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Irise International's Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

The root cause of period poverty, shame and inequality is lack of diverse leadership in decision making spaces leading to female specific needs being systematically overlooked. It is therefore critical to enable diverse and inclusive leadership within Irise and to champion it more widely.

Irise's approach to diversity and inclusion is enshrined in four of our fundamental principles:

Powered by community: Our community is at the heart of everything we do, continually shaping the Irise group, our vision and priorities.

Enabling diverse leadership: Everyone has within them the power to shape their community and world. Irise enables those affected by an issue to rise-up and lead transformative social change.

Realising equality for all: We are committed to leaving no one behind and building inclusive solutions that involve and benefit everyone affected by the challenges we address.

Collaborating for change: We are one global movement. All groups are equal, with an equal stake and an equal commitment to support each other. Irise pursues partnership, working with allies from all spaces and places in pursuit of our core vision and principles.

What do we mean by community?

Irise is a 'community of change' bringing together individuals with lived experience of disadvantage and inequality, enabling them to set priorities for change and mobilising allies behind their leadership and vision. Our approach to inclusion, diversity and equality is central to our role as an institutional vehicle for those who need more power to take it.

What do we mean by diversity?

We believe that we think more deeply, innovate more effectively and operate more fairly when leadership spaces are inclusive of diversity of background, experience and perspective. Genuine diversity means recognising the importance of critical voices in driving change and avoiding 'group think' and therefore requires creating spaces where individuals of a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives are able to work together effectively towards a shared goal. We believe that a just process that enables everyone involved to create a shared solution is as important as the final output or intervention and is likely to make the output many times more innovative and impactful than it would otherwise have been. Creating spaces within Irise where diversity can flourish is not only a matter of justice but the driver of our innovation and power.

Why do we focus on power?

We believe that it is only when those experiencing disadvantage or inequality are supported to take more power that systems and structures can be reformed to be more inclusive of diverse experiences. Power means involvement right at the start of a process, it means a say in setting the vision, goals and processes. Participation means involvement in the middle or end of a process through taking part or feeding back. We pursue ways of working that enable marginalised groups to have more power.



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How do we embed our principles in our policy and practice?

Practically this means a co-created set of principles developed in consultation with our community in the UK and East Africa that guides strategy and policy development in both contexts and all interaction and collaboration across the Irise group, adopting co-production models within all our programming that enable those affected by the challenges we address to set the agenda and actively seeking out and facilitating marginalised voices to participate in these spaces. It also means adopting elements of non-hierarchical leadership structures and philosophies within our internal structure and programming including using consensus and consent-based decision making and striving for a generative board that continually asks difficult questions and deepens our understanding of how power is shared and held to account within Irise and in our partnerships. Finally, it is reflected practically in our policies, from declaring salaries and choosing not to make professional qualifications compulsory on job descriptions to recognising lived experience as a form of expertise in board level and staff roles to flexible working policies to support staff with chronic illness or caregiving responsibilities to our global mentorship circle for anyone working for or with Irise to access mutual support to realise their leadership potential.