



# Our commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

**March 2023**

At IAS – the International AIDS Society – we recognize that to achieve our vision of a world in which HIV no longer presents a threat to public health and individual well-being, we must continuously act to reduce social inequalities that lead to inequitable health outcomes, and to eliminate prejudice and discrimination on the basis of HIV status, race, sex, sexuality, gender identity, age, injecting drug use and sex work.

These remain major structural barriers to accessing effective HIV prevention, treatment, and care services<sup>i</sup>. Ensuring that people, especially those with lived experience of HIV, are placed at the heart of IAS strategies is key to overcoming these obstacles. Therefore, we are committed to creating and adhering to best practices regarding diversity<sup>ii</sup>, equity<sup>iii</sup> and inclusion<sup>iv</sup> principles in all our activities as well as within our own governance structure.

Guiding our actions is our core value of "putting people first".<sup>v</sup> This means that we are independent and ultimately accountable to people with lived experience of HIV; that we weigh and measure our actions against their impact on people's lives; that we champion an environment that empowers all to be part of the conversation; and that we foster a diversity of perspectives.

We recognize that a history of inequity, specifically racism and serophobia, results in discrimination and exclusion to this day which still limits access to the global science, policy and advocacy networks, and resources which drive the HIV response. We will therefore act with purpose to improve access for people who are disadvantaged by these structural barriers to the dialogues that we facilitate. To do so is imperative because we champion an inclusive HIV response that empowers all – including people living with and affected by HIV and scientists, clinicians, civil society service providers and advocates with limited access to resources, to be part of the solution.

This means that diverse voices, including those of people living with HIV, will always be part of deliberations and decisions on the planning and implementation of our conferences, our research promotion programmes and our capacity development activities. We will always make the composition of our planning and advisory committees public so we can be held accountable in this regard.



We are rotating the in-person component of our major IAS conferences across world regions to ensure that people from around the world have an opportunity to participate in our conferences in person. We will further continue to invest significant parts of our resources to enable diverse participation in our conferences and other activities from across regions and backgrounds.

Only by having diverse perspectives represented in our work force, our governing and advisory bodies will we be able to challenge our biases, encourage curiosity, and truly reflect diversity, equity, and inclusion across our activities. As such, we will be making the following changes to reflect this commitment:

- The IAS Governing Council consists of leading HIV professionals from diverse backgrounds who are democratically elected from all world regions. Since the beginning of the decade, we systematically analyse the competencies represented on the IAS Governing Council and encourage individuals with complementary backgrounds, skills, and experience to stand for election.<sup>vi</sup>
  - Going forward, we will systematically monitor the intersectional identities of our Governing Council members and at each election encourage individuals with under-represented identities to compete for vacant seats.
- All our conference and programme activities rely on the expert advice of advisory and steering committees to define strategic directions, detail workplans and identify partnerships. To date, emphasis during appointments has largely been on technical expertise, gender, and geographical balance.
  - Going forward, we will systematically monitor additional intersectional identities of advisory and steering committee members to identify gaps in representation, and work with the relevant appointing bodies to ensure that diverse identities are represented.
- The IAS is committed to hiring individuals from diverse backgrounds and intersectional identities to join the IAS Secretariat, which is composed of staff with many different nationalities, sexualities, gender identities, racial or ethnic identities, ages, degrees of ability and academic specializations who also cover a broad range of languages.
  - Going forward, we will systematically monitor additional diversity criteria and take measures to ensure a workforce that is more inclusive of diversity in all its forms.
- We will continue to regularly organize trainings and other activities to ensure that all our staff, Governing Council members and other stakeholders are able to understand bias and bystandership and know how to reflect the diversity, equity, and inclusion we strive for as an organization in their day-to-day work.



These are initial steps. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee of our Governing Council (Andrew Grulich, Australia; Josephine Nabukenya, Uganda; Chloe Orkin, United Kingdom; Renata Sanders, United States; and Darrell Tan, Canada) will additionally guide an external review of the way in which we are executing our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and will provide guidance as we evolve our practices to do better.

This commitment, therefore, is a living document which we will update from time to time. We have zero tolerance of stigmatizing or discriminating behaviours by or against our staff, members of our governing and advisory bodies, and participants in our activities. Our Code of Conduct defines reporting procedures in cases of breach.<sup>vii</sup> Additionally, all conference delegates agree to comply with the "Principles of participation in our conferences"<sup>viii</sup> and receive information on reporting procedures at the beginning of each conference.

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<sup>i</sup> IAS. [IAS 2021-2025 Organizational Strategy](#), 2021.

<sup>ii</sup> Diversity refers to diverse values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, race, ethnicities, nationalities, caste, sexual orientation, gender, (dis)ability, health, social and economic status, marital status, faith, age and other personal characteristics. Diversity characteristics vary from individual to individual and intersect to make each person unique.

<sup>iii</sup> Equity is the achievement of parity in policy, process, and outcomes for historically and/or presently under-represented and/or marginalised individuals and groups, while taking into account diversity.

<sup>iv</sup> Inclusion reflects the extent to which any person or group is and feels welcomed, respected, supported, and valued in order to participate fully in processes, activities, development opportunities and decision-making.

<sup>v</sup> IAS [Mission, Vision and Values](#).

<sup>vi</sup> IAS. [Nomination and election policy](#).

<sup>vii</sup> IAS. [Code of Conduct](#), 2022.

<sup>viii</sup> IAS. [Principles of participation in our conferences](#).