

Gender Policy
Water and Livelihoods Foundation (WLF)

1. Background and Rationale

Gender is a socially constructed definition of women and men. It is not the same as sex (biological characteristics of women and men) and it is not the same as women. Gender is determined by the conception of tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in society and in public and private life.

Water and Livelihoods Foundation (WLF) will make conscious efforts to address gender inequality within the organization and through its partner-led work, networking and association building with other civil society organizations and engagement with policy makers. It recognizes Gender as a cross cutting issue that is integral to the different areas of WLF such as agriculture, water and sanitation, environment protection, child development activities, and their livelihood along with their participation in governance.

Gender equality is integral to its commitment to human rights and hence is seen as an important aspect of the human rights based approach in the context of an all-pervasive systemic gender discrimination and gender inequality. Gender based discrimination is the most widespread form of systemic discrimination, and gender inequalities pervade all families, societies and organizations. WLF's commitment to rights and gender equality are cross-cutting objectives and filters through all its programs.

2. The WLF Gender approach

The WLF's gender approach is distinct in that it focuses on women and men and not on women in isolation. It will try to consciously analyse and create opportunities to address:

- The differences between interests of women and men, and their groups, within the same program, objectives and approaches and how these interact and are expressed
- The conventions and hierarchies which determine the position of women and men position in the office, community and society at large, whereby women are usually dominated by men
- The differences among women and men, based on age, wealth, ethnic background and other factors
- The way gender roles change, often quite rapidly, as a result of social, economic and technological trends

Since WLF has emphasis on technological innovations as well, it will make conscious and informed moves towards promoting new technologies that do not adversely impact gender roles. The aspiration for WLF to be recognized as an organization that values gender as a essential component of all its work begins with the staff, in programs, with partners and beyond. Therefore, to facilitate and translate WLF essential values of gender equality and gender justice, acknowledging that

these have to be seen and addressed consciously particularly among the socially-excluded groups, this policy framework is developed.

3. Objectives

WLF believes in **Gender Equity**, which may be defined in simple terms as, equal access and benefits to women and men of social goods, opportunities and resources. Gender equity does not mean that women and men become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances are equal. Recognizing the need for providing a level playing field and empower women, who are historically and socially at a disadvantage, WLF will make sincere efforts to make provisions in the organization and its programs towards the same. This will be realized through appropriate staff capacity building, evidence based actions and cooperation between staff and communities at all levels of operations.

Following are the specific objectives pursued by WLF:

1. Providing equal opportunity for both men and women in the organization at all levels
2. Ensure that explicit requirements to address gender issues are included while implementing the programs
3. Move towards more gender balanced, collective and cooperative systems

4. Operational Guidelines: Transforming Gender Policy into Action

Defined below are strategies and actions to operationalize this Gender Policy to achieve Gender Equality and Gender Justice and create a Gender Sensitive workplace at WLF:

- To increase the presence and ensure active participation of women in BoT, committees set up by the BoT and in the staff composition at different level
- Assess the merit of women and men fairly. To ensure that explicit gender labels shall not influence hiring and promotion decisions
- To foster a performance assessment system that does not discriminate men or women, based on their educational qualifications, past experience, gender, age etc., but with core focus on their learning attitudes, ability and contribution to organizational vision and growth and their productivity in the demands made by increasingly multi-task oriented and inter-disciplinary work environment
- Create flexible working environments that equally support the careers of women and men by improving the way gender and diversity are managed. Increase opportunities to reform career models and paths. Both women and men will be allowed to combine their work and life aspirations.
- To ensure work environment safe and secure for women, by taking measures of safety and having mechanisms of preventing and addressing harassment and by providing conducive travel rules that facilitate safe and comfortable travel and stay for women and men staff. If a reasonably safer option is

available for the staff to stay with relatives/friends, such stay may be encouraged and 25% of the maximum limit of eligible hotel accommodation as well as local conveyance may be reimbursed to them.

- Women staff members (after confirmation) shall be entitled for six months (180 days) of Maternity Leave, initial two months on full pay and remaining four months on half-pay. Staff under probation shall be eligible for leave for six months without pay. Men staff members (after confirmation) shall be entitled for two weeks Paternity Leave with full-pay and those under probation shall be eligible for two weeks Paternity Leave without pay. In case of miscarriage/abortion, woman staff may avail two weeks of leave with full pay after producing the doctor's certificate. This provision may be revisited, towards giving better monetary entitlements, once the financial situation of the organization permits.
- Separate convenience facilities for women will be provided at the offices. Women and men staff are allowed to bring along their children occasionally. Work-from-home facility may be availed by both women and men staff, for a maximum of 15 days in a year.
- Create positive ecosystem for women from socially and economically disadvantaged (such as Dalits, adivasis, single women etc.) a space to pursue their career goals and opportunities to perform and growth in the organization
- Consciously promote women taking lead in program planning, reviews, monitoring at grass-roots, in all the project committees set up for the purpose and to encourage women leadership from the project areas to emerge as natural leaders to Constitutional bodies of local governance.
- Creating balanced project management teams in such a way that explicitly address gender equity needs of the project on hand and to enable cultivation of opportunities for women to participate and emerge in leadership positions in the project areas.
- Sexual harassment or any other form of violence against women at the work place are taken seriously and WLF will take resolute action against such staff after establishing the facts. A committee consisting of three members, from among staff and Trustees, will be formed for taking preventive actions and to address sexual harassment and violence complaints in the organization.

WLF management reserve the right, as its sole discretion, to change, modify, amend, apply, add or remove extracts, portions or the whole policy at any time with out prior information.

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