



Gender Policy

SACAL



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SOCIAL ACTION FOR COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVE LEARNING

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INTRODUCTION

The word gender is in common use, however the meaning and connotation of the word for an organization and for development work in general remains open to interpretation. Often an NGO or CBO has difficulty in knowing how to identify gender interests in all aspects of the organization and reach gender mainstreaming, balance and equity within the organization and in its activities.

Over time, it was realized that SACAL should have its gender policy formally written, approved and publicized so that it not only gives direction for the organization in practice, but also holds the organization accountable. It also comes from the understanding that, inequality between men and women is deep rooted, which is manifested in discrimination against women in different forms. To whatever extent, one might be sensitive; it needs conscious and continuous efforts to achieve a balanced environment both at organizational level and also in work with the stakeholders at field level. Framing a Gender policy is a commitment towards those efforts. The overall effort is to provide an enabling environment for women within the organization, various partners and the communities with whom we are working and strengthen gender sensitivity among all.

The goal of this endeavour to outline a gender policy for both male and female staff of the organisation is to ensure that they perform to their best potential and enjoy equal status in the society.

The objective of this manual is to

- Educate the employees about gender interests that should be prioritized to maintain balance and equity in the organisation.
- To explicitly state the organizational commitment towards gender and have a shared understanding about the steps required to protect gender interests.
- To provide a framework for effectively integrating gender concerns into the organizational agenda and policy domain
- To create equal opportunities and a conducive environment for women and men at work place

For this following common standards would be put in place and necessary strategies would be tried out internally and externally: at organizational level and community level.

The policy is not static and shall change and evolve further with discussion and work in improving gender equality and mainstreaming.

CHAPTER - 1

UNDERSTANDING GENDER

Gender refers to the different socially and culturally constructed roles, responsibilities, privileges, relations, and expectations of women and men. These gender standards define what is allowed and valued in a woman or man. The needs and situations of one gender will differ from place to place, from time to time, depending on how different societies define them. The term, gender systems, encompasses the entire web of relationships affected by gender; social institutions and patterns. Because gender systems are interwoven and institutionalized through education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, traditions, and culture, they are difficult to undo. The socio cultural definitions, at time, discriminate against one gender in favour of the other and the systems perpetuate these discriminations.

Philanthropic and development efforts often focus on undoing the aspects of gender systems that negatively affect one gender over the other. A focus on gender is not synonymous with focus on women. In theory, a gender focus would also undo aspects of gender systems that unfairly affect men. In

practice however, women are usually the beneficiaries of gender-focused approaches, because they remain more disadvantaged by gender systems than men. Thus, approaches that target gender through overturning negative gender systems and approaches that target women often go hand in hand. Improving the condition of women often ripples on to undoing the negative gender systems. On the other hand, a gender system is difficult to undo if women in a society are not empowered to help break it down. The approaches are complementary, and considering situations from the gender and women perspectives strengthens efforts for change.

GENDER FUNDAMENTALS

To make sense of the very large topic of gender, it is important to understand the key terms and ideas that underlie it. Like any academic discipline, gender is structured around fundamental concepts that are interrelated, carefully defined, and nuanced. Understanding gender jargon is the first step towards understanding gender. The following terms and concepts are important:

a) SEX and GENDER

Sex is the biological state of being male or female. Generally speaking, biological differences do not vary substantially over time or from place to place. Therefore, sex is not synonymous with gender and, unlike gender; the physical characteristics of each sex are not determined by a social or cultural context. That said, a social or cultural environment may fail to address the difference between sexes – and meet their different needs.

b) GENDER EQUALITY & GENDER EQUITY

These two concepts are often used interchangeably because they are quite interrelated.

Equality between genders means that being born male or female should not determine the rights, responsibilities, or opportunities of an individual. It means that both men and

Gender Equity is the process of allocating resources, programs and decision-making fairly to both males and females. This requires ensuring that everyone has access to a full range of opportunities to achieve the social, psychological and physical benefits that come from participating and leading in sport and physical activity. It does not necessarily mean making the same programs and facilities available to both males and females. Gender equity requires that girls and women be provided with a full range of activity and program choices that meet their needs, interests and experiences. Therefore, some activities may be the same as those offered to boys and men, some may be altered, and some may be altogether different.

women are free from the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender norms, and prejudices. If gender equality is the end goal, then an equitable approach may actually treat men and women differently. Equality and equity are achieved when these differences are addressed in such a way that the end result is fair to each gender.

c) GENDER DISADVANTAGES

In today's world, gender equality is largely unrealized. In many aspects of social life, women are generally disadvantaged relative to men. Countless issues derive from this inequality, and they tend to differ from the developed to the developing world. We have condensed today's many gender issues into three fundamental categories:

- Gender gaps refer to the situation of women relative to men.
- Gender discrimination and oppression covers - how women are treated relative to men.
- Gender inequality looks at opportunities for women, relative to opportunities for men.

CHAPTER - 2

SACAL's UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER

SACAL did a Gender Analysis in their intervention area and found:

- Women have less or no mobility in comparison to men; decision on their movement is not in their control.
- It was found in many cases, women have no role in decision making at the family level. For example, in property purchase or selling of land, education, and marriage of their children or even number of children she wants, decisions are mostly taken by men.
- There are so many stereotypes and biases which are against women and are given by society. There is no logic behind them, but everybody accepts them as part of their life. Nobody, questions these stereotypes, including women.
- In the family, there is strong domination of female by males.

SACAL recognizes that gender refers to power relationships between and among men and women. Therefore, gender issues are not the same as women's issues but are issues of

women and men *vis-a-vis* each other. Both women and men suffer gender discrimination. Very often the focus is on women because of the unequal status they have in all spheres of society. Women have limited access to resources/assets, decision making and thus, are the worst victims of gender based discrimination. The focus is also on men from the point of view of sensitizing them. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, which cuts across castes, class, religion and age divisions in society.

SACAL understands that as men and women are construed to be unequal gender identities both have to be involved in the process of changing gender relations.

2.1 ORGANIZATIONS' COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

SACAL is committed to the cause of 'Gender equality' and 'Gender Mainstreaming'. SACAL believes that gender mainstreaming is a "Process" and not an end. It is "Equity" for "Equality".

For SACAL, Gender mainstreaming means balance between men and women and make efforts to increase the access and control of women over the resources, have their say in decision making, increased mobility and also equal power relations with men.

SACAL understands and adopts a gender perspective that includes focusing on both women and men and their relationships with each other, their access to, control over and ownership of benefits and resources.

SACAL understands and considers-

- At organizational level, involvement of both male and female in planning, implementation, policy making, decision making, management, monitoring and evaluation.
- Mobilize all available resources for both sexes so that both can make best use of their potentials.
- Systematic consideration of gender condition and situation and work towards achieving gender equality.
- Sensitizing civil society towards gender equality
- Advocating with decision makers for gender sensitive policies, inclusive in nature and not just short term programmatic gain.

2.2 CURRENT STATUS OF GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SACAL

Organization has done some efforts in the past to mainstream the concept of gender in the organization.

Some of the conscious decisions made by the organization are-

- No discrimination in the role and responsibility and remuneration of staff based on gender.
- At the programme level, organization works with women to empower them and establish their rights. Most of the community based organizations have representation of women at village level. Organization still has a huge scope and need to work more with the male members in the community on the issues of gender.
- Gender sensitization programme has been taken up by the organization; staffs and members of SACAL have been sensitized and trained on gender. However, this is an ongoing process with new staff joining the team.

In spite of these efforts there are areas where SACAL needs to pay strategic attention in future:

- Organization still has an adverse gender balance at all levels with less representation of women. Women get less opportunity to get involved in decision making processes of the organization. It was accepted by the staff that there has been less involvement of women in project planning and at administration level.

- Women staff also felt that they face certain problems because of non-availability of accommodation during training and other events. Lack of separate toilets in the organization also is one of the concerns of women staff.
- Organization is struggling to find a suitable female staff at senior level. The struggle continues at governing board and at general body level as well.
- Organization has created a "Anti sexual harassment committee/ Grievance Committee" which is a part of the guidelines of the Supreme Court of India to all governments and private organizations. However, strengthening the processes within the organisation is still in process.

2.3 UNDERSTANDING OF SACAL ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual Harassment means:

- Passing vulgar comment in personal or in public.
- Staring at female colleagues without reason
- Making vulgar comments in public/private based on physical appearance. In presence or even in absence.

- Cracking dirty jokes in public
- Seeking sexual behaviour from junior staff because of position.
- Calling junior staff even if no work or unnecessarily seeking company.
- Comments having double meaning.
- Intentional body touch.
- Obscene body language/gestures.
- Seeking sexual behaviour by taking undue advantage in vulnerable situations from colleagues or by any other means like gift, money, support in field, etc.
- Missed calls/unnecessary calling at night/ unwelcome SMS and jokes, unwelcome emails / attachments.

GENDER POLICY OF SACAL

3.1 COMMON STANDARDS IN SUPPORT OF GENDER EQUALITY

SACAL members are required to meet these standards in order to support the dignity of all people. SACAL members will ensure that the following standards are applied, monitored, adhered to and reported at

- I. Organizational level
- II. Field level (in program design and implementations)

I. Organisational Level

a. Addressing and integrating gender equality in Human Resource Policies

- HR systems and policies of SACAL would be gender-sensitive and responsive, and integrating gender indicators into staff performance appraisal systems.

- Job profiles of organisation staffs and terms of reference (ToRs) for external consultants would incorporate and explicitly mention gender sensitivity as an essential element.
- SACAL would ensure conceptual clarity and sensitivity on gender issues as an important selection criteria in recruitment processes and capacity strengthening efforts of staffs

b. Staff composition/representation

- Give a preference to women candidates if adequately qualified and in merit list.

Recruit adequate women staff and ensure numeric gender balance at all post and levels;

- Ensure equal opportunities among male and female staff for personal growth, in promotion benefits, training and working conditions
- Ensure equitable representation and participation of men and women in all groups/committees formed within and by the organisation

c. Workplace

- Provide safe and secure workplace for women staff, free from sexual harassment with Grievance Redressal Committee to look into specific concerns. (Refer HR policy for detailed structure and process)
- Provide an enabling and friendly work environment where both men and women enjoy and actively participate in work. This includes providing flexible working hours and allowing working from home, wherever feasible
- Extend work related concessions and relaxations for women staff depending upon the situations and requirements;
 - Arrange for secure staying places in the field area for women staff. If the staff wishes to stay separately, then SACAL can help but not ensure security arrangements
 - Provide secure transport facilities when they work late hours; ensure security measures along with minimum basic facilities for women staff travelling in the field
 - Woman employee who has put in 3 months of service after confirmation shall be entitled for 4 months of maternity leave on full pay and under probation, she will be eligible for leave without pay for the same period

- Male employees having children shall be entitled for 7 days of leave for primary parenting and child nurturing. In case of miscarriage / abortion, women staff can avail two weeks of maternity leave with full pay and spouses are entitled for one week's leave
- Make efforts to develop infrastructure for childcare facilities in the office premises and allow for travel and stay of a person to accompany staff, for child care
- Reviewing the organizational structure, functioning, problems in relation to gender imbalances among staff and the work environment time to time and taking definite steps to address the same

d. Program design and implementation

- Incorporate gender analysis as a mandatory program/project design feature.
- Design program based on data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant diversity factors such as ethnicity, caste, etc
- Include relevant and feasible gender sensitive indicators for every stage of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- Ensure sufficient funding to meet gender requirements and
- Develop staff work plans and budgets accordingly.
- Explicitly state gender equality results and track and report annually on gender balance in staffing and governance structures and implement specific strategies to balance male/female representation.

e. **Staff capacity building**

- Facilitate staff capacity strengthening processes and trainings to enhance perspectives and conceptual clarity on Gender issues (*for all the staff members*).
- Ensure all trainings (internal and external) facilitated by the organization are gender-sensitive.- a) training content/methodology/mode of facilitation b) logistics part-time/location of venue/crèche facilities/other logistics/first-aid kit
- Conduct gender trainings for both men and women; and ensuring participation of women in all the field level meetings and trainings

II. In the field

- Facilitate 50% representation and participation of women in various institutional structures like PDC, VDC and other groups formed directly by organisations.
- Ensure equal wages for equal work for both men and women in the works as part of the programs, where SACAL is directly or indirectly involved either as an anchor of the program or as a facilitating support service provider.
- Sensitizing the men and mobilizing their support towards gender balance
- Building awareness and sensitivity by processing information and publishing communication material in diverse media to appeal different strata of people in our functional domain.

The policy shall be revisited every five years and amended for changes if any. Changes will be approved by the Governing Body before introduction.

