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GIZ'S GENDER COMPETITION 2022
INTERNAL MAINTREAMING
proposal

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Inclusive and Non-sexist Language (LINS) in Brazil

In Brazil, violence against women is one of the most recurring human rights violations. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Brazil was the fifth most violent country in terms of feminicide, with a rate of 4.8 homicides per 100,000 women in 2013[1]. Similarly, the Brazilian Public Security Forum[2], reported in 2020 that one domestic violence call (report hotline 190) was registered in the country every per minute – an increase of 16,3% compared to the previous year. According to the same source, 1,350 cases of feminicide were registered in 2020, 0,7% more in comparison to 2019. The intersectionality of gender and ethnic-racial characteristics plays a major role in this scenario (as in many others), given that 61,8% of the victims of feminicide are afro-Brazilian women.

Such violence is also reflected in the communications towards women, afro-Brazilian people, and other minority group like transgender and indigenous people, considering Brazilian Portuguese language was structured in a sexist, racist, and LGBTQIAphobic[3] society. Nonetheless, as one of the forms of expression and cultural manifestation, language changes and adapts to new realities and needs of the community that uses it, expressing society values.

Taking this evaluative premise into the domain of human rights and gender issues, we see the absence and/or erroneous representativeness of a group of subjects as well as the absence of the direct evocation of feminine and non-binary people in linguistic discourse. This is not something of minor importance, as it implies a social devaluation of the needs and symbolic representation of people who do not fit in the hegemonic reference: white male, straight male, in productive age and able-bodied.

Specifically, regarding gender, language has been one of the means of control and domination that has subjugated and obscured women, trans*[4] and non-binary[5] people in discourses, as well as their practices and their history. As a Latin Language, Portuguese has a male and a female form for nouns, pronouns, and adjectives. In this context, in order to generalize male and female, the male form is used in plurals. Therefore, use of masculine gender produces ambiguities and confusions that can lead to a position of subordination and/or semantic devaluation of the feminine and other sexual dissidents. Moreover, such practice certain effects on the historical distribution of gender roles and gender relations in society.

Therefore, inclusive and non-sexist language can be employed to reverse, through the chosen words or structures, a situation of discrimination and occultation of women, trans* and non-binary people, as well as to avoid the ambiguity of certain messages when one considers the masculine as the neutral and generic form of communication.

Considering such context and data, the GIZ Brazil's Work Group for Gender and Human Rights (WG Gender & HR), in partnership with the SFF Human Rights, chose to work transversally (either in the implementation of projects or in the workplace) since 2019 with the development of an inclusive and non-sexist language.

Our goals with this initiative are to stop naturalizing situations and relationships that are unequal and to bring awareness and visibility to such issues. Through such actions, we will be able to (a) debate on effective representation policies; (b) promote the use of a sensitive, inclusive, and representative vocabulary; (c) develop strategies on how the company can be attractive to socially disadvantaged groups; (d) discuss how we can have a more active posture on the topic; (e) practice an inclusive and representative organizational culture; among others.

Corporate culture and Cooperation: Designing a guide

Four key factors are considered for the success of the incorporation of inclusive and non-sexist language:

- An internal structure that legitimizes this type of action.
- A mainstreaming strategy for projects and an internal mainstreaming, which seeks to address symbolic issues and cultural values as well.
- Focal points in projects that embrace the theme and take it within their team.

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[1] **Mapa da Violência 2015**.
[2] FSPB (2021) and infographic in English.
[3] **LGBTQIA+** is an acronym for Lesbian, gays, bisexuals, trans, queer, intersexual and asexual people.
[4] **Trans*,** with an asterisk, is an umbrella term for all identities of people whose gender is different from that designated at birth. It encompasses transsexual, transgender, transvestite, non-binary people, and any intersection between these terms.
[5] **Non-binary** people are those who do not perceive themselves to be either men or women.

- Spaces for dialogue with the internal team itself and with the participation of external people with expertise in the theme.

Figure 1 - Flyer developed for the National Meeting in 2019

In June 2019, at the National Meeting, the Gender & Human Rights WG promoted an Open Space for dialogue with colleagues about gender issues and ethnic-racial characteristics, to take an overview of the perspectives and needs of colleagues and the projects on the themes. On this occasion, a **flyer with a glossary** of terms to raise awareness was delivered to the colleagues.

In July 2019, based on feedbacks collected from the Open Space, the Gender & Human Rights WG promoted an event in honor of the day of the Afro-Latin American, Caribbean and diaspora women, with the participation of a representative of UN Women and a representative of the Undersecretariat for Human Rights and Racial Equality Policies of the Federal District (SUBDHIR-DF). On this occasion, the interfaces between the theme and public management and sustainable development were widely discussed.

In September 2019, because of the previous actions in line with the actions of GIZ Headquarters the need for guidelines towards a more inclusive, non-sexist, non-violent, and non-racist language within GIZ Brazil was identified.

Furthermore, in the absence of an official inclusive language guide for the Brazilian Government – similarly to other countries in the region, such as Chile, Peru, and Mexico –, the need for such a document was observed. Since great variety of academic articles regarding inclusive language was found, specially focusing on Brazilian social and cultural context and history, the Work Group for Gender & Human Rights developed a list of guidelines on this matter. Based on this guidance, inclusive communications considering the needs of GIZ Brazil's employees could be discussed, promoted, and further developed. Such guidelines were presented to the whole WG and later disseminated throughout GIZ Brazil and its staff.

In November 2020, the second edition of the guide was launched, considering the feedbacks and good practices GIZ Brazil's employees presented since the launch of the guidelines in 2019.

Figure 2 - Second Edition of the Guide for Inclusive and Non-Sexist Language (GLINS)

The structure of the guide is formed by the following chapters:

1. **Gender = non-sexist language:** Avoid symbols such as X, @, * to include people with visual disabilities and people with dyslexia; gender abstraction; specifying the genders; informal forms (E instead of A or O).
2. **Ethnic-racial characteristics:** Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics' study on how to refer to afro-descendant people, specifically in Brazil.
3. **People with Disabilities (PwD):** Consideration of both the nomenclature and form of national and international treatment. Tips on how to produce videos, photos, publications, and events considering PwD (Durban Conference and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, both from the UN).
4. **LGBTQIA+ Population:** The inclusion of the community in any type of audiovisual materials. Be aware of non-binary people in the communication.
5. **Guidelines in English and in German:** Focus on translations into those languages, considering the material produced by GIZ Headquarters.
6. **Audiovisual inclusive language:** Guidelines to include women, black people, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ community, and other minority groups in videos, photos, animations and any other audiovisual material produced by GIZ Brazil. It also brings tips on the importance of subtitles and sign language for videos and virtual events.

It is important to highlight that the Guide was produced as a collaborative work, including several sectors in GIZ Brazil, both within projects and administrative staff. Furthermore, debates and benchmarking actions were promoted with external stakeholders to achieve such result.

Gender competence: Trainings and mainstreaming

Once the second edition of the guide was launched, even though many people were curious on how to start using inclusive language, a resistance on how to initiate this change of behavior was noticed. Such reaction was expected since gender issues have been criticized in Brazil in the last few years. However, through inclusive communication and strategies developed in the guide, such an important matter should gain strength and be further discussed both within GIZ and with its external partner institutions.

In this context, in order to mainstream the inclusive language, the Work Group for Gender & Human Rights prepared an awareness workshop, focusing on how to start the change of behavior towards inclusive language.

The training is divided into two sessions of two hours each, in which the guide's instructions are presented to the audience in a very interactive way. The first training was held in November 2020 with over 50 participants. Due to its success, other five were organized in 2021, training over 200 people within GIZ Brazil.

Furthermore, projects began to identify opportunities to raise awareness in their political and implementation partners. Therefore, the WG Gender & HR developed an adapted workshop for external public, including guidelines on how they could identify the needs on their own companies and organizations to write their own inclusive language guide. In 2021, three workshops were held focusing on partner institutions, training 93 people.

Additionally, considering the large number of required workshops, the Work Group identified the need for more trainers available to attend the increasing demand. Hence, another course was developed – a training of trainers (ToT). During the year of 2021, two training of trainers were given, capacitating 7 trainers within GIZ and 35 trainers from external partners.

On this matter, an online training course is in its development stage. This course aims not only in capacitating more people withing GIZ Brazil, but also to serve as reference material in addition to the guide, making it possible for people to consult it at any time.

At the beginning of its implementation, the guide was well accepted, but there was some resistance regarding the gender part. Some people did not understand or were skeptical about its need and its importance. Thus, the WG adopted a strategy to disseminate the use of LINS with the following actions:

1. Collect good practices from projects to give visibility on how LINS impacts the engagement of project's activities, especially regarding the target group and beneficiary group.
2. Strengthen the theme within the WG itself.
3. Always being open to a constructive dialog with colleagues and trying to raise awareness when someone questions the use of LINS - focal points of the projects played a very important role.
4. Encourage observational behavior.
5. Demonstrate how technical and strategic the inclusive language can be used to develop engagement and better results, especially with the target groups and political partners, always show.
6. Include inclusive language as a requirement to be observed in products of consultancies.

In addition to some resistance, other challenges arose, concerning emphatically the gender issue. Gender roles are so embedded in Brazilian society that they translate not only into semantics, but even into grammar. Managing these genderlized sentence structures was not an easy task and required a lot of research.

Another challenge is the one that always arises when we are talking about gender and human rights: the cultural barriers that exist are historical and structural. Inclusive and non-sexist language is a matter of practice and respect, which must be used daily. Thus, awareness raising actions are always necessary to make people incorporate these agendas and be receptive to them.

Main results achieved

It is essential to notice that a change of behavior is necessary for people to start using inclusive and non-sexist language. Hence, an open-minded strategy has to be developed, focusing on the importance of the change itself and not forcing them to use the specific guidelines created, but creating a space that encourages people to improve their language on their own pace.

The main results this initiative has achieved are related to the following:

- GIZ Brazil's inclusive and non-sexist language guide and one of the trainings given to external partners were the basis to the development of **Brazilian Supreme Electoral Court's inclusive language guide**, the first one at national level in Brazilian Government.

- Five external experts were trained to proofread GIZ Brazil's publications considering inclusive and non-sexist language. Also, those professionals are available for consultancies in other companies in Brazil.

- Official documents at GIZ Brazil have started to consider the use of inclusive and non-sexist language. The Human Resources sector has adopted it in its internal communications and in Terms of Reference. Furthermore, e-mails, internal and external surveys, invitation to events and speeches within GIZ Brazil adopt the use of inclusive and non-sexist language.

- Inclusive Language has been a great ally of the Energy Cluster in Brazil to fight against sexism. It has given opportunity to amplify voices of women and show that they are great professionals in a predominantly male sector. The cluster has made a video of **Women in Energy** and also prepared a Booklet on "Marketing Strategy Photovoltaic Training Centers SENAI", that brings the approach of inclusive language in the market strategy to disseminate training courses all over the country.

- Videos produces by GIZ Brazil have started to bring subtitles in Portuguese and to be more inclusive in representativeness, including not only women but also other groups that are underrepresented (considering ethnicity, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ community), supporting breaking harmful stereotypes.

- Most of the virtual events include Brazilian official sign language – LIBRAS – translation. It has been adopted in 2020 and the number of virtual events with sign language translation has increased greatly. The main challenges were the high cost of the translators and the lack of professionals. However, projects at GIZ Brazil are already considering the costs when planning the events and the WG Gender & HR has made available a list of professionals that can perform this job.

- Adoption of inclusive and non-sexist language has also been an opportunity to discuss gender in GG0 Projects. The main challenge related to collecting data regarding gender within such projects refers to the lack of indicators. Therefore, through the inclusive and non-sexist language, projects have noticed an increase of interest in gender sensitive data and have found an opportunity to start collecting such information.

- Exchange experiences occurred in cooperation with colleagues from GIZ Peru, GIZ Mozambique and with GIZ Headquarters' communications sector.

Lastly, the lesson learned from this experience related to the idea that language has a great power of change. It can change sexist, homophobic, and racist behaviors that have been replicated for hundreds of years. It can make people feel more welcome and represented in communications. It generates opportunities to start debates on gender sensitive matters in different themes and approaches. It can also be adapted to different target audiences, but still be inclusive and non-sexist. Most importantly, such changes occur on an individual basis, which means that raising awareness on our colleagues, partners, coworkers, and in ourselves can have a broader impact and promote changes in the world.