

Local Support Organisation: _____

GENDER POLICY

Date: _____

Background

Gender equality and equity are considered to be integral parts of all policies, programmes and projects of the LSO. The LSO is committed to strive for a pluralistic and vibrant society, free from all forms of oppression and exploitation. Gender equality also affords appropriate opportunities to women of all ages and social status to play a visible and effective role as part of the mainstream of society. The goal of the policy is to focus on the achievement of equality/equity between women and men through various activities. The consensus amongst development practitioners is that sustainable development, especially poverty reduction, will not be achieved unless the inequalities between men and women are eradicated.

As part of a wider focus on the realization of the human rights of women, this policy emphasises the elimination of discrimination against women, in line with LSO's concern for social justice and development effectiveness. For the purpose of this Policy, gender discrimination is defined as (i) any intentional or unintentional effort to deny women opportunities for equal participation in recruitment, retention and professional learning, and (ii) behaviour of any kind that is demeaning or offensive to women. Discrimination on the basis of gender is both a social and a legal issue. The Constitution of Pakistan and several United Nations Conventions which Pakistan has ratified define gender discrimination and identify its various forms.

2: Rationale of the Policy

The rights of women are an inalienable, integral and visible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The advancement of women and the achievement of equality/equity between women and men are matters of human rights and conditions for social justice, and should not be seen in isolation as a "women's issue".

3: Goal

To achieve equality and equity between women and men to ensure sustainable development, improved livelihoods and the opportunity for women and men to develop to their fullest human potential.

4: Mission

The sensitization of women and men through organizational efforts, capacity building, skill building and awareness raising enhancing women's capabilities to stand alongside those of men in the development process, and having an equal voice in planning that process.

5: Objectives

- Creation of a conducive community environment, where women of all ages and capacities participate without any restraints in the socio-economic activities.

- Emancipation of women from all kinds of oppression, discrimination and cultural barriers.
- Creation of opportunities for income generation leading to economic empowerment, as defined by the women themselves.
- Drawing together existing resolutions into a coherent document and further developing these into a realistic Gender Action Plan with short and medium term objectives.
- Achieving gender equality through recognition that every programme, activity and project affects women and men differently.
- Promotion of equal participation of women as agents of change in economic, social and political process, essential to achieving gender equality.
- Co-ordination and close liaison with government sector institutions and NGOs for adopting and promoting the cause of gender equality with joint and integrated efforts.
- Within LSOO, increasing the level of gender sensitivity in order to provide women and men staff members a gender fair working environment and create a gender sensitive organizational culture.
- Provide opportunities to recruit and retain female staff with the necessary skills.
- Provide a reference point for monitoring gender issues within the organization.
- Document gender-specific 'lessons learned' and positive experiences for future office holders and members.

6: ORGANIZATIONAL SETUP

The structure of the LSO will contain due and appropriate representation of women in various organizational strata i.e. the General Body, Executive Committee and office management staff. The participation of women in these bodies will be encouraged and proactive steps taken to ensure their participation. Their views and suggestions will be welcomed and positively entertained. All efforts will be made in the formation, activation and strengthening of WOs, to organize the as yet 'unorganised' population to the maximum possible extent. This will include both programme and financial commitments.

7: PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

- The selection criteria will be relaxed for women, if necessary, according to the contextual circumstances.
- The employee's performances would be assessed in part on the basis of his/her gender sensitivity in all aspects of organizational and programmatic matters.
- The TOR and appraisal processes would include the gender sensitivity criteria in an objective manner. As a mandatory step, during the orientation process, briefing on the Gender Policy will be given to newly inducted staff. Gender sensitization would also be a part of the induction process for new staff.

- Promotions shall be non-discriminatory and special consideration would be given to women at the time of promotion. Efforts will be made to ensure that women staff have a 'professional development' path within the organisation.
- The management will make all the staff aware of the gender policy, and will ensure that regular gender training, exposure visits and study tours for all staff, especially for women staff, will be arranged subject to availability of resources. If necessary, new funding sources will be found for these activities.
- The Chairperson of the LSO will be the Focal Person to address any grievance arising out of non-adherence to established office norms or misbehavior of any staff member and can propose/implement disciplinary action against the delinquent staff. In case of gross misconduct he or she would have to take a decision with the consent of HR Committee.
- Women and men staff members engaged in the same tasks and with the same responsibilities shall receive the same remunerations.
- In accordance with the laws of Pakistan, women staff members shall be entitled to paid maternity leave.

The LSO will adopt the procedures outlined in the AASHA Code of Conduct (attached) if cases of harassment arise,

In case a complaint is filed, the Gender Focal Person or the HR Committee would initiate action on the verbal or written complain of the aggrieved women staff or member. The penalty imposed will depend on the nature of misconduct/misbehavior, ranging from a warning, a financial penalty such as delaying a scheduled increment, or termination of services.

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Executive Committee and a forum created within the Executive Committee to hear suggestions concerning its content and possible revision.

8: INTERVENTION STRATEGY

8.1: Political Empowerment

Awareness raising through workshops, seminars and community dialogues regarding the importance of participation in political processes and the role to play in public and community level decision making.

8.2: Economic Empowerment

Measures to address the basic causes faced by women in economic independency, through awareness programmes, initiation of targeted projects and mobilization of change agents. Sensitization of key players for affording opportunities to women regarding access to financial services, rights in holding assets/property, especially through inheritance, and development of socio-cultural entrepreneurial trends.

8.3: Legal Rights

Awareness through seminars and workshops. Coordinated efforts with District Bar and other NGOs extending support to aggrieved women. Efforts to eradicate the curse of forced marriages and trafficking of women. Collection of up to date information regarding the incidence of women's suicides, child labour and forced marriages.

8.4: Social Rights

8.4 (1): Education: Awareness raising regarding the importance of educating girl children. Coordinated efforts through WOs that no girl child remains out of school and the ratio of missed out / dropouts is minimized. Coordination with Government departments, public sector organizations and NGOs for improving educational quality and adult literacy rates.

8.4 (2): Health

Holding of seminars / workshops. Awareness raising with coordination of Government Health Department and NGOs regarding various diseases and precautionary measures, particularly for neonatal, maternal, infant and child health.

The points contained in this policy will provide the guidelines to carry forward the potential programmes, projects and activities; however, any change, addition, amendment or deletion of any clause will be possible through the approval of the Executive Committee.

Zero Tolerance For Sexual Harassment

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SMALL ORGANIZATIONS

This Code provides the minimum requirements that your organization needs to adhere to in order to comply with the 'Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to improve the work environment of your organization so that both male and female employees can work with dignity, they can have better job satisfaction due to civilized and respectful work environment and can improve the productivity of the organization.

The procedure for implementation of the Code is simple with hardly any costs. The management needs to take the main responsibility to ensure that work environment is respectful for every employee and if there are any complaints the management needs to appoint a 3 member committee to look after the complaints. The committee members can take care of the complaint informally where the issue is kept confidential and the problem is resolved or the complainant can decide to file a complaint formally to the same Committee. In that case a formal inquiry process is undertaken. The Committee will submit the result of the inquiry and their recommended punishment to the Competent Authority or the head of the company and the necessary action will be taken.

The management is required to

- a) adopt the Code as part of their policies
- b) Appoint a 3 member Committee with at least one woman (some members can be co-opted from outside the organization). Inform the employees of the names of the Committee members.
- c) Make the Code available for the employees (give them a copy or post it on a wall).

THE CODE

Sexual harassment by any employee is an unacceptable behavior in an organization. It is defined as: *any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors or other verbal or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature*

or sexually demeaning attitudes, causing interference with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment,

or the attempt to punish the complainant for refusal to comply to such a request or is made a condition for employment.

It is prohibited in any circumstance including any interaction or situation that is linked to official work or official activity outside the office. It constitutes a violation of this Code and is punishable.

A complaint can be filed with one of the members of the Inquiry Committee against any employee of the company if such behavior is experienced.

The Committee can, according to the preference of the complainant initiate an informal or a formal inquiry.

The management has to make sure that the process is just and no retaliation against the complainant is allowed.

Once the Committee reaches a decision and recommends a penalty, in case the accused is found guilty from the options given in Annex I, the management/competent Authority has to implement the decision.

For further details on the process a more elaborate Code of Conduct can be downloaded from www.AASHA.org.pk or refer to the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2009 (text also available at AASHA's website)