

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

2026–2030

Global Action Network for Sickle Cell & Other Inherited Blood Disorders (GANSID)

Committed to equity, inclusion, and equal opportunity
in our organization, our programs, and our global community

Document Information	
Organization	Global Action Network for Sickle Cell & Other Inherited Blood Disorders (GANSID)
Legal Status	Non-profit organization, incorporated in the United States
Website	https://inheritedblooddisorders.world
Plan Period	2026–2030
Version	1.0
Signed by	Lanre Tunji-Ajayi, CEO & President, GANSID

1. Foreword from the CEO & President

GANSID exists to improve outcomes for people living with inherited blood disorders: sickle cell disease, thalassemia, pyruvate kinase deficiency, hemophilia, and related conditions, across the world. Our networks, programs, and research reach communities in Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe, the Americas, and beyond, in settings that range from well-resourced to severely under-resourced.

Gender equality sits at the heart of this mission. The people most affected by inherited blood disorders, whether patients, caregivers, advocates, or clinicians, are shaped by gender in profound ways: in how disease is experienced, how care is accessed, how research questions are framed, and how opportunities for leadership and progression are distributed. We cannot serve our communities well if we do not take these realities seriously.

This Gender Equality Plan sets out GANSID's formal commitments, concrete actions, and measurable targets for 2026–2029. It reflects where we already stand: a gender-balanced staff, a female-majority Board, and parity in our mentorship programs. It also sets out honestly where we need to do more, including building HR policies from the ground up, embedding gender analysis into our research, and creating formal safeguarding structures.

This document serves multiple purposes. It is a public declaration of our values, an eligibility document for European and international grant programs, and a practical internal roadmap for our team. It has been formally adopted by GANSID's Board of Directors and will be reviewed at the midpoint of the plan period.

Lanre Tunji-Ajayi

CEO & President, GANSID

2026

2. About GANSID

The Global Action Network for Sickle Cell & Other Inherited Blood Disorders (GANSID) is a North America (USA and Canada-based) international nonprofit that connects and strengthens healthcare providers, clinicians, patient organizations, advocates, and policymakers working on inherited blood disorders worldwide. GANSID works across a wide range of settings, from well-resourced to severely under-resourced, and currently maintains active regional networks in Africa and Southeast Asia.

GANSID's core programs include:

- Advocacy: engagement with the WHO, governments, and international bodies to advance policy and equitable access to care for inherited blood disorders
- Capacity Building: mentorship and training programs for healthcare providers and other clinicians, patient organization support, and leadership development
- Education: e-learning courses, case management sessions, journal clubs, and congress webcasts for both healthcare providers and patient communities
- Research: GANSID directly conducts and supports research on inherited blood disorders, including clinical trials coordination and evidence generation
- Regional Networks: structured networks in Africa and Southeast Asia, North America, Latin America, Western Pacific, Caribbean, Europe, with global membership

GANSID's community includes clinicians, researchers, healthcare organizations, patients, their caregivers, advocates and organizations from diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. That diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and it also means we hold ourselves to a high standard of inclusion in everything we do.

3. Scope and Application

This Gender Equality Plan applies to all aspects of GANSID's organizational life and work:

- All paid staff (full-time, part-time, and contractors)
- Board of Directors and advisory committees
- Volunteers, interns, fellows, and program participants
- All GANSID programs, partnerships, and funded projects
- Research conducted or supported by GANSID
- Educational content developed or disseminated by GANSID
- Events, congresses, and community activities organized by GANSID

This plan is designed to satisfy the gender equality eligibility requirements of the European Commission's Horizon Europe framework, the CERV programme, and other major international grant programs, while also serving as a genuine organizational commitment published on GANSID's public website.

4. Current Situation: Baseline Assessment

GANSID has conducted an initial baseline assessment of gender equality across its governance, workforce, and programs. The following reflects our current position as of the adoption of this plan.

4.1 Board of Directors

GANSID’s Board of Directors currently comprises 10 members, with a strong female majority:

60% Women on the Board (6 of 10 members)	40% Men on the Board (4 of 10 members)	10 Total Board Members
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This gender balance at governance level is a significant organizational strength. GANSID is committed to maintaining at least 40% representation of any single gender on the Board at all times, and to sustaining and deepening this balance as Board membership changes over time.

4.2 Staff

GANSID’s paid staff reflects approximate gender parity:

~50% Women in paid staff roles	~50% Men in paid staff roles	Equal Gender balance across team
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GANSID commits to completing a formal workforce baseline audit within three months of adopting this plan, covering gender breakdown by level (junior, mid-level, senior, leadership), pay equity analysis, and data on contractors and volunteers. Results will be published in the first Annual GEP Progress Report.

4.3 Mentorship Program

GANSID’s clinician mentorship program, which pairs healthcare providers across our global networks, currently demonstrates gender parity in both mentors and mentees:

Mentorship Program: Approximately equal numbers of women and men participate as both mentors and mentees, reflecting GANSID’s commitment to equitable access to professional development and career progression across genders.

This is a meaningful achievement in a field where women are often underrepresented at senior clinical levels. GANSID will continue to monitor this data and will set corrective targets if imbalances emerge in future cohorts.

4.4 Research and Gender

GANSID's research already takes sex and gender into account as part of how we approach inherited blood disorders. What this plan adds is a commitment to making that more systematic: moving from informal consideration to consistent, documented practice across all research outputs and educational content. The actions in Pillar 4 set out how we will do that.

5. Commitments, Actions, and Targets

GANSID's Gender Equality Plan is organized around five pillars, aligned with Horizon Europe guidance and applicable to all international grant programs. Each pillar includes concrete actions, measurable targets, timelines, and named responsible parties.

Pillar 1: Work and Life Balance, and Organizational Culture

GANSID operates as a globally distributed organization, with staff and partners spread across multiple time zones and cultural contexts. We want to build an organizational culture where everyone, regardless of gender, caregiving responsibilities, or location, can participate fully and move forward in their careers on equal footing.

As GANSID's team is made up of contractors rather than employees, formal HR policies are not yet in place. Developing a lightweight set of working agreements suited to this structure is a first priority under this plan. This framework will include:

- Flexible working guidelines covering remote work, scheduling, and availability expectations across time zones
- Guidance on parental leave that supports contractors of all genders in taking time off around the arrival of a child, with workload and deadlines adjusted accordingly
- Guidance on adjusting workload and deadlines for contractors with caregiving responsibilities
- Meeting and scheduling guidelines that are respectful of different time zones and personal responsibilities

Action / Measure	Target	Timeline	Responsible
Develop and adopt a Flexible Working Policy	Policy published and communicated to all staff	Q4 2026	CEO / Board
Implement anonymous annual staff well-being survey, disaggregated by gender	Survey conducted; results reviewed by leadership and Board	Q4 2027, then annual	CEO / Board

Action / Measure	Target	Timeline	Responsible
Establish scheduling guidelines for meetings and events that account for time zones and caregiving hours	Guidelines adopted; applied to all recurring meetings	Q1 2027	CEO / Board
Develop an Employee Handbook covering all HR policies and equal opportunity commitments	Handbook distributed to all staff	Q3 2027	CEO / Board

Pillar 2: Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-Making

GANSID is already in a strong position here: 60% of Board members are women, and gender parity runs across our staff. This plan commits us to sustaining and formalizing that balance, and to making sure it extends to advisory bodies, project leadership, and how we engage with partner governance.

Action / Measure	Target	Timeline	Responsible
Formally adopt a Board gender balance policy maintaining at least 40% of any single gender	Policy adopted by Board and published	Q1 2027	Board Chair
Track and annually report gender representation across all staff levels and governance bodies	Annual GEP Progress Report published on website	Annual from Q4 2027	CEO
Apply gender-aware criteria to all Board and advisory committee appointments	Documented in appointment processes	From Q1 2027, ongoing	Board Chair
Ensure women and gender minorities are equitably represented in project leadership roles for funded grants	Monitored per grant; reported in annual GEP report	Ongoing	CEO / Programs
Develop and document a basic succession plan to protect gender balance at leadership level	Succession plan drafted and reviewed by Board	Q4 2027	Board

Pillar 3: Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression

GANSID will embed gender equality across the entire staff, volunteer, and fellow experience, from the moment someone is recruited and onboarded through to professional development, performance review, and career progression.

Action / Measure	Target	Timeline	Responsible
Adopt gender-neutral, inclusive language in all job descriptions, postings, and volunteer calls	All new postings reviewed for inclusive language before publication	From Q1 2027	CEO
Implement unconscious bias training for all staff involved in recruitment and performance review	100% of relevant staff trained	Q2 2027	CEO
Introduce a gender equality and inclusion module in staff and volunteer onboarding	Module in place and used for all new joiners	Q3 2027	CEO
Conduct annual pay equity review across equivalent roles; address identified gaps within 6 months	Pay equity report produced; any gaps remediated	Annual from Q4 2027	CEO / Treasurer
Ensure equitable access to professional development, training, and mentorship across genders	Monitored via annual survey; reported in GEP report	Ongoing	CEO / Board
Develop a formal performance review framework that is free of gender bias	Framework adopted; all staff reviewed under it	Q3 2027	CEO / Board

Pillar 4: Gender Dimension in Research and Program Content

GANSID directly conducts and supports research on inherited blood disorders and develops educational content for clinicians and patient communities globally. Sex and gender differences in how disease presents, how patients respond to treatment, how people seek care, and how illness affects daily life are all clinically significant. We have a responsibility to weave these considerations into our research and programs as standard practice, not as an afterthought.

Key examples of gender-relevant dimensions in GANSID's disease areas include:

- Sickle cell disease: differences in pain crisis frequency, pregnancy-related complications, and psychosocial burden by gender
- Hemophilia: predominantly affects males, but female carriers experience clinically significant symptoms that are systematically under-recognized and under-treated
- Thalassemia: endocrine complications including fertility impacts affect patients differently by sex; caregiving burden falls disproportionately on women in many contexts
- Access to diagnosis and specialist care: in lower-resource settings, gender compounds with socioeconomic barriers in ways that create serious and layered disadvantages for women and girls

Action / Measure	Target	Timeline	Responsible
Develop a short Gender and Intersectionality checklist for GANSID research and program design	Checklist adopted; applied to all new research and programs	Q2–Q3 2027	CEO / Scientific Committee, with research intern support
Collect and report sex/gender disaggregated data on program participants	Disaggregated data included in annual reports	From Q3 2027	CEO / Administrative Staff
Ensure research outputs and publications from GANSID address sex/gender analysis where relevant, in line with SAGER guidelines	Sex/gender analysis included or explicitly justified as N/A in all new research	From Q2 2027, ongoing	Scientific Committee
Incorporate gender-specific clinical content into mentorship program curriculum (e.g., female hemophilia carriers, pregnancy in SCD)	Content updated in next program cycle	Q3 2027	CEO / Scientific Committee
Share gender equality guidance with member and partner organizations; include gender lens in capacity building support	GEP and gender guidance distributed to all members; included in capacity building toolkit	Q2 2027, ongoing	CEO / Board

Pillar 5: Prevention of Gender-Based Violence, Harassment, and Discrimination

GANSID has zero tolerance for gender-based violence, sexual harassment, bullying, and discrimination of any kind. We are committed to building formal structures that prevent these things from happening and that give people clear routes to report and resolve incidents when they do, whether in person, online, or across our global partner networks.

Since no formal policy currently exists, GANSID will develop a concise Safeguarding and Anti-Harassment Policy as a first priority under this plan, with support from a student intern. It will cover:

- A clear definition of prohibited conduct, covering sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination, bullying, and victimization
- A scope that applies to Board members, contractors, volunteers, mentors, mentees, event participants, and partners
- A simple, confidential reporting route with a named designated person, and a basic process for looking into and responding to reports, including protection from retaliation
- Provisions suited to GANSID's virtual, international way of working

Action / Measure	Target	Timeline	Responsible
Continue utilizing safeguarding and Anti-Harassment Policy covering gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and discrimination	Policy published on website; all staff, Board, and volunteers notified	ongoing	CEO / Board, with student intern support
Establish a confidential reporting mechanism with at least one female and one male designated contact person	Mechanism in place; communicated to all stakeholders	Q2 2027	CEO / Board
Apply safeguarding standards to all GANSID events, congresses, and online community spaces, including the WhatsApp forum	Safeguarding protocol included in all event planning documents	From Q2 2026	CEO / Administrative Staff
Establish an annual review of safeguarding reports and outcomes, reported (anonymized) to the Board	Annual safeguarding report to Board	Annual from Q4 2026	CEO / Board

6. Resources and Responsibility

Putting this plan into practice requires real commitment: of time, budget, and organizational attention. Gender equality is not something that can be delegated to one person. It requires everyone at GANSID, from the Board down, to take ownership of their part.

Roles and Responsibilities	
CEO & President	Lanre Tunji-Ajayi holds overall accountability for GEP implementation and will sign off on annual progress reports. The CEO is the primary point of contact for grant funders on gender equality compliance.
GEP Coordination	Overall responsibility for coordinating this plan sits with Lanre Tunji-Ajayi and the GANSID Board. Day-to-day progress tracking, data collection, and reporting will be coordinated by the CEO with support from administrative staff.
Board of Directors	The Board oversees the implementation of this plan, ensures gender balance is maintained in governance and appointments, and reviews progress at the mid-term point in 2029.
All Staff, Volunteers & Administrative Staff	Everyone who works with GANSID is responsible for upholding the principles of this plan in their day-to-day work. Those in coordination or supervisory roles have additional responsibilities for inclusive recruitment, fair review, and maintaining a respectful team culture.
GEP Budget	GANSID commits to allocating a dedicated budget for GEP activities including policy development, training delivery, data collection systems, and external expertise where required. This will be reflected in annual operational budgets and, where applicable, included in grant budgets.

7. Data Collection, Monitoring, and Reporting

Being transparent and accountable about progress is central to this plan. GANSID commits to collecting data systematically and sharing what we find, both internally and publicly, throughout the plan period.

7.1 Data Collection

GANSID will collect sex/gender disaggregated data on an ongoing basis covering:

- Paid staff: gender by level (junior, mid, senior, leadership), pay, and progression
- Board and advisory bodies: gender composition and changes
- Volunteers, fellows, and interns: gender breakdown
- Mentorship program: gender of mentors and mentees by cohort

- Program participants: gender of clinicians, patients, and advocates in GANSID programs
- Research: sex/gender analysis status in all research outputs

All data collection will respect individual privacy and applicable data protection rules. Everyone will be able to self-identify their gender, and we will always include options beyond the binary.

7.2 Annual Reporting

GANSID will track progress against this plan on an annual basis. A summary will be reviewed by the Board each year, and meaningful updates will be reflected in public-facing communications as appropriate. The annual tracking will cover:

- Updated gender disaggregated data on staff, Board, and programs
- Progress against each action and target in this plan
- Any revised targets or new actions for the coming year
- Anonymized summary of any safeguarding incidents and outcomes

7.3 Key Performance Indicators

Progress will be measured against the following core indicators:

- % women / men / other in total staff, by level, and in Board
- Gender pay gap (mean and median, by level)
- % of staff and Board completing gender equality and unconscious bias training
- % of new programs and research applying gender analysis
- % of program participant data disaggregated by sex/gender
- % of mentorship cohort by gender (mentors and mentees)
- Number of HR policies adopted under this plan
- Number of safeguarding reports received and resolved

7.4 Mid-Term Review

In 2029, GANSID will carry out a formal mid-term review of this plan. We will involve staff, Board members, and where possible, community stakeholders in that process. The findings will be used to update our approach for the final year of the plan and to shape the next GEP cycle starting in 2031.

8. Awareness Raising and Training

Building real knowledge and capability around gender equality across GANSID is not optional: it is a core part of this plan. We commit to the following program of training and awareness raising:

Action / Measure	Target	Timeline	Responsible
Unconscious bias training for all staff and Board members	100% completion; refreshed every 2 years	Q1 2027	CEO
Gender equality and GEP induction module for all new staff, volunteers, and Board members	Integrated into all onboarding processes	From Q3 2027	CEO
Safeguarding and anti-harassment training for all staff, Board, volunteers, and mentors	100% completion; annual refresh	ongoing	CEO
Inclusive leadership training for all managers and Board members	CEO / Board and Board trained	Q3–Q4 2027	CEO / Board
Communication of this GEP to all staff, members, partners, and stakeholders via website, newsletter, and onboarding	GEP live on website; communicated in newsletter and at Congress 2026	Upon adoption	CEO / Administrative Staff

9. Formal Adoption and Sign-Off

This Gender Equality Plan has been reviewed and formally adopted by the GANSID Board of Directors. It is published on our website at <https://inheritedblooddisorders.world> and we will make sure all staff, Board members, volunteers, members, and partners are aware of it and what it means for them.

This document satisfies the Gender Equality Plan eligibility requirements of the European Commission’s Horizon Europe framework programme for research and innovation, the CERV programme, and equivalent requirements under other international grant programs.

Formal Adoption	
Name	Lanre Tunji-Ajayi
Title	CEO & President, GANSID
Organization	Global Action Network for Sickle Cell & Other Inherited Blood Disorders (GANSID)
Date of Adoption	[Day Month Year]

Document URL	https://inheritedblooddiseorders.world/gender-equality-plan
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Annex A: Key References and Resources

We developed this plan with reference to the following frameworks, guidelines, and resources:

European Commission / Horizon Europe

- Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (European Commission, October 2021): <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1>
- Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026–2027 (gender equality provisions)
- EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 (European Commission, March 2026)
- ERA Policy Agenda 2022–2024, Action 5: Promote Gender Equality and Foster Inclusiveness

Technical and Methodological Resources

- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) — GEAR Tool for Gender Equality in Academia and Research: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear>
- SAGER Guidelines (Sex and Gender Equity in Research): <https://researchintegrityjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s41073-016-0007-6>
- Gendered Innovations 2 (European Commission, 2020): examples of sex/gender analysis in research

GANSID Internal Documents

- GANSID Vision, Mission and Objectives: <https://inheritedbloooddisorders.world/vision-mission-and-objectives>
- GANSID Mentorship Program: <https://inheritedbloooddisorders.world/mentorship-program>
- GANSID Board of Directors: <https://inheritedbloooddisorders.world/board-of-directors>

Annex B: Summary of Actions and Timelines

The table below provides a consolidated summary of all actions committed to under this GEP, for ease of monitoring and grant review.

#	Action	Timeline	Pillar
1	Develop and adopt a Flexible Working Policy	Q4 2026	Work-Life Balance
2	Implement anonymous annual staff well-being survey, disaggregated by gender	Q4 2027, then annual	Work-Life Balance
3	Establish scheduling guidelines for meetings/events accounting for time zones and caregiving hours	Q1 2027	Work-Life Balance
4	Develop an Employee Handbook covering HR policies and equal opportunity commitments	Q3 2027	Work-Life Balance

#	Action	Timeline	Pillar
5	Formally adopt a Board gender balance policy (min. 40% of any single gender)	Q1 2027	Leadership
6	Track and annually report gender representation across staff and governance bodies	Annual from Q4 2027	Leadership
7	Apply gender-aware criteria to Board and advisory committee appointments	From Q1 2027, ongoing	Leadership
8	Ensure equitable representation in project leadership roles for funded grants	Ongoing	Leadership
9	Develop a succession plan to protect gender balance at leadership level	Q4 2027	Leadership
10	Adopt gender-neutral, inclusive language in job descriptions and volunteer calls	From Q1 2027	Recruitment & Career Progression
11	Implement unconscious bias training for staff involved in recruitment and performance review	Q2 2027	Recruitment & Career Progression
12	Introduce a gender equality and inclusion module in onboarding	Q3 2027	Recruitment & Career Progression
13	Conduct annual pay equity review across equivalent roles	Annual from Q4 2027	Recruitment & Career Progression
14	Ensure equitable access to professional development, training, and mentorship	Ongoing	Recruitment & Career Progression
15	Develop a formal performance review framework free of gender bias	Q3 2027	Recruitment & Career Progression
16	Develop a Gender and Intersectionality checklist for research and program design	Q2–Q3 2027	Research & Programs
17	Collect and report sex/gender disaggregated data on program participants	From Q3 2027	Research & Programs
18	Ensure research outputs address sex/gender analysis in line with SAGER guidelines	From Q2 2027, ongoing	Research & Programs
19	Incorporate gender-specific clinical content into mentorship curriculum	Q3 2027	Research & Programs
20	Share gender equality guidance with member and partner organizations	Q2 2027, ongoing	Research & Programs
21	Continue utilizing Safeguarding and Anti-Harassment Policy	Ongoing	Safeguarding
22	Establish a confidential reporting mechanism (one female and one male designated contact)	Q2 2027	Safeguarding
23	Apply safeguarding standards to all GANSID events and online community spaces	From Q2 2026	Safeguarding
24	Establish annual review of safeguarding reports and outcomes to the Board	Annual from Q4 2026	Safeguarding
25	Unconscious bias training for all staff and Board members	Q1 2027	Awareness & Training

#	Action	Timeline	Pillar
26	Gender equality and GEP induction module for new staff, volunteers, and Board members	From Q3 2027	Awareness & Training
27	Safeguarding and anti-harassment training for all staff, Board, volunteers, and mentors	Ongoing	Awareness & Training
28	Inclusive leadership training for managers and Board members	Q3–Q4 2027	Awareness & Training
29	Communication of this GEP to all staff, members, partners, and stakeholders	Upon adoption	All Pillars