



GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

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When relevant, this policy and associated documents should be translated into the local language to ensure access to all personnel.



1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality, centred in human rights, is both a development goal and a critical objective for achieving sustainable development. Global commitments to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are recognised within the [Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) and the United Nations (UN)¹ Global Agenda 2030 ([Sustainable Development Goal 5](#)).

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. 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 inequality².

Achieving gender equality entails ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls, eliminating all forms of violence against them, recognising the value of unpaid care and domestic work, ensuring women have equal opportunities to access education, employment and leadership roles at all levels, and protection of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights³.

Women and girls in the Himalaya experience inequality and discrimination in many important parts of their lives, which can limit the choices and opportunities available to them. Thus, a precondition to achieving gender equality is achieving gender equity. The Australian Himalayan Foundation (AHF) is committed to upholding gender equality and equity and empowering women in all levels of its work, consistent with Australian Government policies and UN Sustainable Development Goals. AHF will not tolerate any form of gender-based violence, exploitation or abuse, which is considered in more detail in the AHF Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with:

- AHF Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- AHF Code of Conduct
- AHF Child Safeguarding Policy
- AHF Communications Policy
- AHF Complaints and Whistleblowing Policy
- AHF Disability Inclusive Development Policy
- AHF Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy
- AHF Volunteers Policy
- AHF Employee Handbook
- AHF International Programs Manual
- AHF Risk Management Policy

¹ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

² DFAT Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy 2016-2020

³ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>



2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that considerations of gender equality and empowerment are considered and integrated into the management of AHF, and in the delivery and management of all AHF programs and activities. Gender equality is a fundamental principle that underpins all AHF's programmatic work. Within our organisation and our programs AHF actively works towards achieving a gender inclusive culture that respects the rights of women and men, girls and boys.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all AHF personnel including Directors, employees, volunteers, consultants and other representatives, in Australia and in all the countries in which we work. AHF works through local implementing partners, rather than directly implementing programs, and so AHF will work closely with these partners to operationalise the principles outlined in this policy.

4. PRINCIPLES

AHF is committed to the following principles:

- **Mainstreaming:** (proactively) applying a gender-sensitive approach in the delivery of all activities.
- **Engagement and participation:**
 - Engaging with women and men, girls and boys to advance gender equality and promoting the equal participation of women and girls in discussions and decision-making on the direction of their communities' development (e.g. development priorities, resource allocation) and in leadership roles.
 - Working with women's organisations and organisations representing the development needs of women to participate in development processes.
 - Championing a gender inclusive culture and ensuring that leadership (including Governance), supervision and people management have a gender inclusive focus.
- **Gender equality:** this includes supporting the transfer of political, social and economic power to women and girls, to ensure that it is equal to that of men and boys and that the benefits of development activities are equal, regardless of gender. This includes supporting our partners in the Himalaya region to build greater capacity for gender equality and inclusion.
- **Do no harm:** applying a do no harm approach, by carefully considering the context and any new risks that AHF programs and activities may unintentionally create, and mitigating against these.
- **Intersectionality:** recognising that gender inequality intersects with other forms of discrimination (e.g. based on race, class, ethnicity, religion, disability and age)



- **Ending gender-based violence:** a commitment to eradicating violence against women and girls.
- **Accountability, transparency and visibility:** requirements to report and management of gender-based violence incidents or allegations, regular/periodic monitoring and reflection on gender related outcomes and issues, and collection and reporting of disaggregated data.

5. GUIDELINES

5.1 Organisation-wide

AHF will promote gender inclusion in all aspects of the Foundation's work:

- **Governance:** by encouraging and fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion in every aspect of AHF's work and organisation, including promoting representation of gender equality in governance and leadership;
- **Human Resources:** *refer to Clause 5.2 below and the AHF Employee Handbook;*
- **Partner and Program Management:** *refer to Clause 5.3 below and the AHF International Program Manual;*
- **Engagement Activities:** *refer to Clause 5.4 below and the AHF Communications Policy.*

AHF will assess its organisational gender inclusive practices periodically, including its partners' practices.

5.2 Human Resources

5.2.1 Recruitment

AHF will ensure that gender equality principles are upheld during recruitment, selection and screening of all personnel. This includes Directors, employees, volunteers, consultants and other representatives. Recruitment processes will provide equal opportunities, and AHF will seek out candidates' commitment to gender equality and gender expertise as desirable skills and experience when recruiting. All appointments will be made on the Principle of Merit, and in compliance with all relevant Federal and State Legislation.

5.2.2 Induction and training

All employees will receive induction on the Gender Equality Policy upon accepting employment/engagement with AHF, including a briefing on related AHF policies and procedures.

Training on the Gender Equality Policy and safeguarding is mandatory for all AHF employees. This training will be carried out on a regular basis, and will be commensurate with the employee's role in



the organisation. Where necessary, AHF will provide training to volunteers, consultants and other relevant stakeholders on this policy.

5.2.3 Support to managers and wider staff

AHF will maintain a safe work environment and will ensure that workplace practices provide sufficient flexibility for female and male staff to balance their work and personal commitments, such as carer's responsibilities. Additionally, where possible, AHF will ensure that the workplace is accessible for all, such as for pregnant women. AHF is committed to personal wellbeing. AHF employees and volunteers are able to confidentially access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) up to six times per year at no cost to the individual. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The EAP service is communicated as part of the induction process for new employees and volunteers. Any AHF personnel will be encouraged and supported to access specialist and/or emergency domestic and family violence support services whenever required.

5.2.4 Behaviour and complaints

AHF personnel (including employees, volunteers, consultants, partners, board and committee members or any other representatives associated with the delivery of its work) must not harass or discriminate against their colleagues or members of the public on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, age, sexual orientation or gender identity, or any other attribute or characteristic protected under State and Federal equal opportunity legislation.

Unacceptable behaviour has the potential to create a risk to a person's health and safety. Such harassment or discrimination may constitute an offence under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW).

All personnel are encouraged to report any (suspected or actual) breach of *AHF's Gender Equality Policy* through the AHF Complaints Procedures. Personnel will not be victimised or treated unfairly for raising an issue or making a complaint.

See AHF's Employee Handbook; see AHF's Complaints and Whistleblowing Policy.

5.3 Partner and Program Management

AHF is committed to ensuring that gender equality mechanisms and principles are embedded in its programs and partnership development. Gender mainstreaming will be applied at all stages of program and partnership management.

AHF, along with project partners, will undertake a contextual analysis of gender barriers in all areas of engagement to ensure that opportunities to enable gender inclusion are identified and that strategies to promote gender equality are included in all activities. AHF will ensure that, where possible, the views of women and men, girls and boys are taken into account at all levels of programming. AHF will prioritise the identification of specific risks to women and girls, along with strategies to mitigate these risks. Additionally, AHF will ensure that engagement mechanisms available to partners and primary stakeholders/community members consider associated power and gender dynamics to ensure that women and men, girls and boys have equal access and influence.



Further, in relation to AHF's monitoring and evaluation frameworks, these will include specific indicators to measure gender equality, sex-disaggregated data, and gender equality.

AHF's Gender Equality Policy will be promoted and related actions undertaken throughout its work with project partners when:

- conducting due diligence assessment, undertaken prior to partnering with an organisation and regularly during the partnership;
- developing project design;
- appraising the project;
- monitoring of project, partner and risks;
- reporting of project;
- developing and implementing partner capacity building plans where relevant;
- evaluating projects.

AHF will also ensure that adequate finances, time and other resources are allocated to achieve gender equality outcomes and where required, engage specialist gender expertise to support this in our organisation and the work implemented by our partners.

5.4 Australian Engagement Activities

AHF will use gender inclusive language in our communications with partners, donors, and the general public. The AHF website and any media releases should display information that respects and protects the safety and dignity of women and men, boys and girls. AHF will provide updates to promote its work on gender equality issues through its online communications.

5.5 Visits to international programs

Where appropriate, both male and female staff should have equal opportunities to attend visits to international programs. Measures, such as pre-departure briefings addressing health and safety, codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms, as well as criminal background checks will be implemented to mitigate the risk of gender-based violence and sexual abuse on trips (refer to *AHF's Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy*, and the *Overseas Personal Safety and Security Policy in AHF's Employee Handbook*), and account for the needs of each gender.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All AHF stakeholders, including partners, have a responsibility to provide a gender inclusive environment.

6.1 Board and CEO

The Board and CEO will publicly commit to achieving gender equality, champion a gender inclusive culture and ensure that supervision and people management have a gender inclusive focus.

It is the responsibility of the Board and CEO to ensure effective gender equality mechanisms and principles across all AHF areas of operations, including programs.



AHF's CEO is the delegated AHF staff member with portfolio responsibility for ensuring gender equality outcomes in the development and implementation of AHF's Gender Equality Policy and across all AHF activities, including training, identifying and coordinating training, and learning opportunities for AHF stakeholders.

AHF's CEO is responsible for monitoring adherence to, and effectiveness of this Policy.

6.2 Managers

Managers and senior employees are responsible for ensuring that *AHF's Gender Equality Policy* is understood and implemented by the employees and other personnel (including consultants and volunteers) under their supervision and responsibility. They are also responsible for the creation and maintenance of an environment which promotes gender equality.

AHF's Head of Programs will have operational responsibility for ensuring that in-country partners meet the obligations of this Policy.

Each manager can act as a resource person for questions about what constitutes gender equality and policy non-compliance. Managers also act as the first point of contact to receive formal incident reports and will report to the CEO as mentioned above.

6.3 Employees and volunteers

All employees and volunteers have a responsibility to comply with AHF's Gender Equality Policy.

Employees in charge of a particular project will ensure partners are aware of the policy and will assist the partner in implementing the policy.

6.4 Consultants and other representatives

Consultants and other AHF representatives will be expected to comply with the principles and guidelines in AHF's Gender Equality Policy, and are required to adhere to AHF's Code of Conduct.

7. REVIEW OF POLICY

AHF's Gender Equality Policy will be formally reviewed at least every five years to assess its continued relevance and effectiveness in meeting current standards and legislation.

8. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

AHF will comply with, and aim to exceed, our regulatory obligations in relation to equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion. This policy adheres to State and Federal gender equality laws and policies, and international frameworks set out by the UN. These include:



- UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- DFAT Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy 2016-2020
- DFAT Gender Equality in Monitoring and Evaluation and Reporting 2020
- UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- ACFID Code of Conduct
- ACFID Quality Assurance Framework

ANNEX A KEY DEFINITIONS

Gender: A social and cultural construct, which distinguishes differences in the attributes of men and women, girls and boys, and accordingly refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women⁴.

Gender-based violence: An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males⁵.

Gender equality: The concept that women and men, girls and boys have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefitting from) economic, social, cultural and political development⁶.

Gender equity: The process of being fair to men and women, boys and girls, and importantly the equality of outcomes and results. Gender equity may involve the use of temporary special measures to compensate for historical or systemic bias or discrimination⁷.

Gender mainstreaming: the consistent use of a gender perspective at all stages of the activity cycle. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of men and women an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that all benefit equally and inequality between women and men is not perpetuated.

⁴ UNICEF Gender Equality – Glossary of Terms and Concepts 2017

⁵ UNICEF Gender Equality – Glossary of Terms and Concepts 2017

⁶ UNICEF Gender Equality – Glossary of Terms and Concepts 2017

⁷ UNICEF Gender Equality – Glossary of Terms and Concepts 2017