



# INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES TOOL



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SEFORALL GLOBAL  
**FORUM**  
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# OVERVIEW

## Who is this tool for?

Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL)'s Inclusive Communications Guidelines Tool is designed for organizations developing projects, programmes or policies that impact diverse groups, including women, men, boys and girls across different regions or communities. Integrating these guidelines into your standard operating procedures will enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of your communications, supporting a just and equitable transition in the energy sector.

## When to use this tool?

SEforALL's Inclusive Communications Guidelines can be applied to a variety of media produced by international organizations to ensure that messaging is accessible, respectful, and representative of diverse audiences. The following types of media commonly produced by international organizations should adhere to inclusive communications guidelines:

- Press Releases & Statements
- Website & Online Content
- Social Media Content
- Visual Media (Photos & Videos)
- Marketing & Advertising Materials
- Educational & Training Materials
- Events, Forums, Workshops & Conferences Promotion



## BACKGROUND

Inclusive and gender-inclusive language and communication combat biases related to gender, age, ethnicity, and other factors. Communications that reflect inclusivity, diversity, and balance help promote gender equality and youth inclusion and counteract the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. Language and images are powerful tools that shape people’s attitudes and behaviours.

### Key terminology

“**Inclusive language** acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.”<sup>1</sup>

**Gender-inclusive language and communication** serve as linguistic and visual resources that depict women and men on equal footing, considering contextual factors and diverse expressions of gender identity. This approach avoids perpetuating gender stereotypes by avoiding word or image selections that may be seen as biased, discriminatory, demeaning, or derogatory by suggesting or implying the idea that one specific sex or gender is the norm.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Linguistic Society of America: Guidelines for Inclusive Language (2016)  
[https://www.lsadc.org/guidelines\\_for\\_inclusive\\_language](https://www.lsadc.org/guidelines_for_inclusive_language)

<sup>2</sup> UNODC: Guide: Gender-inclusive communication (n.d.)  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/Gender/gender\\_sensitive\\_language/Gender-sensitiveCommsGuide-English-final.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Gender/gender_sensitive_language/Gender-sensitiveCommsGuide-English-final.pdf)



# INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

## Avoiding gender-biased language

Communication materials should promote gender-neutral language (language that avoids reference to a particular sex or gender) and avoid gender-specific terms that may perpetuate stereotypes or exclude certain groups.

**Table 1:** Examples of Avoiding Gender-Responsive Language<sup>3</sup>

Example	Replacement	Example	Replacement
Men, mankind	People, individuals, humanity, human beings, humankind	Congressman	Legislator, parliamentarian, congressional representative, congressperson
Businessmen	Representatives, business community, businesspeople	Man-made	Artificial, human-induced, human-made, machine-made
Chairman	Chair, chairperson, head	Mrs. (when marriage status or alternative title is unknown)	Ms.

<sup>3</sup> UN Women: Gender-inclusive language guidelines (English) (n.d.) [https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Gender-inclusive%20language/Guidelines-on-gender-inclusive-language-en.pdf?gclid=EAlalOobChMI1b7464fs-gIViPIRCh2togYdEAAYASABEgKMzPD\\_BwE](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Gender-inclusive%20language/Guidelines-on-gender-inclusive-language-en.pdf?gclid=EAlalOobChMI1b7464fs-gIViPIRCh2togYdEAAYASABEgKMzPD_BwE)

## Titles

In ensuring the use of inclusive titles, it is important to consider and adhere to the preferred form of address for each individual. Consistency is key when referring to individuals when comparable titles, such as Professor or Dr. In instances where this preference is unknown, prioritizing the use of “Ms.” over “Mrs.” is recommended, as the former is more inclusive and applicable to any woman, irrespective of marital status.

Additionally, it is crucial to be mindful of the language employed to describe various groups, opting for terms that respect and align with individuals’ self-identifications.

*Example:* Professor Joe Smith and his wife will attend the event. → Professor Joe Smith and Professor Mary Smith will attend the event.

## Embracing diversity in examples

Embracing diversity in examples is a fundamental aspect of creating inclusive and effective training materials or workshop content. It involves incorporating a variety of situations that reflect diverse experiences and perspectives. Instead of using generic and repetitive scenarios, include examples that resonate with people from different backgrounds and walks of life.

For example, in a financial literacy capacity-building workshop, instead of exclusively using examples related to traditional family structures, consider scenarios that encompass diverse family compositions, financial challenges, and cultural contexts. This may include examples involving single-parent households, multi-generational families, or individuals with non-traditional financial goals. By doing so, the workshop becomes more inclusive and acknowledges the diverse financial realities that participants may encounter in their lives.

Using examples that feature individuals from different cultural backgrounds or scenarios works to reflect various real-world applications, making the content more relatable and accessible to a broader audience.

### Checklist for gender-related revisions to communications materials

- Have you used “man” or “men” or words containing them to refer to people who may not be men?

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- Have you used “he,” “him,” “his,” or “himself” to refer to people who may not be men?

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- If you have mentioned someone’s sex or gender, was it necessary to do so?

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- Do you use any occupational (or other) stereotypes?

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- Do you provide the same kinds of information and descriptions when writing about people of different genders?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Gender-Inclusive Language (n.d.): <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/gender-inclusive-language/>

## Inclusive communications imagery

Pictures, graphics, videos and audio materials are powerful communications tools that influence perceptions, attitudes and eventually social change. Utilize visuals that encompass diverse representations of genders, ages, and other demographic factors in your communication materials. Include pictures that reflect a broad spectrum of individuals to ensure inclusivity and resonate with a diverse audience. This approach fosters a more equitable and representative visual language, promoting a sense of recognition and connection among viewers.

Are both men and women visible and prominent?



Are the images inclusive and diverse (in terms of gender, age, different abilities, etc.)?



Are women empowered or do the images reinforce stereotypical gender roles?



# NOTE

In multilingual contexts, adhering to the principles of gender neutrality in language and gender-inclusive language necessitates employing different strategies in the various languages, tailored to the grammatical typology of each language. The above guidance is based on English-language usage.

By adopting these guidelines, your organization can help set a standard for inclusive, equitable, and effective communications that reflect and respect the diversity of your stakeholders and audiences.





## About SEforALL

Sustainable Energy for All has a global mandate to accelerate progress on the energy transition in emerging and developing countries. Hosted by UNOPS, we work at the intersection of energy, climate and development, partnering with governments and organizations worldwide to end energy poverty, double energy efficiency, significantly expand renewable energy and combat climate change.



[SEforALL.org](https://SEforALL.org)