



## **GENDER EQUALITY POLICY**

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**Next Review: 2018**

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## **1. DEFINITION**

Gender equality, centred in human rights, is both a development goal and a critical objective for achieving sustainable development. It underlies is one of the guiding principles of the 2030 Agenda for Development – the concept of 'leaving no one behind'. *United Nations Development Plan. 2018.*

Women and girls continue to experience inequality and discrimination in many important parts of their lives, which can limit the choices and opportunities available to them.

Gender equality requires that their specific needs are considered separately and acted upon accordingly. The concept of gender equality recognises that women and men have different life experiences, different needs, different levels of power and access to decision making in society and that these differing perspectives must be given equal consideration and weight.

AHF believes that gender equality, economic growth and development are mutually reinforcing and significantly correlated.

Gender equality is about equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for women and men, girls and boys. It does not mean that women and men are the same. Gender inequality arises as a result of unequal power distribution between women and men, exacerbated by ongoing discrimination, weaknesses in laws, policies and institutions, and social relations that normalise inequality. *DFAT Gender equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy. February 2016.*

## **2. BACKGROUND**

Gender inequality persists in the Himalaya region, undermining economic growth, constraining human development and impeding poverty reduction. Gender inequality particularly results in women having limited access to employment opportunities due to gender disparity in access to education, under-representation in decision-making and politics and high rates of domestic and sexual violence. Evidence confirms the importance of gender equality, not only as a fundamental human right, but as essential for poverty reduction, sustainable economic growth and effective and accountable governance. The evidence is clear — gender equality is critical to development and must be a core principle in aid programming.

This is how AHF aspires to work.

Through a range of strategies, we regularly review and boost our commitment to gender justice by:

- Assessing the quality of our current and potential aid investments through the lens of gender equality and women’s empowerment
- Supporting our partners to develop stronger programs and practices, and build greater capacity for gender equality
- Promoting women’s leadership and involvement in our humanitarian work.
- Participating in gender policy dialogue in the Himalayas and Australia.
- Advocating for gender justice with our in-country partners.
- Enhancing Himalayan women’s voice.

### **3. AHF COMMITMENT**

The Australian Himalayan Foundation (AHF) is committed to:

- supporting gender equality and empowering women and girls in the Himalaya region consistent with Australian Government policy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals; and
- contributing to equitable and sustainable development by involving both men and women at all levels of programming.
- Ensuring that AHF partners have in place and apply a gender equality that accords with this policy;
- ensuring that the structure of engagement mechanisms available to partners and primary stakeholders/community members consider associated power and gender dynamics to ensure that both men and women have equal access and influence.
- ensuring that AHF Principles of gender equality apply across all aspects of programs and services.
- ensuring that AHF gender equality policy application includes contextual analysis of gender barriers in all areas of engagement to ensure that opportunities to enable inclusion are identified and that strategies to promote gender equality are included in all activities.

### **4. OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the AHF Gender Equality Policy is to ensure that gender equality considerations are addressed and maintained throughout the Foundation’s program operations and management arrangements.

### **5. PROGRAM OPERATIONS**

Achieving gender equality means providing access to economic resources, ensuring participation and leadership in decision-making, respecting the human rights of women and girls, and increasing the capacity of our partners to tackle gender inequalities.

This policy recognises that women and men require equal opportunities to realise their individual potential, to contribute to their community and country's economic and social development, and to benefit equally from their participation in society.

Gender equality principles are applied to all activities undertaken by AHF, including the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of projects, and the employment of staff in AHF programs and projects. Women and girls are involved in the decision-making processes of project development, administration and implementation.

Through its projects the AHF aims to:

- Engage with both men and women to advance gender equality.
- Improve the economic status of women.
- Promote equal participation of women in decision-making and leadership in the Himalaya region.
- Improve equitable health and education outcomes for women, men, girls and boys, in ways that can be sustained.
- Promote the eradication of violence against women and girls.

*“Everyone has a responsibility to prevent and end violence against women and girls, starting by challenging the culture of discrimination that allows it to continue. must shatter negative gender stereotypes and attitudes, introduce laws to prevent and end discrimination and exploitation, and stand up to abusive behaviour whenever we see it. We have to condemn all acts of violence, establish equality in our work and home lives, and change the everyday experience of women and girls.”*

*Ban Ki moon Secretary General UN. [Gender equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy 2016.](#)*

- To strengthen partner ownership of policy that support gender equality and women’s empowerment and support the development and implementation of country-driven efforts to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Ensure that that all project/program performance frameworks integrate gender equality objectives and related indicators that capture gender disaggregated performance data.
- Advance gender equality strategies and establish targets to engage women and girls more effectively and monitor the effectiveness of these strategies and progress towards achieving agreed targets.
- Continuously strengthen accountability mechanisms to increase effectiveness and collect and analyse information to improve gender equality results. The M&E of AHF projects/programs includes:
  - specific indicators to measure gender equality; and
  - the disaggregation of all data by sex.
- Ensure that all program reporting includes specific reporting on program performance against gender equality objectives.
- AHF will undertake periodic assessments of its own and it’s implementing partners’ gender equality practices. These assessments will be documented and made publicly available.

- AHF commits to the provision of information sessions and education on gender equality to be delivered both in Australia and in country.

## **6. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

AHF acknowledges and values the positive contribution of a diverse workforce and is committed to promoting and supporting the principles of gender equality, diversity and flexibility in the workplace. Staff procedures aim to achieve fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between men and women. Although AHF is a relatively small organisation, its management and governance arrangements, and those of its in-country partners, aim to ensure gender equality across all positions. As outlined in the AHF HR Procedures Manual, these commitments include:

- All AHF staff are responsible for the development of gender equality and diversity within AHF and its in-country partners.
- That the diverse backgrounds, skills, talents and views of AHF staff are recognised, encouraged and valued by supervisors and managers.
- AHF staff must be free from any direct or indirect discrimination, unfair treatment in the workplace and workplace harassment.
- Encouraging workplace practices that provide flexibility for staff to balance their work and personal commitments.
- Remedying any employment related disadvantage of current and potential employees in designated groups.
- AHF staff, and those seeking employment with AHF and its in-country partners, must receive fair and equitable treatment in personnel selection processes and career development opportunities.
- That employment decisions are based on merit and undertaken with transparency.
- Supervisors are encouraged to focus on the diverse backgrounds and skills of their staff and to draw on and develop these qualities in the workplace.
- AHF staff are encouraged to acknowledge and draw on their diverse backgrounds, skills and talents.

These principles are applied to all personnel associated with the AHF including Board Directors, paid staff, contractors, volunteers and in-country partners. Gender equality is a guiding principle for the nomination and selection of all staff.

The current equal representation of men and women on AHF delegations, Boards and other decision-making bodies demonstrates the Foundation's commitment to achieving gender balance. This commitment is also reflected in the selection of interstate representatives and volunteers, as well as the provision of support and advice to AHF's in-country partners.

***Related documentation***

AHF Strategic Plan 2015-2020

AHF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework

AHF Program Management Procedures Manual