, to health and education and to information and communication, is essential for persons with disabilities to fully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms. With respect to accessibility, information and communications should be provided in and through accessible formats, means, and channels.

An illustrative example: Inclusive communication is when meetings of the Organization include sign language interpretation or subtitling services for people who are deaf, audio description and text printed in Braille for people who are blind, and printed texts in simple language with images for persons with neurological diversity or intellectual disabilities.





## Essentially, the keys to accessible communications are to:

- ▶ Provide a visual alternative for everything that is exclusively auditory.
- ▶ Provide an audio alternative for everything that is exclusively visual.
- ▶ Produce versions of texts written in simple, iconographic language without technicalities, to transmit the key concepts to be disseminated.
- ▶ Provide an accessible web page with all the information/documents of the event.<sup>7</sup>

## Accessible notices of meetings:

When OAS areas convene an event, they should:

- a. Ensure that the call or invitation is not only in photo or PDF format and produce a text-only (Word or RTF) version describing the image.
- b. Convert the email notice to a text-only or RTF format, since the institutional email format in HTML is not accessible for screen readers (Outlook allows this and the option is included in the program menu); this way the email can be received and read by anyone, including people who are blind.
- c. In notices of meetings, always include the following paragraph: Individuals with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate, please request them at the email: ...
- d. When using social media to announce meetings the information should be accessible to all persons with disabilities. Voice overs and closed captioning on Facebook and Instagram should be included as well. An example can be found here: <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/picture-descriptions>.

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The website <https://www.w3.org/WAI/> provides standards and support material to make a web accessible.

## Guidelines for communicating with persons with disabilities

- ▶ Speak directly to people with disabilities just as you would with anyone else. Do not assume they are “incapable” due to their physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment. If you are unsure of how to communicate with someone, or of what they want, the best thing to do is to ask them directly and ask the person with the disability to guide you if necessary.
- ▶ Look directly at deaf people or people with hearing disabilities when speaking to them, and do not cover your mouth. If the person is facing away from you, or you are not in their angle of vision, lightly touch them on the shoulder to get their attention and make the necessary visual contact for communication. If the deaf person cannot read lips, use a pen and paper or cell phone to write down, in simple terms, what you wish to communicate.
- ▶ When speaking with people who are blind or have visual disabilities or low vision, identify yourself and the other individuals in the area, and describe where the furniture is located as well as where the group is situated in the space. When participating in a group conversation, identify yourself when you begin speaking, and identify the person to whom you are directing your words.
- ▶ When a sign language or oral interpreter, or real-time subtitling services, are part of the conversation, be aware that communications that need to be interpreted take longer to reach the intended recipient and that there must not be interferences between the interpreter and the message recipient. Therefore, avoid getting between them when walking or blocking their communication or line of sight, and speak slowly to allow time for the message to reach the final recipient.

## Guidelines for more accessible communication

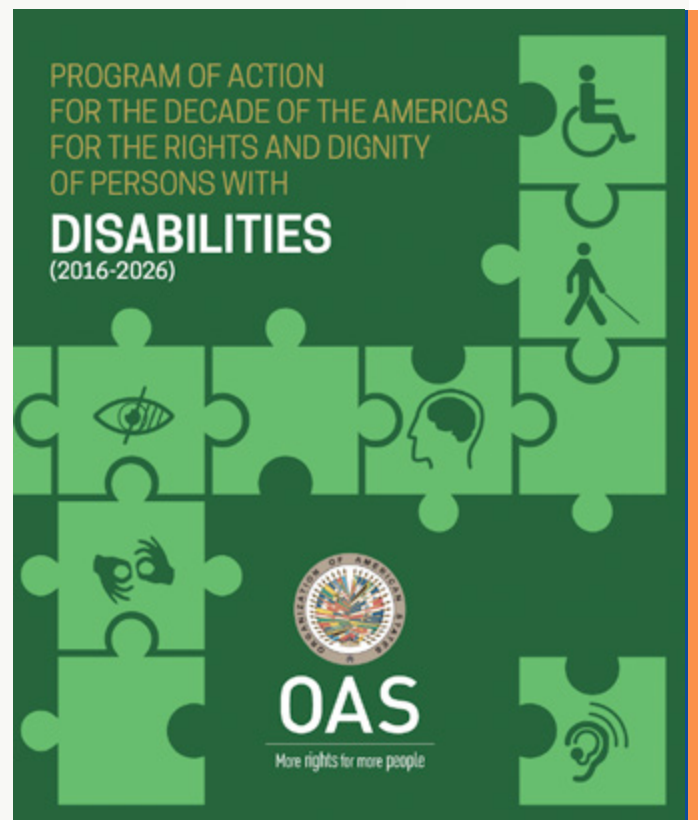
- ▶ Avoid projecting a victimizing or hurtful image of people with disabilities.
- ▶ Use images that show persons with disabilities doing daily activities, working, being productive, that transmits a positive vision.
- ▶ Deconstruct “ableism” against individuals based on their bodily differences. Stop emphasizing “capacities” and “limitations.” Use phrases like “person using a wheelchair” instead of “wheelchair-bound person.”
- ▶ Do not use emotional, devaluing adjectives like “unfortunate” or “pitiful,” or condescending or patronizing terms or expressions like “poor thing,” “handicapped,” “limited.”

- ▶ Avoid describing successful persons with disabilities as if they were superheroes.
- ▶ A disability is not the same thing as an illness or incapacity. Therefore, avoid describing people according to medical diagnoses, or including disability situations under health issues.
- ▶ Avoid using euphemisms to refer to persons with disabilities. Further, do not use disabilities like deafness, blindness, or autism as symbolic descriptions, as in “political blindness” or “the service is lame/crippled/deaf/blind” (to say that the service is bad). Do not use the expression “retarded” to criticize someone’s decisions or words.
- ▶ Prepare communications that raise awareness about the situation of people with disabilities beyond the commemorative dates or anniversaries.
- ▶ It is important to advance the accessibility of OAS documents,<sup>8</sup> so that a braille reprint is included in printed written communications, and audio description and subtitles in audiovisual communications. Additionally, written communications must have legible typography and with a contrast of colors that contributes to visibility for people with low vision.
- ▶ The Department of Social Inclusion of the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity (DSI/SARE) has a Braille printer available for General Secretariat staff who wish to make their documents accessible to persons with visual disabilities. To use it, send an email to [dis@oas.org](mailto:dis@oas.org).

<sup>8</sup> Resolution AG/RES. 2731 (XLII-0/12) “[to] take steps to bring about progressive advancement toward accessibility to persons with disabilities of the facilities of the Organization of American States (OAS), as well as of its information dissemination tools, such as its documents, communications, website, etc., in accordance with the principle of nondiscrimination enshrined in CIADDIS.”

## Inclusive digital communications

- ▶ All digital material must be legible to screen readers for persons with visual disabilities. It is best to use texts in Word, Power Point, or Excel format. Include a description in text only format of all the inserted images.
- ▶ Include a version with enlarged typeface and a text-only version (plain text or RTF).
- ▶ Include simple-language and iconographic versions of the main concepts.
- ▶ Include sign language and/or subtitled videos.
- ▶ Videos that only contain images must include a voice-over describing the image (audio description).



<b>*Incorrect expressions*</b>	<b>(Inclusive expressions)</b>
Special or different abilities, different needs, special people, special needs	Persons with disabilities or in a situation of disability
Deaf-mute, Deaf-and-Dumb	Deaf person, person with hearing loss, person with an auditory disability
Sightless	Blind person, person with low vision /with a visual disability
Crippled, Impaired, invalid, paralyzed, useless, lame, handicapped, gimp	Person with a physical disability
Wheelchair-bound	Person who uses a wheelchair
Dim, subnormal, deficient, retarded	Person with an intellectual disability
Mongoloid, backward, retarded	Person with Down's syndrome, person with an intellectual disability, person with a cognitive disability
Mentally ill, deranged, disturbed, psychopath, insane, crazy	Person who uses mental health services or psychiatric consumer or survivor, person with a mental health disability
Autistic	Person with autism or person with neurodiversity; Person from nonspeaking communities; Neuroatypical person
Deaf-blind	Person with deafblindness; person with multiple challenges
Asylum, psych ward	Mental health center, day center, reintegration center

Additional information can be found in the United Nations Disability Inclusive Communication Guidelines:  
[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un\\_disability-inclusive\\_communication\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_disability-inclusive_communication_guidelines.pdf)



## 6.3 People in contexts of human mobility

Migrations form part of the history of humanity, and as a human reality, they are continually changing.

In the Americas, the human rights of migrants are almost entirely included in every one of the international and regional human rights instruments adopted since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. In general, the declarations and agreements stipulate that a person's nationality or other conditions are not, and should not be, valid criteria for recognizing and guaranteeing a human right.

Communications should include considerations that show migration as a common occurrence of population displacement rather than as a threat, and that do not portray migrants as less worthy human beings. Further, communications must not automatically implicitly or explicitly associate migratory movements with violence, marginalization, victimization, disorder, or crime, without contextualizing these issues or analyzing their root causes.

*Inclusive language promotes respect for the rights of migrant persons by presenting them as an opportunity for society, rather than as a problem or threat.*

*It also contributes to eradicating derogatory, discriminatory expressions used to refer to the migrant population.*



- ▶ Show the social wealth that derives from the meeting of migrant populations and host communities. Do not associate migrants with unemployment or crime, for example.
- ▶ Do not insist on supposedly irreconcilable cultural differences, which are a false and discriminatory assumption.
- ▶ Impart depictions of the community as shared and heterogeneous, rather than segregated into national or ethnic groups.
- ▶ Approach migration as a topic rather than as a problem, which will make it more of a mundane, unextraordinary issue.
- ▶ Give voice to migrants, asking them how they want to be portrayed.
- ▶ Communicate about migrants from the perspective of diverse, intersectional identities.
- ▶ Do not mention the subject's ethnic group, skin color, religion, or culture if it is not strictly necessary to ensure overall understanding of the information.
- ▶ Do not identify the migrant population with certain linguistic hallmarks or physical traits, as historically this has underpinned racist discourse.
- ▶ Raise awareness of migrants through portrayals that encourage the full exercise of their rights as well as their social inclusion.

<b>*Incorrect expressions*</b>	<b>(Inclusive expressions)</b>
Illegals, aliens, undocumented	Migrant in an irregular situation
Flow, waves, surges, avalanches of immigrants	Entry, arrival

### Example:

“In absolute terms, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti have the largest diaspora communities: over a million emigrants each, with most living in the United States (World Bank, 2015). Guyana and Haiti are, in absolute terms, the primary countries of origin of intraregional migrants. In relative terms, Guyana and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have the most emigrants. Respectively, the emigrant population is 58.2 per cent and 55.5 per cent the size of the population living at home (World Bank, 2015).

Over half of total Caribbean migrants to the US, Europe, and Canada are women. Furthermore, migrants are predominantly of productive and reproductive age. Cubans form an exception – the largest group of Cuban migrants is aged 45 and over (Thomas-Hope, 2000).”

<https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/migration-caribbean-current-trends-opportunities-and-challenges>

## 6.4 Older persons

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Today’s typical society is an aging one. People live longer thanks to technological progress and improved awareness of healthy lifestyles that result in an increased life expectancy. Older people are a social, cultural, and economic asset. They are not, therefore, a passive group, but rather actively participate in all fronts of social life.

Communications about this group often use inappropriate terms with negative connotations.

### To communicate regarding older persons

- ▶ Do not refer to these people as dependent or weak. Recognize that vulnerability in old age is associated with health conditions, poverty, and social support resources, not with individuals’ traits or their worth as human beings.
- ▶ Depict older people as competent adults capable of playing a significant role in society. Deconstruct the paradigms that base human worth on usefulness and consumption, and instead base it on the self.

- ▶ Produce communications that portray older people as involved in daily activities and integrated into society.
- ▶ Avoid calling older persons “grandparents,” which reduces their status to a social role. Moreover, not all older people are.
- ▶ The term old age should not be disparaged. Rather, language should always consider the primacy of the idea of personhood, with its consequent connotations of respect and dignity.
- ▶ In communications, showcase older persons’ contributions to their environments, the value of their experience and wisdom, and the help they provide to families, their communities, and society.
- ▶ Highlight the economic contributions made by this group: they are individuals with stable levels of consumption and fixed incomes, and significant drivers of the economy. However, do not center their worth only on this aspect.
- ▶ Emphasize initiatives that show older women and men actively involved in areas like art, theater, sports, science, and politics.
- ▶ Communicate about older people using an approach based on diversity and the intersectionality of identities, including gender (the role of care), gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, race, origin, etc.

<b>*Incorrect expressions*</b>	<b>(Inclusive expressions)</b>
Old women, old men, the elderly	Older persons; Older women/men
Geezers, dependents, geriatric, old fogey	Older adults; older persons; older population.

## 6.5 Indigenous peoples

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The indigenous peoples of the Americas are culturally distinct groups who maintain an ancestral bond to the lands where they live, first lived, or wish to live.<sup>9</sup>

To refer to these peoples in general, the terms indigenous peoples and original peoples can be used interchangeably and as synonyms, but the terms “ethnicities” and “populations” should be avoided. Although the two phrases can be considered synonyms, the term “indigenous peoples” is used in international legislation such as the International Labour Organization’s Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the *American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

- ▶ In using inclusive language to refer to indigenous peoples, we must understand that their cultures, just like those of any group of humans, are not static, but rather dynamic.
- ▶ Do not refer to “our” peoples but rather to “the” peoples. Furthermore, avoid phrases like “the native peoples of Honduras,” for example, which connote ownership, and instead use “in Honduras.”
- ▶ Do not classify any member of a people as “pure” or “impure.”
- ▶ Use the present tense to communicate about indigenous peoples, rather than referring to them as groups from the past. They are present-day cultures that live together with other cultures.
- ▶ “Indigenous” is the word that is most used and accepted by international forums to refer to these groups of people. In communicating, it is always a good idea to ask individuals how they wish to be referred to.
- ▶ Although it is true that some indigenous peoples face structural and recurrent poverty and/or marginalization, and these issues should be brought to light, communications must also highlight their contributions to all aspects of society.
- ▶ Identify indigenous persons who are leaders in the university, cultural, artistic, and scientific spheres, and in sports, politics, etc.

9

[.http://www.oas.org/en/topics/indigenous\\_peoples.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/topics/indigenous_peoples.asp)



- Communicate about indigenous persons from the perspective of diverse identities and intersectionality.

<b>*Incorrect expressions*</b>	<b>(Inclusive expressions)</b>
The indigenous	Indigenous persons/indigenous communities/indigenous peoples
Ethnic minorities/the indigenous/Indians	Indigenous communities, indigenous peoples, original peoples, indigenous persons
Indigenous reservations	Indigenous territory
Indigenous dialect	Indigenous language

## Example

On behalf of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, I am pleased to address you in order to submit to the jurisdiction of the honorable Inter-American Court of Human Rights, case no. 12.354 against the Republic, related to the ongoing violation of the right to collective property of the Kuna de Madungandí and Emberá de Bayano indigenous peoples and their members as a result of the State's failure, to date, to pay the financial compensation stemming from the dispossession and flooding of the victims' ancestral territories. The case also has to do with the failure to recognize, award title for, and demarcate and award title for the lands granted to the Kuna de Madungandí indigenous people. Note of Remission to the IA Court HR, Case 12.354

*Note:* In 2018, the Organization of American States (OAS) named Venezuelan activist, actress, and model Patricia Velásquez Goodwill Ambassador for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Americas.



## 6.6 Persons of African descent

The United Nations estimates that there are around 200 million people who self-identify as people of African descent living in the Americas.<sup>10</sup>

The American States recognize that people of African descent confront obstacles because of the prejudices and discrimination that are prevalent in public and private institutions as well as in public policy, whether by act or omission, and that this is due to centuries of slavery, racism, racial discrimination, and the historical denial of their rights. This situation also results in a failure to recognize their contributions to the cultural heritage and economic, political, and social development of the Americas.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, this group has been—and continues to be—discriminated against and made invisible in language.

### To communicate about persons of African descent:

- ▶ Ask people how they prefer to be referred to.
- ▶ Do not use the word “black” to negatively describe a situation or item. For example: “black humor,” “black Monday on the stock market,” “black sheep,” “black mark,” etc.
- ▶ Do not use the word **denigrate**, since its etymological root means “to blacken completely;” instead, use the word “disparage” or “degrade.”
- ▶ Raise awareness of the presence of the Afro-descendant population in the various topics addressed by the Organization.
- ▶ Publicize the historical presence and participation of persons of African descent in forming the countries of the Americas, as well as their contributions to culture.

10 <https://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/>.

11 <http://www.oas.org/dil/afrodescendants.htm>.



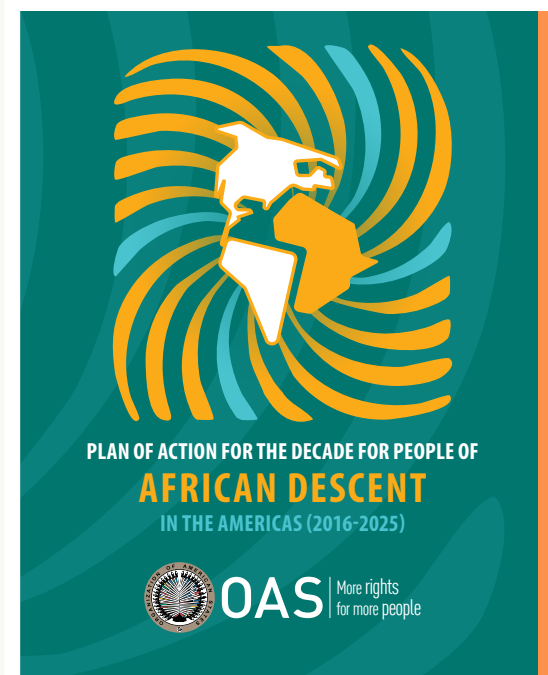
Photo by Natona Cancer Institute on Unsplash

- ▶ Collaborate to eradicate the prejudice that associates Afro with foreign, exotic, or sexualized.
- ▶ Do not stereotype characteristics, roles, or abilities by race, for example: persons of African descent are all good dancers, cooks, singers, strong, and have knowledge of alternative medicine, etc.
- ▶ Do not depict the customs of persons of African descent as foreign, exotic, or ridiculous.
- ▶ Include persons of African descent in communications using an approach based on diversity and the intersectionality of identities.

<b>*Incorrect expressions*</b>	<b>(Inclusive expressions)</b>
Depending on the country: Blacks,* dark-skinned, negroes, colored	People of African descent, Persons of African descent, Afro-descendant populations, African-American/Afro, Afro- Caribbean, Afro-Trinidadian, etc.

**\*Explanatory note:** In some countries in the region, like the United States, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, and Peru, several organizations of persons of African descent use the word “Black” (“Negro/a” in Spanish) to reclaim the term and to deconstruct its negative associations. This is mainly due to the influence of the civil rights movement: Black power, Black is beautiful.

**Note:** In 2017, the Organization of American States (OAS) named Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. of the United States, an Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, literary scholar, journalist, cultural critic and institution builder, Goodwill Ambassador for the Rights of People of African Descent in the Americas.



# 7

## USE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Language transmits the way in which people, societies, and institutions see the world and raises awareness of distinct cultures, multiculturalism, and interculturality, as well as of humanity's intersectional diversity, reflecting the vast richness thereof in words and images.

The failure to use inclusive language is also a form of communication: it denies that human nature is inherently diverse and in doing so becomes another form of discrimination and oppression.

The use of inappropriate language is also a form

of discrimination given the premise that all persons should be treated equally and with dignity, the diversity of persons and cultures should be appropriately recognized and made visible, on equal terms and with equal opportunities.

When we state our intent to use inclusive language, our aim is to do so comprehensively and consistently in the Organization's internal communications among working groups, among the various areas, and in all its external communications, from speeches and statements made by the Organization's governing bodies to its press reports, social networks, and websites.

*Language is ideological because we use it to explain reality, and therefore, it is a way to exercise power.*

*Communication that includes, democratizes.*

## Why use inclusive language?

- ▶ To comply with and give effect to OAS policies and mandates as well as the mission to guarantee “more rights for more people” without excluding anyone;
- ▶ To facilitate the Organization’s egalitarian and nondiscriminatory actions;
- ▶ To unify criteria for internal and external communications, eliminating ambiguities, discrimination, and marginalization.
- ▶ To name and depict all realities and human diversity.

### *An inclusive communications strategy therefore also includes non-verbal communication*

Physical spaces also communicate inclusion when they are accessible for all people, which means providing accommodations to allow persons with mobility issues and persons with disabilities to enter and participate; clear, identifiable signaling; informative pictorial and simple-language signage in key locations; and auditory and tactile technologies.

## 7.1 Equality regarding roles:

### Use inclusive language to communicate about professions, positions, and occupations

Below, and in addition to the suggestions provided previously in sections 5 and 6, we will list other recommendations for implementing inclusive language in the Organization’s internal and external communications: internal notes, statements, guidelines, procedures, bulletins, press conferences, speeches, institutional web site and social networks, photographs, and videos.

The **\*non-inclusive\*** options are shown in **red and in between asterisks**, and the **(inclusive)** options in **green and parentheses**:



- ▶ Use generic terms when referring to groups made up of people with different sexes/genders, to avoid emphasizing one over the other and marginalizing.

*“An OAS delegation held a meeting with **\* the men and women \*** applicants for political asylum”.*

*“An OAS delegation held a meeting with **(the people)** applying for political asylum”.*

- ▶ Use pronouns that do not indicate gender, or omit them if they are not necessary

<b>*Non-inclusive*</b>	<b>(Inclusive)</b>
Before submitting your document, send it to the focal point for <b>his</b> review; <b>he</b> will return it to you with comments	Before submitting your document, send it to the focal point for <b>their</b> review; <b>they</b> will return it to you with comments

- ▶ Use group nouns that do not specify sex or gender and use gender-neutral terms for positions.

<b>*Non-inclusive*</b>	<b>(Inclusive)</b>
Boys, girls	Children
Policemen	Police officer
Firemen	Firefighters
Mailmen	Postal worker
Young men, young women	Youth

▶ Use gender-neutral terms for positions

*Non-inclusive*	(Inclusive)
Ombudsman	Ombuds, Ombudsperson
Chairman	Chair, Chairperson

▶ Additional considerations for inclusive language in written communications

•Include quotes and references from both women and men in communications and news items. It is important to ensure that all genders and persons are equally represented in the opinions cited in the Organization’s communications.

•The GS/OAS must make an effort to always ensure equality of representation among panelists, speakers, etc. in communications. There should be an equal number of men and women; moreover, persons with nonconforming gender identities and expressions and sexual orientations, as well as other diversities intersectionalities, should be considered. Likewise, all-women panels should not only discuss women’s, gender, social, or care issues (which are socially “feminized”), and panels made up of persons from other groups in situations of vulnerability should not only address issues specific to them. Rather, there should be fair and diverse representation for all issues and policies discussed at the GS/OAS.

*Naming and raising awareness of the different experiences lived by LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, migrant persons, older persons, persons in situations of poverty, and in general, our human, cultural, and linguistic diversity, strengthens the four pillars of the OAS Secretary General’s work, since beyond the regulatory treaties and political and technical documents, the GS/OAS management seeks to improve the lives of the people living in the Americas, who should have a voice and see themselves reflected in the decision-making processes on issues that involve them.*

## 7.2 Words and gender

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*Language is not sexist in and of itself; rather, the way it is used is.*

According to the Spanish philologist Teresa Meana, who has been working to prevent discrimination in the Spanish language for over 20 years, “We define sexism in language according to two fundamental effects: silence and scorn.”

Silence, because it is sexist to fail to name women or persons with nonconforming gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientations, sex characteristics, or other identities. This denial and disregard violate their human rights.

And scorn, because when the masculine is depicted as superior and universal, the feminine and other nonbinary gender identities disappear and, therefore, are disregarded.

For example, Time magazine created the section “Man of the Year” or “Woman of the Year” in 1927, but only used “Woman of the Year” four times. In 1999, Time changed the name of the section to “Person of the Year.”

## 7.3 Discriminatory language

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Language conveys people’s views of life and builds realities. Therefore, care should be taken to avoid any kind of discrimination in communications and in using it.

Language is not arbitrary; rather it is a social and historical construct that influences people’s perception of reality, evolves, and adapts to new social, cultural, and political circumstances and contexts—hence the importance of using it consciously to adequately communicate the Organization’s actions in line with its objectives of inclusion, nondiscrimination, and promoting rights.

Inclusive language does not hide, subordinate, or exclude any gender. It takes into account, respects, and raises awareness of all persons, recognizing and respecting their genders, diversity, and intersectionality as valid and as a form of social wealth. If the language being used does not fulfill these principles, it is discriminatory.

This Guide provides examples of inclusive alternatives to be used in institutional communications to avoid discriminating through language.

## 7.3.1 Figures of speech

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Figures of speech are expressions that use words or images to emphasize an idea to move, persuade, or please the reader, viewer, or listener; they reflect a certain view of people and of the world.

To include all people and their diversity in our language, we must choose our descriptive words very carefully.

### Examples:

- ▶ Highlighting women politicians' roles as mothers or caregivers invalidates their presence in the public sphere. It also invalidates the presence of men in the private sphere (because men politicians' roles as fathers or caregivers are rarely emphasized).
- ▶ The use of terms that "infantilize" persons with disabilities to trigger compassion and to show they deserve public or private charity, discriminates against them and offends their human dignity. The same occurs when they are presented as "superheroes," because the admiration for "self-improvement" and "resilience" assumes that the expectations for their success or achievements were low.
- ▶ Objectifying people with disabilities devalues their humanity, and thus constitutes discrimination and oppression.
- ▶ Praising indigenous peoples or people of African descent only for their "cultural" or "folkloric" contributions undermines and invalidates their presence in and contributions to the political, economic, social, historical, and environmental spheres.

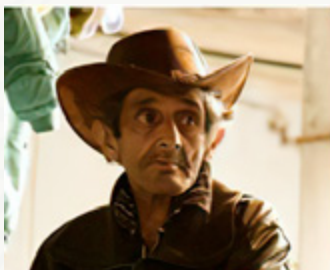
# 8

## INCLUSIVE GRAPHIC AND VISUAL LANGUAGE

Examples of proactive and positive images that showcase human diversity:



Examples of images related to groups in situations of vulnerability at the forefront:





**Additional photographs that exemplify diversity and intersectional identities can be found at:**  
<http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/ddse/pages/index-5.asp>

- ▶ Images should be accompanied by a caption with a brief text description of the image so that people who use screen readers (persons who are blind or have low vision) can understand the message.
- ▶ Likewise, when producing videos, try to use subtitles so that deaf people can access the information on an equal footing.

Images are central to communication. Through them, the world communicates directly. Therefore, they deserve the same reflection and care as verbal and written language, in order to ensure they are not sexist or exclusionary.



- ▶ To ensure visual communications are inclusive, adhere to the following rules:
- ▶ Treat all persons and groups equally in visual representations, considering their diversity and intersectional identities.
- ▶ Not only is the number of people who appear in the image important, but so is the place each one is assigned:
  - who is in the front
  - who is looking straight ahead, who isn't, what they are doing with their hands, how they are positioned (facing forward, facing back, standing, sitting, bending)

- ▶ One sexist bias is to show men as active (at the front of the image, standing, looking at the camera, speaking), while women appear more passive (arms crossed, eyes down, sitting, placed behind others...). This also occurs with other intersectional identities: indigenous, Afro-descendant, migrant, poor women, and women with disabilities.



Foto de Andrea Popa en Unsplash

- ▶ Do not depict women in positions of subordination, inferiority, or objectification, nor as victims, showing the scars left by abuse in cases of gender-based violence. Ideally, women should be shown as active and empowered individuals fighting for their rights.

- ▶ Avoid using the masculine form as generic.
- ▶ Avoid the instrumentalization of people in situations of poverty

[https://give.unrefugees.org/181002emer\\_indotsu\\_c\\_4720/](https://give.unrefugees.org/181002emer_indotsu_c_4720/)



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1

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\$120

\$60

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\$ Other amount

- ▶ Asymmetry of placement: the front parts of the image are more expressive, since they show people's feelings. The forefront is the most important area of the image, and as such should include diversity and equal representation.
- ▶ Asymmetry in angles: angulation is the position of the camera regarding the subject. It can establish relationships of power or importance, since depending on the angle some subjects can appear smaller. It is important to consider equality and diversity in the appearance and angles of the people shown in the images.
- ▶ Avoid reproducing stereotypes and sexist roles. This occurs when women are associated with beauty, sensitivity, fragility, passivity, caretaking, reproduction, and the domestic sphere, and men with strength, activity, public authority, production, the public sphere, and the professional world. The same happens with other identities: indigenous, Afro-descendant, migrant, poor women, and women with disabilities.
- ▶ Disclose the achievements made by women and men in non-traditional spheres.
- ▶ Show diversity. There is no single "model" of a woman; there are many types of women, just as there are many types of men and of persons with different gender identities and expressions and other intersectional identities.
- ▶ Music forms part of the audiovisual narrative. It reinforces the image and emphasizes actions and emotions. The type of music used, and the lyrics of the songs must be considered to avoid discrimination. For example, sad music is often used when we show images of persons in situations of vulnerability, to express the idea and feelings of suffering.
- ▶ In images or videos depicting LGBTI persons, do not associate them with bodily expressions or gestures, ways of dressing, or tones of voice that stereotype, mock, or ridicule their sex characteristics, gender expressions, gender identities, or sexual orientation. Moreover, show them in daily life instead of, for example, always using images of gay pride events to illustrate any action involving LGBTI persons.
- ▶ This also holds for images of persons of African descent and of indigenous peoples, which are often stereotyped caricatures, constituting discrimination.
- ▶ Respect everyone's privacy. Intrusive images should not be obtained without the express authorization of the subjects.



## Persons with disabilities:

- ▶ In all audiovisual works, use open or closed captioning and/or sign language interpreters for persons who are deaf or have auditory disabilities.
- ▶ Include audio descriptions (voice-overs) of the principal visual elements for persons with visual disabilities.
- ▶ In all cases, be careful with placement, music, positioning, and the depiction of roles, to avoid discriminatory connotations that undervalue persons because of their bodily differences. Furthermore, take care to ensure balanced representation of genders, diversity, and intersectionality.
- ▶ Avoid depictions based on medical diagnoses.
- ▶ Avoid dramatic expressions.



## Migrants:

- ▶ In texts and images, show migrants participating in day-to-day activities, not just as victims.
- ▶ Forego dramatic images. Remember that there are famous migrants in various spheres (cinema, sports, sciences, etc.) who collaborate with their testimonies to deconstruct stereotypes.





## Older persons:

- ▶ Do not use images depicting passivity and physical deterioration. For example: photos or images of older persons sitting on park benches or using canes. Do not pigeonhole or stereotype older persons in images of human decline due to their age. As in all cases, a better or worse quality of life does not really depend on age but rather on opportunities and context.
- ▶ Produce images of active older persons: working, dancing, exercising their citizenship, expressing their human worth, shopping, doing sports, volunteering, or simply expressing satisfaction with life.
- ▶ Do not use only gray hairs or wrinkles to depict older persons.
- ▶ Use subtitles in videos, not only for the benefit of deaf persons but also to help older persons.



## A

**Active and healthy aging:** The process of optimizing opportunities for physical, mental, and social wellbeing; participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual, and civic affairs; and protection, security, and care in order to extend healthy life expectancy and quality of life for all people as they age, as well as to allow them to remain active contributors to their families, peers, communities, and nations. This concept applies to individuals as well as to population groups.<sup>12</sup>

**Age discrimination in old age:** Any distinction, exclusion, or restriction based on age, the purpose or effect of which is to annul or restrict recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal basis, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, cultural, economic, social, or any other sphere of public and private life.<sup>13</sup>

**Aging:** A gradual process that develops over the course of life and entails biological, physiological, psychosocial, and functional changes with varying consequences, which are associated with permanent and dynamic interactions between the individual and their environment.<sup>14</sup>

**Autonomy:** The concept of autonomy refers to people's capacity to make free and informed decisions about their lives, enabling them to be and act in accordance with their own aspirations and desires, given a historical context that makes those possible.<sup>15</sup>

12 Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons ([http://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/tratados\\_multilaterales\\_interamericanos\\_a-70\\_derechos\\_humanos\\_personas\\_mayores.asp](http://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/tratados_multilaterales_interamericanos_a-70_derechos_humanos_personas_mayores.asp)).

13 Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons ([http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter\\_american\\_treaties\\_A-70\\_human\\_rights\\_older\\_persons.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-70_human_rights_older_persons.asp)).

14 Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons ([http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter\\_american\\_treaties\\_A-70\\_human\\_rights\\_older\\_persons.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-70_human_rights_older_persons.asp)).

15 UN Women Training Centre's Gender Equality Glossary (<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=A&sort-key=&sortorder=asc>).

## B

**Bisexual:** Used to describe a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to persons of the same sex and of a different sex. The term bisexual tends to be interpreted and applied inconsistently, often with a very narrow understanding. Bisexuality does not have to involve attraction to both sexes at the same time, nor does it have to involve equal attraction to or the same number of relationships with both sexes. Bisexuality is a unique identity that requires examination in its own right.<sup>16</sup>

## C

**Cisgender person:** When a person's gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.<sup>17</sup>

**Cisnormativity:** The idea or expectation that all persons are cisgender, and that persons designated males at birth always grow up to be men and that persons designated female at birth always grow up to be women.<sup>18</sup>

## D

**Disability:** The term "disability" means a physical, mental, or sensory impairment, whether permanent or temporary, that limits the capacity to perform one or more essential activities of daily life, and which can be caused or aggravated by the economic and social environment. Persons with disabilities 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.<sup>19</sup>

16 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

17 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

18 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

19 Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (<http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-65.html>), and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convopt-prot-e.pdf>.

**Discrimination:** Discrimination is any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference, in any area of public or private life, the purpose or effect of which is to nullify or curtail the equal recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal basis, of one or more human rights or fundamental freedoms. Discrimination may be based on nationality; age; sex; sexual orientation; gender identity and expression; language; religion; cultural identity; political opinions or opinions of any kind; social origin; socioeconomic status; educational level; migrant, repatriate, stateless, or internally displaced status; disability; genetic trait; mental or physical health condition, including infectious-contagious condition and debilitating psychological condition; or any other condition.<sup>20</sup>

**Discrimination against persons with disabilities:** Any distinction, exclusion, or restriction based on a disability, record of disability, condition resulting from a previous disability, or perception of disability, whether present or past, which has the effect or objective of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by a person with a disability of his or her human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>21</sup> “Discrimination on the basis of disability” means any distinction, exclusion, or restriction based on disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation.<sup>22</sup>

## F

**Functional diversity:** Term used to reaffirm that persons with disabilities do not lack capacities, but rather function in an atypical way; they can fulfill the same functions as any other person, in a way that is different from what is considered usual or “normal.” According to this point of view, persons with disabilities do not need to be “fixed;” they do not lack anything. Rather, they can do what anyone else does, but in different ways (same functions, diverse ways of performing them). Different logics of mobility, communication, emotional expression, perception, and understanding are also discussed, as another expression of the diversity inherent to human nature.<sup>23</sup>

20 Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance ([http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter\\_american\\_treaties\\_A-69\\_discrimination\\_intolerance.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-69_discrimination_intolerance.asp)).

21 Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (<http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-65.html>).

22 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 2, Definitions: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convopt-prot-e.pdf>.

23 A.V. Ferreira, Miguel. (2010). *De la “minus”-valía a la diversidad funcional: un nuevo marco teórico-metodológico*. *Política y Sociedad*. 47, adapted by the GS/OAS.

## G

**Gay:** The term gay is often used to describe a man whose physical, romantic, and emotional attraction is to other men, although it can also be used to describe both gay men and lesbian women.<sup>24</sup>

**Gender:** This term refers to the socially constructed identities, functions, and attributes of men and women, and to the social and cultural significance attributed to their biological differences.<sup>25</sup>

**Gender expression:** Gender expression is understood to be the external manifestation of a person's gender, through their physical appearance, which may include the way they dress, their hairstyle, use of cosmetics, or their mannerisms, way of speaking, patterns of personal behavior, social interaction, names, or ways they refer to themselves, etc. A person's gender expression may or may not correlate to their self-perceived gender identity.<sup>26</sup>

**Gender identity:** Gender identity is the internal, individual experience of gender as felt by each person, and it may or may not correlate to the sex assigned at birth. It includes both the personal sense of the body (which may involve modification of bodily appearance or function through medical, surgical, or other means, provided that such modification is freely chosen by the individual) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech, and mannerisms. Gender identity is a broad concept that allows for self-identification and references individuals' own experience of their gender. Thus, gender identity and expression take many forms, and some people do not identify as men or women or identify as both.<sup>27</sup>

**Gender equality:** Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, children, and persons (adults, young people, or adolescents) with nonnormative gender identities, gender expressions, or sex characteristics. Equality does not mean that women, men, and persons with nonnormative gender identities, gender expressions, or sex characteristics will become the same, but rather that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they were born with certain sex characteristics, nor on their gender identities or gender expressions. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of all persons are taken into account, and recognizes the diversity inherent to human nature, whether of different groups of men, women, or persons with nonconforming gender identities, gender expressions, or sex characteristics. Gender

24 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

25 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

26 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

27 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).



equality is not a women's issue; rather, it concerns and engages men and all persons on equal terms. Equality among men, women, and persons with nonconforming gender identities, gender expressions, or sex characteristics is seen as both a human rights issue and as an indicator of people-centered development.<sup>28</sup>

**Gender roles:** Gender roles are the social and behavioral norms that, within a specific culture and from a binary perspective, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex. They often determine the traditional responsibilities and tasks assigned to men, women, boys, and girls (see gender division of labor). Gender-specific roles are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, occurrence of conflict or disaster, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions. Like gender itself, gender roles can evolve over time, in particular through the empowerment of women and of persons with nonnormative sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, or sex characteristics, and through the transformation of masculinities.<sup>29</sup>

**Gender/sex binary:** The dominant social and cultural model in Western culture that considers gender and sex to include two and only two rigid categories, namely masculine/male and feminine/female. This system/model excludes individuals who do not fit within these two categories (such as trans and intersex persons)<sup>30</sup>

**Gender stereotypes:** These are simplistic generalizations about gender attributes, differences, and roles arbitrarily assigned to women and men, as well as stigmatizations of the attitudes, behaviors, and roles of persons with nonconforming sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics. Stereotypical characteristics of men are that they are competitive, acquisitive, autonomous, independent, confrontational, and concerned about private goods. Parallel stereotypes of women hold that they are cooperative, nurturing, caring, connecting, group-oriented, and concerned about public goods. Examples of common stereotypes of persons with nonconforming sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics are that gay men and lesbian women do not form stable couples; that bisexual persons do not exist; that intersex people are abnormal; and that trans persons are mentally ill. Stereotypes are often used to justify gender discrimination.<sup>31</sup>

28 Adapted by the GS/OAS from the UN Women Training Centre's Gender Equality Glossary (<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=A&sortkey=&sortorder=asc>).

29 Adapted by the GS/OAS from the UN Women Training Centre's Gender Equality Glossary (<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=A&sortkey=&sortorder=asc>).

30 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

31 Taken from the UN Women Training Centre's Gender Equality Glossary (<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=A&sortkey=&sortorder=asc>).

## H

**Heteronormativity:** Cultural bias in favor of heterosexual relationships, which are considered normal, natural, and ideal, and are preferred over same sex/gender relationships. This concept invokes legal, religious, social, and cultural norms that force people to act in accordance with the dominant and prevailing heterosexual patterns.<sup>32</sup>

**Heterosexual person:** Women who are emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to men; and men who are emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to women.<sup>33</sup>

**Homophobia and transphobia:** Homophobia is an irrational aversion, fear, or hatred of lesbian, gay, or bisexual persons; transphobia denotes an irrational aversion, fear, or hatred of trans persons. Since the term “homophobia” is widely known, sometimes it is applied across the board to refer to fear, hate, and aversion towards LGBTI persons in general.<sup>34</sup>

**Homosexuality:** This term refers to emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of the same gender. The terms gay and lesbian are associated with this meaning.<sup>35</sup>

## I

**Indigenous peoples:** The indigenous peoples of the Americas are culturally distinct groups who maintain an ancestral bond to the lands where they live or wish to live.<sup>36</sup>

**Internally displaced persons:** Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.<sup>37</sup>

32 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

33 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

34 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

35 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

36 Organization of American States ([http://www.oas.org/en/topics/indigenous\\_peoples.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/topics/indigenous_peoples.asp)).

37 International Organization for Migration ([https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml\\_1\\_en.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_1_en.pdf)).

**Intersectionality:** The phenomenon according to which individuals suffer oppression or have privilege based on their belonging to multiple social categories, which can neither be divided nor totaled, but rather whose coexistence must be comprehensively addressed. For example, queer persons of African descent with disabilities. Trying to individualize or prioritize one categorization over the others is a manifestation of oppression and discrimination against the intersection of all of these identities.<sup>38</sup>

**Intersexuality:** Any situation in which an individual's sexual anatomy does not physically match up with culturally defined standards for male or female bodies. An intersex person is born with a sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, or chromosomal patterns that do not fall within the typical definition of a man or woman. This may be obvious at birth or may only become apparent as time goes on. An intersex person may self-identify as male or female or neither. Intersexuality has nothing to do with sexual orientation or gender identity: intersex persons experience the same range of sexual orientations and gender identities as nonintersex persons.<sup>39</sup>

**Intolerance:** Intolerance is an action or set of actions or expressions that denote disrespect, rejection, or contempt for the dignity, characteristics, convictions, or opinions of persons for being different or contrary. It may manifest as marginalization and exclusion of groups in conditions of vulnerability from participation in any sphere of public or private life or as violence against them.<sup>40</sup>

## L

**Lesbian:** A woman who is enduringly emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to other women.<sup>41</sup>

**Lesbophobia:** An irrational aversion, fear, or hatred of lesbian persons.<sup>42</sup>

**LGBTI:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or transgender, and intersex. The abbreviation LGBTI is used for the diverse groups of people who do not fall within conventional or traditional notions of masculine and feminine gender roles. Regarding these specific initials,

38 Williams Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1989), adapted by the GS/OAS.

39 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

40 Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance ([http://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/tratados\\_multilaterales\\_interamericanos\\_A-69\\_discriminacion\\_intolerancia.asp](http://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/tratados_multilaterales_interamericanos_A-69_discriminacion_intolerancia.asp))

41 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

42 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

the Inter-American Court of Human Rights notes that the terminology associated with these groups is not set in stone but rather rapidly evolves, and that several other abbreviations have also been coined to include asexual, queer, transvestite, and transsexual persons, among others. Furthermore, different cultures may use other terms to describe people who have same-sex relationships or who self-identify as or exhibit nonbinary gender identities (such as hijra, meti, lala, skesana, motsoalle, mithli, kuchu, kawein, queer, muxé, fa'afafine, fakaleiti, hamjensgara, and two-spirit).<sup>43</sup>

## M

**Migrant:** A person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.<sup>44</sup>

**Migration:** A process of moving, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people, and economic migrants.<sup>45</sup>

**Multiple or aggravated discrimination:** Any preference, distinction, exclusion, or restriction based simultaneously on two or more of the criteria set forth in Article 1.1, or others recognized in international instruments, the objective or result of which is to nullify or curtail the equal recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of one or more human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the international instruments applicable to the States Parties, in any area of public or private life.<sup>46</sup>

43 . Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)). The Court does not specify which abbreviations, terms, and definitions represent the fairest, most precise way to refer to the populations in question; it follows OAS General Assembly practice in using this abbreviation indiscriminately without such usage signifying disregard for other manifestations of gender expression, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

44 . International Organization for Migration (<https://www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant>).

45 . International Organization for Migration ([https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml\\_1\\_en.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_1_en.pdf)).

46 . Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance ([http://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/tratados\\_multilaterales\\_interamericanos\\_A-69\\_discriminacion\\_intolerancia.asp](http://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/tratados_multilaterales_interamericanos_A-69_discriminacion_intolerancia.asp))

## N

**Nonbinary:** describes a person whose gender identity falls outside the male/female binary and does not correlate with the standards of this binary system.

## O

**Old age:** Social construct of the last stage of the life course.<sup>47</sup>

**Older person:** A person aged 60 or older, except where legislation has determined a minimum age that is lesser or greater, provided that it is not over 65 years. This includes, among other concepts, *elderly persons*.<sup>48</sup>

## P

**Patriarchy:** This term refers to a traditional form of organizing society that often lies at the root of gender inequality. Under this kind of social system, men, or what is considered masculine, are accorded more importance than women, or what is considered feminine. Traditionally, societies have been organized in such a way that property, residence, and descent, as well as decision-making regarding most areas of life, have been the domain of men. This is often based on appeals to biological reasoning (for example, that women are more naturally suited to be caregivers) and continues to underlie many kinds of gender discrimination.<sup>49</sup>

47 . Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons ([http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter\\_american\\_treaties\\_A-70\\_human\\_rights\\_older\\_persons.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-70_human_rights_older_persons.asp)).

48 . Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons ([http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter\\_american\\_treaties\\_A-70\\_human\\_rights\\_older\\_persons.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-70_human_rights_older_persons.asp)).

49 . UN Women Training Centre's Gender Equality Glossary (<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=A&sortkey=&sortorder=asc>).



**Person of African descent:** A person of African origin living in the Americas and in all areas of the African diaspora as a result of slavery, whose fundamental rights have historically been denied.<sup>50</sup>

**Persons with nonconforming sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics:** Term used to refer to persons excluded from the heterosexual and cis norms and the sex/gender binary, including persons who self-identify as LGBTI as well as identities that are not originally included in those initials, according to the guiding principle of self-identification.

## Q

**Queer:** Queer is a general term for persons whose gender identities are not included in or transcend the man/woman binary.<sup>51</sup>

## R

**Racial discrimination:** Any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life.<sup>52</sup>

**Racism:** Racism consists of any theory, doctrine, ideology, or set of ideas that assert a causal link between the phenotypic or genotypic characteristics of individuals or groups and their intellectual, cultural, and personality traits, including the false concept of racial superiority. Racism leads to racial inequalities, and to the idea that discriminatory relations between groups are morally and scientifically justified.<sup>53</sup>

50 . *Manual para la Formación de Formadores(as) de Líderes(as) Afrodescendientes en las Américas* ([http://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/docs/afrodescendientes\\_Manual\\_Formacion\\_Lideres.pdf](http://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/docs/afrodescendientes_Manual_Formacion_Lideres.pdf)).

51 . Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (<https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/multimedia/2015/violencia-lgbti/terminologia-lgbti.html>).

52 . International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>).

53 . Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Related Forms of Intolerance ([http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter\\_american\\_treaties\\_A-68\\_racism.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-68_racism.asp)).

**Reasonable accommodation:** “Reasonable accommodation” means necessary and appropriate (**reasonable**) modification and adjustments (**accommodations**) of the social, communicational, political, cultural, attitudinal, and physical environment, where needed, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Denial of reasonable accommodation for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in any area of life is considered discrimination.<sup>54</sup>

**Refugee:** A person who, “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country,” according to the text of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by the 1967 Protocol.

## S

**Sex:** In the strictest sense, the term sex refers to the biological differences between men and women, to their physiological characteristics, to all the biological characteristics that define the spectrum of persons as women and men, or to the biological construct that refers to the genetic, hormonal, anatomical, and physiological characteristics according to which an individual is classified as male or female at birth. Therefore, since this term only establishes the two divisions of men and women, it fails to acknowledge the existence of other categories that do not fall within the male/female binary.<sup>55</sup>

**Sex assigned at birth:** Beyond the idea of sex as male or female, this term is associated with the determination of sex as a social construct. The sex a newborn is assigned is not an innate biological fact; rather, sex is assigned at birth based on others’ perceptions of the newborn’s genitalia. Most people are easily classified, but some do not fit within the male/female binary.<sup>56</sup>

**Sex characteristics:** Defines a broad range of body features, for example, variations in the sexual anatomy that go beyond the male/female binary. Intersex is an umbrella term that covers this bodily diversity; however, today the term bodily diversity is also used when speaking of persons with disabilities, from the theory of corporeality.<sup>57</sup>

54 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 2, Definitions: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convopt-prot-e.pdf>.

55 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

56 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

57 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (<https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/multimedia/2015/violencia-lgbti/terminologia-lgbti.html>), with our own additions.

**Sexual orientation:** This term refers to emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender, the same gender, or more than one gender. Sexual orientation is a broad concept that allows for self-identification. Further, it may vary along a continuum that includes exclusive and nonexclusive attraction to the same sex or the opposite sex. All people have a sexual orientation inherent to their identity.<sup>58</sup>

**Stateless person:** A person who is not considered a national by any State according to their laws. As such, a stateless person does not hold the rights attributable to nationality.

## T

**Trans person:** When a person's gender identity does not align with the sex assigned at birth. Trans persons construct their identities regardless of medical treatment or surgical interventions.<sup>59</sup>

**Transvestite person:** In general terms, it can be said that transvestite persons manifest their gender expression (whether temporary or long-term) using clothing and attitudes socially and culturally associated with the opposite gender than they were assigned at birth. This may or may not include bodily modification.<sup>60</sup>

## X

**Xenophobia:** Attitude of hate, rejection, or hostility towards foreigners. Xenophobia takes form as discriminatory behaviors and prejudices against or contempt for persons from other countries or cultures. It is related to **racism**.

58 . Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

59 . Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (<https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/multimedia/2015/violencia-lgbti/terminologia-lgbti.html>).

60 . Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 ([http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_esp.pdf)).

## REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### 10.1 Inter-American Conventions

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- ▶ Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance  
[http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter\\_american\\_treaties\\_A-69\\_discrimination\\_intolerance.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-69_discrimination_intolerance.asp)
- ▶ Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities  
<http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-65.html>
- ▶ Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, “Belem do Para Convention”  
<http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/convention.asp>
- ▶ Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons  
[http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter\\_american\\_treaties\\_A-70\\_human\\_rights\\_older\\_persons.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-70_human_rights_older_persons.asp)
- ▶ Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Related Forms of Intolerance  
[http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter\\_american\\_treaties\\_A-68\\_racism.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-68_racism.asp)

### 10.2 Documents of the Inter-American Human Rights System

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- ▶ IACHR Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 *Gender Identity, and Equality and Non-Discrimination of Same-Sex Couples*  
[https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_24\\_eng.pdf](https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_24_eng.pdf)

- ▶ Rapporteurship on the Rights of LGBTI Persons: Basic Concepts (<https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/multimedia/2015/lgbti-violence/lgbti-terminology.html>)

## 10.3 Documents of the OAS General Secretariat

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- ▶ American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
<https://www.oas.org/en/sare/documents/DecAmIND.pdf>
- ▶ Institutional Policy on Gender Equality, Diversity, and Human Rights of the General Secretariat of the OAS  
<http://www.oas.org/legal/english/gensec/EXOR1603.pdf>
- ▶ OAS English Language Style Guide  
[http://scm.oas.org/References/Ref\\_doc\\_web\\_page/ENGLISH/OASStyleGuidev1.pdf](http://scm.oas.org/References/Ref_doc_web_page/ENGLISH/OASStyleGuidev1.pdf)
- ▶ Training of Afro-descendant Leaders in the Americas<sup>61</sup>  
[https://www.oas.org/dil/afrodescendants\\_activities\\_undertaken\\_training\\_of\\_trainers\\_leaders\\_panama\\_2012.htm](https://www.oas.org/dil/afrodescendants_activities_undertaken_training_of_trainers_leaders_panama_2012.htm)
- ▶ Plan of Action for the Decade for People of African Descent in the Americas (2016-2025)  
[https://www.oas.org/en/sare/documents/PA\\_Afrodesc\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.oas.org/en/sare/documents/PA_Afrodesc_ENG.pdf)
- ▶ The Inter-American Network of High Authorities on Policies for the Afro-Descendant Population RIAFRO for its acronym in Spanish

61 <sup>-----</sup> A Manual in Spanish was prepared by the GS/OAS containing the conceptual and practical tools needed for Training of Trainers of Afro-descendant Leaders in the Americas. The context for applying these concepts will vary depending on the counties and sub-regions.



## 10.4 Documents from other international organizations

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- ▶ International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
<https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>
- ▶ UN Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English  
<https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>
- ▶ UN Women Training Centre's Gender Equality Glossary  
<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=A&sortkey=&sortorder=asc>

## 10.5 Other Resources

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- ▶ GLAAD Media Reference Guide  
[https://www.glaad.org/sites/default/files/GLAAD%20MRG\\_9th.pdf](https://www.glaad.org/sites/default/files/GLAAD%20MRG_9th.pdf)

## 10.6 Bibliography consulted

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The original version of this guide was developed in Spanish. The Spanish version was translated and adapted by an internal OAS working group composed of personnel from the Inter-American Commission of Women, the Press and Communication Department and the Department of Social Inclusion. While the original references were consulted in Spanish, additional references in English were consulted for the adaptation of the Guide to the English language.

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**THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL** (<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/gender-inclusive-lang>).

**UN GUIDELINES FOR GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH** (<https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>)

**UN WOMEN TRAINING CENTRE'S GENDER EQUALITY GLOSSARY** (<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=A&sortkey=&sortorder=asc>)

**UNITED NATIONS DISABILITY INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES:** [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un\\_disability-inclusive\\_communication\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_disability-inclusive_communication_guidelines.pdf)

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Inter-american Comisión of Women (CIM)

[cim@oas.org](mailto:cim@oas.org)

<http://www.oas.org/cim>

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