

Position of the Interamerican Scout Region against all forms of discrimination

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- ✕ The present position of the Interamerican
 - ✕ Scout Region does not seek to contradict or
 - ✕ interfere with the legislation, regulations, or
 - ✕ customs of each country. Rather, it
- constitutes a call to action and reflection, inspired by the values of the World Scout Movement, to promote respect, inclusion, and equality for all people, in coherence with the universal principles of human rights.



For the World Scout Movement

Diversity means recognizing and valuing each person as unique, respecting our differences. Promoting diversity means including all people and using those differences to build just and diverse communities.

The Interamerican Policy on Diversity and Inclusion, approved at the Regional Conference in Houston in 2016, reaffirms that diversity is a core value of the Scout Movement and a key foundation of its policies and actions.

The Interamerican Region expresses its deep concern over the rise of hate speech, which fuels discriminatory and xenophobic prejudices, affecting peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among people.

We believe in an inclusive Region, where all people—regardless of skin color, origin, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, or other conditions—live together with equal rights. A Region where each of us is essential to a shared educational project, guided by the Scout Law and Promise.

Inclusion means ensuring equitable access, valuing diversity, and allowing each person to fully participate in Scout activities. We aspire for our membership to reflect the diversity of girls, boys, adolescents, youth, and adults present in our local and national communities.



The World Scout Movement seeks to be inclusive of all people. For youth participants (girls, boys, adolescents, and young people), this is reflected in a Youth Program that enables active participation and the development of their abilities. For adults, inclusion is ensured through processes of recruitment, training, support, and personal development, with equal opportunities.

For all these reasons, the National Scout Organisations of the Interamerican Region, present in 35 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, firmly declare our rejection of all forms of discrimination. **We are committed to actively working toward building societies where all people are valued, respected, and treated equally; regardless of nationality, religion, political opinion, ethnicity, culture, gender, social class, skin color, disability, sexual orientation, or any other condition that falls within the definition of discrimination and violence.**

The World Scout Movement and the Interamerican Region oppose any form of prejudice and discrimination that threatens the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, defending intercultural coexistence that values plurality and promotes peace.

- The right to non-discrimination is a fundamental human right that guarantees equality and dignity for all people.
- The right to non-discrimination is established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). These right states that all people are equal before the law and are entitled to protection against any form of discrimination.



- Article 2 of the UDHR states that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind. This includes race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, economic status, birth, or any other status.
- The principle of non-discrimination is a central theme in major human rights treaties.

What is discrimination?

The United Nations Human Rights Committee defines it as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on reasons such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic status, birth or any other social status, 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" (UN Human Rights Committee, 1989).

Discrimination is an everyday practice that consists of giving unfair or undeserved negative treatment to a specific person or group, which we may not always notice but have likely caused or experienced at some point.

Discrimination largely stems from fear—often of a group that looks, speaks, thinks, or behaves differently—or of an ethnic group that is perceived as a threat to the security or cultural identity of another (Save the Children, 2014).



According to the Council of Europe, discrimination is the unequal treatment of different categories of people when such treatment cannot be justified on objective and reasonable grounds (Europe, 2023).

The concept of discrimination involves three key aspects:

1. Treating a person differently.
2. When doing so has the purpose or effect of harming or disadvantaging them.
3. The differentiation is based on a prohibited ground (Lansdown, 2022).

Therefore, the prohibited component is not necessarily the act of discrimination itself—treating someone differently. Instead, the prohibited element—the intention perceived as a radical act—is the discrimination itself. The prohibited intention is the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of a right on equal terms.

There are human groups that are victims of discrimination every day due to their physical characteristics, ideologies, beliefs or lifestyle. Ethnic or national origin, sex, age, disability, social or economic status, health condition, pregnancy, language, religion, opinions, sexual identities, marital status, and other differences can be grounds for distinction, exclusion, or restriction of rights.

The effects of discrimination on people's lives are negative at psychological and emotional levels, are painful, and attack human dignity because they involve the loss of rights and inequality in accessing them; this can lead to isolation, experiencing violence, or even, in extreme cases, death.



Forms of discrimination

Discrimination can be either direct or indirect. Direct discrimination refers to specific differential treatment of a person to their detriment, based on their characteristics compared to another person in the same situation. Indirect discrimination occurs when equal or seemingly neutral treatment significantly affects different groups of people differently, or when we are silent observers of discriminatory processes and fail to act to reverse them.

Discriminatory acts can be directed against individuals or groups of people, based on a wide range of criteria. The most common criteria include gender identity, gender expression, sex, sexual orientation, caste, descent, age, class, disability, health status, race, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, economic status, or other conditions.

In an attempt to catalogue all the criteria by which children are discriminated against, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child identified a long list of groups that are often targets of discrimination. In the specific case of childhood, discriminatory criteria are not necessarily applied directly to children, but rather to their parents, guardians, friends, or relatives. For example, a child may be discriminated against because of their parents' sexual orientation.



Global consequences of discrimination

Discrimination leads to exclusion and can have a significant impact on society. The reasons for discrimination against a child in early childhood persist and remain for a long time throughout all stages of development. This exclusion and discrimination may stem from grievance and xenophobia and have devastating consequences for victims (UNICEF, 2022).

The consequences of discrimination are as numerous as the forms it takes. The effects of discrimination can be long-term or short-term and have implications ranging from the smallest scale (an individual) to entire societies.

Simply put, the effects of discrimination on an individual level are of two types: objective and subjective. Therefore, discrimination can prevent or limit access to or enjoyment of one's rights. Discrimination can cause a person to lose opportunities, thus maintaining the gap of inequality between social classes.

Subjectively, being a victim of discrimination can lead a person (especially during childhood and adolescence) to develop negative perceptions of their ethnicity, race, culture, appearance, gender, sexual orientation, or any trait or characteristic used to discriminate against them.



In addition, research has shown that victims of discrimination are more likely to experience higher levels of depression, anxiety, and other adverse mental health outcomes (Bienestar, 2020). Discrimination among children has also been linked to school bullying, which affects children's mental well-being and development, and can have a lasting harmful impact into adulthood.

Discrimination also triggers broader effects and consequences and not only affects the lives of victims, but, when part of a pattern, can become systemic.

Systemic discrimination involves the procedures, routines, and organizational culture of any institution that, often unintentionally, contribute to generating less favorable outcomes for minority groups compared to the majority of the population, through the organization's policies, programs, employment, and services (Council of Europe, Systemic Discrimination, n.d.).

In its most extreme forms, discrimination can lead to deep psychological and physical violence. Because of their origin, clothing, sexual orientation, gender, religion, etc., children, youth, and adults often suffer physical discriminatory acts, which are usually classified as "hate crimes." The fear and anger that often surround discrimination, on a larger scale, have devastating consequences for entire groups of people. Discrimination can be linked to armed conflict. In fact, armed conflicts are often directly tied to hatred and extraordinary discrimination.



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