

12.1. GENDER POLICY

1. Background

ActionAid Association India envisions “a world without poverty, patriarchy and injustice”. Challenging patriarchy and bringing about a change in the position of women is an integral part of our commitment. Accordingly, empowerment of women and girls is recognized as fundamental to all our work. We are guided in this work by the Constitution of India and also by the various other national and international laws, policies, covenants and conventions that aim at gender equality and promotion and protection of women’s rights in particular. In line with this, ActionAid Association is committed to creating spaces, systems and processes within the organization that helps challenge patriarchy in all its forms. The Gender policy is an articulation of this commitment and outlines actions that the organisation will take to put this intent into operationalisation. It aims at creating just and fair distribution of opportunities, responsibilities, and benefits for women and men to ensure that gender equality is truly practiced within the organization.

2. Principles of Gender Policy

Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a ‘women’s issue’ but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development. (UNDP)

However, we know that patriarchy is deep rooted in the psyche of the society. People and organizational systems and processes are influenced by the patriarchal values and beliefs and they do not automatically promote processes that are gender just and sensitive. Discrimination against women on the basis of socially constructed gender roles and norms prevents women from enjoying full human rights in the socio-economic and political spheres. It is with this understanding that we will work towards ending gender discrimination through our social change mission goals as also inside the organizational. It will be organisation’s conscious endeavor to promote, encourage and build systems, policies, processes and spaces that challenges patriarchy in all its forms and levels.

Feminist principles that analyze the inequality and discrimination that women and girls face because of their gender will form the basis of our gender policy. We will work towards promoting and supporting individual and organisational conduct that is founded on feminist principles and values meant for men, women and others in the organisation.

In line with the above, ActionAid Association’s commitment to gender justice and equality will be guided as follows:

- Looking at gender equality not as rhetoric for organizational image, but a valued and professed belief which is actually practiced.
- Building an empowered women fraternity.

- Recognizing the structural inequities at every level and work towards removing them through affirmative action towards women.
- Strengthening feminist orientation and our respect for diversities in the organizational cultures and teams.
- Promoting and creating democratic thinking and practices at every realm which give space for multi-cultural, gender sensitive behavior and conduct where every conduct is measured from the angle of 'the more vulnerable first'.
- Examining every conduct of all our stakeholders from the yardstick of gender.
- Allocating adequate resources to examine every intervention and strategy from a gender nuanced perspective, and carry it out to its logical end.

3. The Goal

The Gender Policy therefore aims at helping the organization achieve its goal of gender equality by putting gender justice at the forefront of all its engagements and processes universally, internally as well as outside.

The policy will serve as a measuring scale that will help the organization check the quality and effectiveness of our endeavors in this regard. It will guide each institution within AAA to make necessary arrangements in the form of human and financial resources in order to realize our vision of a world without patriarchy.

4. Organizational arrangements for implementation:

1.1 Programmes:

- Gendered analysis will guide all our programme, campaign and advocacy work right from planning, implementation, impact assessment and development of measurable gender indicators
- Strategic programmes will be designed and developed to support women and girls to secure their economic, social, political, civil and cultural rights including independent access to and control over land, employment, services and institutions, rights over their own bodies, right to safe and secure life without fear of violence. This will be ensured by incorporating the gender concerns in the Goals and objectives at practical as well as strategic level.
- All our programme and policy work will challenge patriarchy by inclusive and collective efforts both by women and men. Efforts will be made to connect men and boys with the process of change and engage them as agents of change.
- Partnership selection criteria and guidelines will ensure that partners have the basic gender sensitivity and knowledge required to promote non-patriarchal processes in the projects and organization level
- We will work towards perspective building and knowledge and skills development of allies and partners and its staff to address gender inequality in the projects and at the organizational level.

- We will encourage our allies and partners to ensure that gender approach is a priority in all strategic planning, annual planning and projects and specific processes. Wherever needed, we will support the partners to implement gender policy at their organisational level.
- Local Rights Programmes (LRPs) are one of the pillars of our work towards realizing our strategic priorities. Systematic knowledge, information and skill development programmes will be part of the institutional processes while initiation of the LRPs to ensure each LRP is addressing the issues of violence and discrimination against women.
- Our planning, monitoring and evaluation system will align with our gender analysis with particular focus on the women on the margin. We will measure our progress and advance from the gender lens.
- Our monitoring and evaluation activities, as far as possible will include gender impact assessment including an appraisal of women's economic participation, economic opportunities, political empowerment and household decision-making, educational attainment, their health and wellbeing and a safe and secure life.
- Adequate resources will be allocated for strengthening women's organisations and groups, and organisations working towards gender equality.
- Review teams supporting partnership selection process, appraisals, impact assessment etc will necessarily involve one member with understanding and expertise in gender and women's rights.
- Partnership policy will follow a zero tolerance to sexual harassment. Partnership will be terminated if the Chief Functionary/Secretary of the organisation is found to be guilty of sexual harassment. Partnership agreement will have a specific mention of such a clause.

1.2 Organisational Culture and People Processes:

- In order to promote and protect women's rights, regular initiatives will be supported to build knowledge, attitude and behavior that enable a culture of gender sensitivity and responsiveness. Regular orientation and capacity development programmes will be organized for all staff towards this end to enhance and deepen gender perspective and understanding.
- Gender analysis will be applied at all stages of development of any organizational policy in order to make it gender sensitive and gender responsive.
- All strategic and operational decision making bodies will have adequate representation of women. Spaces and opportunities will be created for women to enhance their knowledge and skills for active participation in such bodies.

- As an organisation, we commit to treat each staff with courtesy and dignity irrespective of their sexual identity and action will be taken against any form of discrimination or harassment.
- HR related policies and systems will be designed in a manner that takes into account women's strategic and practical gender needs and also her reproductive responsibilities. These will also facilitate men's role in reproductive activities and motivate them to challenge and break gender stereotypes and practices in their personal and professional life.
- Women's forum that has been a celebrated organisational space for women and by women and one that has been instrumental in promoting and building feminist principles and values within and in our external engagements will be continued to be supported and strengthened. Adequate budgetary allocations will be made available for this purpose.
- ActionAid Association will clearly and loudly demonstrate its belief in zero tolerance on all kinds of violence against women through words and actions both within the organization and its partners and associates. Any physical or psychological harassment will be dealt with by strong disciplinary action. The Anti-Sexual Harassment (ASH) policy with its implementation mechanism will be the operational instrument to ensure a gender sensitive working environment and our commitment of zero tolerance to any instance of sexual harassment. For details refer ASH policy.
- HR processes like recruitments, induction and performance appraisal will be conducted in a gender sensitive manner. Orientation and capacity building programmes for staff/teams will be organised towards this end, where needed.
- All new recruitments should help build balanced gender ratio at the overall organisational level as well as the particular unit for which recruitment is being done. Women will be especially encouraged to apply and weightage will be given to them in the election process. Efforts will also be made to ensure inclusion of increased number of sexual minorities and women from diverse backgrounds at various levels of the organization.
- Gender training needs will be identified during performance appraisal process trainings/orientations and capacity building programmes will be supported for individuals or full teams based on need assessment.
- Ensure affirmative action for women from diverse backgrounds in selection of competence development trainings to assume greater responsibility in the organization.
- Transfer, in case necessitated will be arranged in such a manner that it respects staff personal and familial concerns.

1.3 Affirmative actions for gender sensitive working conditions

- Under special circumstances, flexible working hours/working from home facility will be provided to staff to attend to their family responsibilities that may arise due to exigencies.
- When women are travelling late or when required to stay late in the office, safe and secure travel arrangements will be made for them with appropriate orientation of admin and logistics staff for this.
- Provide crèche facility for staff with children less than three years.
- Travel for women with children less than three years will be supported with a child care minder, where requested.
- Leave rules will ensure adequate leave for women and men staff based on their physical and reproductive role needs. Men will be encouraged and motivated to participate in reproductive role activities.

1.4 Finance:

- All budgets (programme, policy, campaigns, functions, units etc) will have adequate allocation of resources to promote gender equality.
- We will endeavour to analyse our budgets from a gender lens. Similarly, utilisations will be reviewed to assess budget spent on gender/women's rights. Efforts will also be made to equip the internal audit team to look at budget allocation and utilisations from a gender lens.

1.5 Fundraising:

- Our key fund raising ask/product will center around the issues of girl children. In this regard, we will engage with girl children not as mere beneficiaries of our work rather as actors and agents of change to challenge the patriarchy.
- Our fund raising activities will ensure that all processes are empowering for the children, especially the girl child and encourage communities to promote gender sensitivity among children and the communities.
- We will encourage resource mobilization for women's rights from institutional and corporate donors as well.

1.6 Communication:

- ActionAid Association's commitment towards challenging patriarchy will reflect in all the communication material and should have language and images that are gender sensitive.
- Brand awareness and communication with donors will be specifically focused on the girl child and women and crucial for connecting with a large number of people to sensitize them.

1.7 Governance:

- Our existing governance structure - General Assembly, Governing Board and Sub-Committees will have adequate representation of women and men. At least 20% of these will be with proven feminist background who will provide strategic guidance and support in furtherance of our commitment to the women's rights.

5. Implementation and accountability

The ActionAid Association SMT will ensure the responsibility for implementation of gender policy and articulation of its implementation plan by all the divisions and regional offices.

Our programme offices will be equipped with the knowledge, information and skills necessary for working to concretize the organizational commitment towards women's human rights and will function as centres of feminist action by bringing together women and men from dispossessed communities, activists, representatives of social movements and media in order to synergize cross currents of thoughts and endeavors towards furthering the struggle of the subaltern women.

ActionAid Association India national office will play a critical role in promoting, supporting and aligning women's rights related strategic issues from local to international.

All unit/function head will demonstrate political will to implement required attitudinal changes implied by the policy. All staff will be expected to show gender sensitivity in their work.

6. Glossary:

Affirmative action

Special measures to remedy the effects of past discrimination and establish equal opportunity and treatment. Also called, positive action, positive discrimination, reverse discrimination

Source: ILO

Differential Access to and Control over Resources:

In general, women and men have different levels of both, access to the resources needed for their work, and control over those resources. Resources can be economic, political (representation, leadership), social (education) and time — a critical but often scarce resource.

Source: UNDP

Discrimination

Discrimination includes any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.

Source: ILO

Discrimination (Gender): The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979, states that “Discrimination against women shall mean distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”. It refers to any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender roles and norms, which prevents a person from enjoying full human rights.

Source: UNDP and WHO

Empowerment: Describes both the process and the outcome of people taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills (or having their own skills and knowledge recognized), increasing self-confidence, solving problems, and developing self reliance.

Source: Naila Kabeer

Feminism: Feminism is the movement for social, cultural, political and economic equality of women and men.

Gender and organizational change

Gender and organizational change refers to the fact that organizations are some of the main perpetrators of unequal gender relations. If gender relations in society are to change, organizations should promote gender-responsive policies and programmes, and ensure gender balance in their structures.

Source: ILO

Gender-blindness

Gender-blindness characterizes research, analyses, policies, advocacy materials, project and programme design and implementation that do not explicitly recognize existing gender differences that concern both productive and reproductive roles of women and men. Gender-blind policies do not distinguish between the sexes. Assumptions incorporate biases in favour of existing gender relations and so tend to exclude women.

Source: ILO

Gender equality

Gender equality entails the concept that all human beings, both women and men, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices.

Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Equality between women and men is both a human rights issue and a precondition for sustainable people-centered development and decent work. Also called gender justice.

Source: ILO

Gender Equality: refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a 'women's issue' but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.

Source: UNDP

Gender equality in the world of work

Gender equality in the world of work refers to:

- (a) Equality of opportunity and treatment in employment;
- (b) Equal remuneration for work of equal value;
- (c) Equal access to safe and healthy working environments and to social security;
- (d) Equality in association and collective bargaining;
- (e) Equality in obtaining a meaningful career development;
- (f) A balance between work and home life that is fair to both women and men;
- (g) Equal participation in decision-making

Source: ILO

Gender equity

Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. Equity is a *means*, whereas equality is the *goal*.

Gender gap

The gender gap is the difference in any area between women and men in terms of their levels of participation, access to resources, rights, power and influence, and remuneration and benefits.

Source: ILO

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Source: UNESCO

Gender Policies: Gender policies are divided into three categories depending on the extent to which they recognize and address gender issues

a) **Gender-aware policies** recognise that women as well as men are actors in development and that they are often constrained in a different way to men. Their needs, interests and priorities may differ and at times conflict. Gender aware-policies can be sub-divided into two policy types:

Gender-neutral policies approaches use the knowledge of gender differences in a given context to target and meet the practical needs of both women and men. Gender-neutral policies do not disturb existing gender relations.

Gender-specific policies use the knowledge of gender differences in a given situation to respond to the practical gender needs of either women or men. These policies do not address the existing division of resources and responsibilities.

b) **Gender-blind policies:** Policies that are gender-blind fail to distinguish between the different needs of women and men in their formulation and implementation. Thus, such policies are biased in favour of existing gender relations and therefore are likely to exclude women or exacerbate existing inequalities between women and men.

c) **Gender-redistributive** policies aim to transform the existing distribution of resources and responsibilities in order to create a more equal relationship between women and men. Women and men may be targeted or one group alone may be targeted by the intervention. Gender-redistributive policies focus mainly on strategic gender interests, but can plan to meet practical gender needs in a way which have transformatory potential (provide a supportive environment for women's self empowerment).

Source: UNDP

Gender-responsive analysis

Gender-responsive analysis is a systematic tool to examine social and economic differences between women and men. It looks at their specific activities, conditions, needs, access to and control over resources, as well as their access to development benefits and decision-making. It studies these linkages and other factors in the larger social, economic, political and environmental context.

Gender-responsive analysis entails, first and foremost, collecting sex-disaggregated data and gender-responsive information about the concerned population. Gender-responsive analysis is the first step in gender-responsive planning to promote gender equality. Gender-responsive analysis is not confined to identifying differences.

More importantly, it recognizes the politics of gender relations and the adjustments needed to be undertaken by institutions to attain gender equality. It looks at the inequalities between women and men, asks why they exist, and suggests how the gap can be narrowed.

Gender-responsive budgeting

Gender-responsive budgeting is the application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

Source: ILO

Gender-responsive planning

Gender-responsive planning consists of developing and implementing specific measures and organizational arrangements (for example: capacity to carry out gender-responsive analysis and collect sex-disaggregated data) for the promotion of gender equality, and ensuring that adequate resources are available (for example through gender budgeting).

Source: ILO

Gender-responsive policies

Gender-responsive policies recognize that within a society, actors are women and men, who are constrained in different and often unequal ways, and who may consequently have differing and sometimes conflicting needs, interests and priorities.

Source: ILO

Gender roles

Gender roles are learned behaviour in a given society, community or social group, in which people are conditioned to perceive activities, tasks and responsibilities as male or female. These perceptions are affected by age, class, caste, race, ethnicity, culture, religion or other ideologies, and by the geographical, economical and political environment.

Source: ILO

Gender Training: A facilitated process of developing awareness and capacity on gender issues, to bring about personal or organizational change for gender equality. "The generic aim of gender training...is to consciously introduce gender as a category of analysis (as opposed to description), to point to the differing needs and interests of women and men and their unequal representation, and to increase awareness and reduce the gender-bias which informs the actions of individuals and institutions."

This kind of gender training commonly involves:

- Raising participants' awareness of the different and unequal roles and responsibilities of women and men in any particular context
- Looking at ways that development interventions affect, and are affected by, differences and inequalities between women and men

· Equipping participants with knowledge and skills to understand gender differences and inequalities in the context of their work, and to plan and implement policies, programmes and projects to promote gender equality.

Source: UNDP

Practical Gender Needs: Needs identified by women within their socially constructed roles in society. Although they often arise from gendered divisions of labour and women's subordinate position in society, practical gender needs do not challenge these norms. Practical gender needs are a response to an immediate perceived necessity identified within a specific context, such as access to clean water or adequate housing. They are practical in nature and often concern inadequacies in living conditions.

Source: UN-Instraw

Resources: Resources are means and goods, including those that are economic (household income) or productive (land, equipment, tools, work, credit); political (capability for leadership, information and organization); and time.

Source: UN Instraw

Sex discrimination

Sex discrimination entails the differential treatment of women and men in employment and access to resources and benefits, on the basis of their sex. Sex discrimination may be direct or indirect. Direct sex discrimination exists when unequal treatment between women and men stems directly from laws, rules or practices making an explicit difference between women and men (e.g., laws which do not allow women to sign contracts).

Indirect discrimination is when rules and practices that appear gender neutral in practice lead to disadvantages primarily suffered by persons of one sex. Requirements which are irrelevant for a job and which typically only men can meet, constitute indirect discrimination. The intention to discriminate is not required.

Sexual harassment: Sexual harassment is a form of sexual violence. The term refers to one-sided, unwanted and unwelcome behaviour where sexuality and/or varied cultural constructions of sexuality are used as the means to oppress and position people and to produce or maintain vulnerability among them. Sexual harassment is often divided into two types: quid pro quo harassment and hostile environment harassment. The difference between these two types of harassment is that in quid pro quo harassment sex is provided in exchange for things such as employment or educational benefit – job promotion or good grades, for example – or the avoidance of some detriment. Hostile environment harassment means sexual harassment that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment generally for a whole group of people - such as women, young women, some ethnic group of women or some groups of men, to mention a few. The forms of sexual harassment are usually divided into three different types: (1) verbal: e.g. remarks about figure/looks, sexual and sexist jokes, verbal sexual advances, comments that implicate stereotypic and discriminative attitudes; (2) non-verbal and/or visual: e.g. staring at someone and whistling; and (3) physical: acts from unsolicited physical contact to assaults and rape.

Source: APROPOS

Strategic Gender Interests: Needs and interests identified by women that arise from their subordinate position in society. Strategic interests vary according to context, are related to gendered divisions of labour, power and control, and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, access to contraception, etc. Strategic gender interests question women's socially constructed role, demanding greater equality and a change in existing roles.

Source: UN Instraw

12.2.

POLICY ON DIVERSITY

Background

ActionAid Association India's commitment to values of equality, justice and pluralism stresses on an organisational culture and work practises that ensure equal opportunity to every person, irrespective of caste, class, race, age¹, gender, sexual orientation, colour, class, ethnicity, disability, location, and religion, enabling equity and at all levels. While this commitment is also guided by specific references and provisions (including affirmative actions) in the various organisational policies, strategies, norms and guidelines, (HR policies, partnership policy, strategy document, organisational memorandum of association to name a few), the purpose of this policy is to provide an overarching framework that enables a fair and just distribution of opportunities, responsibilities, and benefits to all its staff thereby building an organisation that respects and celebrates diversity. This will also lead to enrichment of individuals, teams and the overall organisation.

ActionAid Association endeavours to have a balanced representation of people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds in the organisation. Recognising the social exclusion and stigma that certain social groups face, ActionAid Association commits towards proactive organizational action for their inclusion and providing them with positive/preferential opportunities across various organizational processes. These focus groups include dalits, tribals, women, urban poor communities, other most backward communities, muslims, informal sector labour, people with disabilities, sexual minorities and people living with HIV and AIDS. The positive measures are founded on the premise that the observed imbalance is due to either wholly or on part, to past and/or present discrimination, the remedy for which for which consists of action in favour of the underrepresented social groups. Providing equal opportunity ensuring inclusion of all social groups that ActionAid Association India works with is therefore aimed at enabling enrichment and equity at all levels across the organization.

Workplace diversity also refers to the variety of differences that exist between people in an organization arising out of their different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds and physical and intellectual attributes as defined above. Variations therefore exist in the interpretations, meanings and perspectives of people based on these differences. Diversity, therefore involves not only how people perceive themselves but also how they perceive others. These perceptions affect their interactions. For a wide assortment of people to function effectively as an organization, there is need to therefore deal effectively with issues such as communication, adaptability, and change.

We therefore look at diversity in a multidimensional sense that includes differences based on:

- Organisational demography
- knowledge, skills, and abilities
- values, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes
- personality, cognitive and behavioral style
- organizational demographics

Our vision for diversity:

- Diversity is not political but it is a natural state of being. Just like Nature that is so diverse. Our vision for diversity within ActionAid Association India is therefore not because we want to favour a particular group of population but because we want a richer and better organisation.
- It is based on the premise that it is important for us as an organisation to recognise and understand the differences amongst various individuals who work in the organisation and to respect and celebrate these differences.
- This will involve adopting proactive approach, with a strong moral and ethical commitment to diversity, by creating systems and processes for providing equal opportunities and affirmative actions where needed to enable all members in the organisation to contribute and achieve their full potential.
- The goal is therefore to build a heterogeneous-pluralistic culture that respects and celebrates diversity.

It is expected that the framework will help the organization walk the path towards this vision. This will serve dual purpose – first, enhancing social justice by creating an organizational culture and processes in which no one is privileged or disadvantaged due to their caste, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, physical disability, sexuality orientation etc ; and, second, enrichment, efficiency and effectiveness through organizational transformation. It is also intended at creating and maintaining a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals, based on their varied backgrounds, are valued, so that all can reach their potential and maximize their contributions to the organization's strategic goals and mission. This will be achieved by exploring the differences in a safe, positive, and fostering environment and helping people develop a better understanding of each other, moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

The policy will operate as a measuring scale for the organization in checking the quality and effectiveness of its endeavors in meeting this goal of celebrating and respecting diversity.

We will achieve the objective of diversity as outlined above through the following actions:

- **Putting diversity at the forefront** of all our engagements and processes, internally as well as externally,
- **Positive measures** in favour of socially excluded and underrepresented groups to enable opportunities, enrichment and equity at all levels.
- **Building and nurturing an environment** that accepts, respects and celebrates diversity within the organization.
- **Examining the conduct of all its actors** from the yardstick of social diversity.
- **Allocating adequate Resources** to examine every intervention and strategy from a social diversity nuanced perspective and carry it out to its logical end,
- **Conducting periodic reviews** internally to assess & address any existing bias against diverse groups of people & structural inequities in relation to gender.

The following sections detail out operational plan with respect to each of these areas:

HR Policies and Practices

- All HR policies will be diversity sensitive and inclusive.
- Periodic reviews of policies to be facilitated to ensure that they promote and protect rights of people from diverse backgrounds.
- All recruitments should help bring balanced representation of people from diverse social backgrounds in all units and across grades.
- Advertisements for vacancies will clearly specify preferred categories and screening of applications will also be done bearing the above in mind.
- Candidates from socially diverse backgrounds will be given weightage in selection.
- The selection panel will also comprise of social and gender diversity and the panel will be informed about ActionAid Association India's diversity policy with focus on affirmative action where applicable.
- Gender and diversity components will form part of regular trainings and staff induction processes.
- All staff will be entitled to be treated with courtesy and dignity irrespective of the social diversity/identity and action will be taken against any form of discrimination/harassment.
- Performance Management Systems will be in a manner that assesses individual's sensitivity towards diversity. This should also help identify development and training needs to bring required transformation in individual's attitudes and behaviour.
- Ensure availability and allocation of adequate resources for such training and development needs in the organisation.

Building a nurturing and conducive culture for embracing diversity

- We will support processes that inculcate empowered, focused and motivated teams, appreciating diversity and letting 'a thousand flowers bloom' in accordance with the values of humility, mutual respect, equity and justice, transparency and accountability, togetherness and collective decision making.
- Time to time organizing training programs, workshops and activities that help understand and accept differences among staff, increases awareness and sensitivity about these differences and offers strategies for confronting biases/prejudices, that may exist, if any. This will be intended at increasing cross-cultural understanding of issues and valuing the differences.
- The activities may include role playing exercises, lectures, discussions, and group experiences. This will also lead to recommending behavioral tools for fostering a more cohesive workplace.
- Dissemination of facts and information that help change existing beliefs and stereotypes and entrenched attitudes and behaviors.

Organisational level

- Ensure balanced representation of staff from diverse groups with gender balance, in all decision making processes at management and board level eg LC, LCC, SMT, board, assembly etc.
- Gender and Diversity audits will be carried out periodically. The parameters for such an audit would include an evaluation of the kind of diversity existing in the organisation within a time period and existing cultural environment in the organisation. The audit should ideally be done

by an external expert facilitated by an internal staff committee. The outcome of the audit will be shared with the HR/OE team for amendments/follow-up actions for recruitment and various staff engagement processes. Also, to know, understand and eliminate the common stereotypes existing in the workplace, hence creating an enabling environment for harmonious existence of diversity.

- Effective Grievance redressal mechanism: In order to nurture diversity, an effective grievance redressal mechanism will be a mandatory requirement. This is based on the understanding that diversity would encompass several challenges. The details of the policy and mechanism are available in the Grievance redressal policy.
- Sponsorship programme will take sides with children from marginalized and socially diverse groups.
- Similarly, fund raising asks will focus on people/women/children from socially diverse backgrounds.
- People from socially diverse groups will be the ambassadors for ActionAid Association India's fundraising asks.

Programme and Policy work

Our programme and policy work is guided by the Country Strategy Paper however this policy would like to reiterate the following:

- All our programme and policy work will be guided by analysis from diversity viewpoint, particularly from the excluded and marginalized communities and ensure building inclusive communities and society that respects and celebrates diversity.
- All programme processes (appraisals, plans, reviews, phase-out plans, budget, programme implementation, campaigns etc) must necessarily prioritize gender & diversity aspects.
- Teams supporting these processes must also include people from diverse backgrounds, particularly the socially excluded and marginalized communities.
- Monitoring Framework and measurable Indicators will be designed to look at change and change processes from diversity angle.
- Programme resource allocation will keep gender and diversity aspects in mind. Similarly budget should be allocated for gender and diversity audit to be conducted in projects supported by ActionAid Association India from time to time.
- ActionAid Association India Partnerships should include a balance representation of organisations headed by people from gender and social diversity backgrounds. Similarly, efforts should be made to broad-base partner staff diversity, more particularly in ActionAid Association India supported projects to specially include diverse communities (socially excluded, marginalized and dispossessed) in their staff composition.
- Partner trainings programmes should propagate our values based on respect and sensitivity to diversity.

Implementation and accountability

- The HR/OE Unit is the primary holder of this policy. Accordingly the responsibility of ensuring strict adherence to the policy will lie with the OE Unit.
- However, this single unit cannot make this policy intent a reality and therefore responsibility will lie with all other units to make this a reality.

- Similarly, while every individual staff is eligible to enjoy the benefits under this policy, everyone is also accountable in ensuring adherence to this policy.

“Notwithstanding the economic costs, the human costs of intolerance to diversity is incalculable.”