



Veterinaires Sans Frontieres - Germany

GENDER POLICY

Gender equality is more than a goal in itself.

It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.

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GLOBAL MANDATE/ COMMITMENT

Gender equality is the key element of the human rights system established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948).

It states that rights and freedoms shall not be limited by a person's sex. ***"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."***

VSF-G therefore should acknowledge the importance of the commitment to gender equality contained within the UN Millennium Declaration (2000), which includes the following resolution: *to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.*

It is reflected in several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and in particular in Goal 3, ***"Promote gender equality and empower women."***

More than 15 years after the Women's World Conference in Beijing, the World Bank Development Report 2012 concentrates fully on "Gender Equality and Development" and finally recognises gender equality as a development goal in its own right.

USAID defines gender equality and female empowerment as core development objectives, fundamental for the realization of human rights and key to effective and sustainable development outcomes. They underscore that no society can develop successfully without providing equitable opportunities, resources, and life prospects for males and females so that they can shape their own lives and contribute to their families and communities.

IFAD explains as follows: "Working towards gender equality and women's empowerment means enabling women to express their potentials, as producers, managers of resources and providers of services, to the benefit of their households and their communities....Women are not viewed as vulnerable recipients of assistance but as powerful allies in the process of social and economic change....Initiatives are designed with specific measures to empower women, enabling them to 'catch up' and acquire the means and ability to participate in the mainstream of social and economic development"

RATIONALE

VSF-G is mandated to contribute to the realization of all human rights for all people. The present policy has been developed in response to the above mandate. The policy aims to create an environment conducive in promoting gender equality as a fundamental human right. VSF-G works towards the eradication of discrimination in all its forms. We recognize that in our societies and organizational cultures, biased stereotypes and social norms prevent women and men from exercising their free choice and from taking full and equal advantage of opportunities for individual development, contribution and reward. It is acknowledged that gender disparities and biases affect the efficiency and effectiveness of VSF-G's operations, in both stable and emergency contexts.

VSF-G recognizes that gender equality is a critical component of the organization's commitment to diversity. This Gender Policy, along with related policies that support diversity, seeks to clarify the organization's expectations and guidelines to assist staff in their efforts to advance gender equality.

In particular this policy outlines the objectives at organisation and project level, and analyses the specific target groups in the organisation work, i.e. look at different roles of men, women, boys and girls within pastoralist and agro-pastoralist societies from a gender perspective and analyse the specific challenges they have to face in more a general manner. The differing conception of tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities, in the public and in the private life of their families, need to be recognized to lead to specific project measures respecting and embarking from traditional rules but at the same time opening a path for changes in perception of gender roles and behavior.

Female Pastoralists and Agro-Pastoralists as specific target groups of VSF Germany

Women are major players in the agriculture sector, in household food and nutrition security, and in natural resource management. They account for 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force in all developing countries and up to 50 per cent in Eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Recent publications agree that economic productivity of the rural poor is mainly about enabling women to realize their full potential and improve their own and their families' quality of life. Women represent the majority of the rural poor, especially where migration, marital instability, male mortality because of wars, and single parenthood have left them as heads of households. Women play a major role in the livelihood and survival strategies of poor rural households. And they have proven to be a driving force in achieving project effectiveness and reducing poverty.

The Role of women in the livestock sector

Women play an important role in activities dealing with livestock management, transformation and marketing. Identifying and supporting the roles, decision-making and capabilities of women as livestock owners, processors and users of livestock products are key aspects to promote women's economic and social empowerment and consequently a rural women's ability to break the cycle of poverty.

Moreover, access, control, and management of resources such as grazing areas and feed resources, provide assets that improve women's equality and empowerment with an overall positive impact on the welfare of the household.

Therefore VSF-G consider the following elements necessary and mandatory in all its interventions:

- Understanding the basic needs of women livestock keepers, the threats they face, their roles in the livestock sector and how these roles are changing;
- Supporting women's empowerment, looking not only at how to enable women to become more market-oriented, but in particular at how to ensure that women capture the benefits of economic empowerment;

- Supporting women's access to productive resources and main assets (water, land, fuel wood, markets, knowledge), promoting their participation in small-scale dairying, and strengthening their role in decision-making processes;
- Understanding how women influence decisions and what resources they have control over;
- Supporting income-generating activities (for instance, processing and selling of livestock, forage, aromatic and medicinal plants and wildlife products) as a way to enhance women's socio-economic position in the household and empower them to take a greater role in the community (IFAD, 2009, Rota, A. and Sperandini, S. "Gender and Livestock: tools for design" in Livestock Thematic Papers: Tools for project design. Rome).

At the same time, it is important to recognize that, because of their extremely heavy workload, women have fewer opportunities to diversify or maximize their livelihoods. Time-saving opportunities, therefore, merit special attention.

Several analyses conducted recently show clearly that women in pastoralist or agro-pastoralist societies have to face specific challenges because of their gender roles, but at the same time that are no easy answers on how to improve their situation and that detailed assessments and analyses are necessary. (e.g. Flintan, Fiona: Changing nature of gender roles in the dry lands of the Horn and East Africa: Implications for the DDR Programming, REGLAP 2011)

OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

to promote equal opportunities for men and women and strengthen actions that promotes gender equality within programmes as well as in our organisation

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To guide VSF-G staff in adopting principles and practice of gender equality in their personal and professional lives.
2. To ensure that a gender perspective is integrated along the project cycle at all levels
3. To promoting equal opportunities for men and women at all staff levels within the organization especially in countries where female personnel are under-represented.
4. To ensuring that all VSF-G programmes benefit men and women and girls and boys according to their different needs and potentials.
5. To influence the institutional culture within the organization so that all employees are gender aware, access training in gender mainstreaming and put this into practice in all aspects of their work.
6. To inform external actors (partner organizations, donors, governments, the media and the private sector) of VSF-G's perspective on gender and to provide an 'entry point' for discussion of gender with them and also promote gender equality and children's right.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

PROJECT CYCLE MANAGEMENT

VSF-G will incorporate gender equality into programming through the application of gender awareness and analysis to the project cycle including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation through:

- Gender analysis based on gender-specific or gender-segregated data collection is a must. However more is needed, in particular a dialogue that allows women and men to reflect on their priorities for change and formulate them. This process shall lead to incorporate inputs from women and men to the project design and what they expect to achieve (impact hypothesis).
- Designing culturally appropriate gender-sensitive programmes that address the needs and safety requirements of the most vulnerable in consultation with women, men, boys and girls. The Project proposals shall address gender issues and gaps identified during the assessment and be based on gender-specific data, e.g. when referring to target groups or beneficiaries. Objectives should also be formulated in a gender sensitive way, impact and envisaged results, outputs and activities should be gender specific. External factors (risks, obstacles, challenges) should also look at gender specific challenges.
- VSF-G acknowledges that in the context where it is working, women and girls are often more disadvantaged and for this reason VSF-G engages in promoting dignity and empowerment in programme design and implementation. Quality project implementation thus shall consider gender as a cross-cutting issue as well as realising specific gender sensitive activities. Reports should always discuss how far objectives, impact and results and outputs reached contributed to the general aim of improvement of gender equality and the success of gender specific activities should be referred to. Monitoring and evaluation visits and reports should reflect the same.
- Advocating where possible for gender- responsive policies and practices with communities and local authorities.
- Protecting beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse by staff and partners.
- Ensuring that technology, training and information are appropriate and accessible to men, women and children.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

A regular gender analysis of our internal structure consequently is a must in order to make sure that VSF-G observes gender mainstreaming within the organisation

Key elements and indicators for the gender analyses are as follows:

- Ensuring workplace policies and procedures are in place and are familiar amongst staff and partners to ensure gender equality in the workplace.
- Ensuring accountability of senior management for promoting gender equality.
- Develop staff, partner and senior management awareness through inductions, trainings and reflections.
- Ensuring that career development opportunities are afforded to both men and women. This may include activities like formal mentoring and coaching
- Verifying the budget foreseen (financial, time) for mainstreaming within the organisation
- Ensuring that sufficient effort is made where appropriate candidates of both sexes are given equal consideration for available positions.
- Developing and or reviewing existing policies, procedures and systems to ensure that they support a gender- sensitive and family friendly work environment.

APPENDIX - DEFINITIONS¹

Gender

A social or culture interpretations of biological sex; definitions of what is considered to be feminine and masculine in particular cultural and social settings, expectations of women and men, girls and boys with respect to these definitions; social economic and political relationships between females and males in specific societies.

Gender identity, roles and relations can and do vary and change as a result of ideological, political, economic/cultural influences. Some forms of cultural identity and expression E.g, specific ideological creeds as well as religious beliefs and interpretation- in interaction with restriction of resources may play a major part in patterns of extreme gender inequality.

Sex

Biological and physiological features and characteristics of females and males and the differences between them is based on differences in female and male reproductive systems. These are universal and normally fixed and unchangeable.

Gender relations

In most contexts, women and men (girls and boys) play different roles at a household, community and societal level. To perform their roles, they need different resources (natural, economic, political, social). Often however, women or men cannot play the roles they want and/or access the resources they need because of their gender. Women in particular face difficulties accessing and controlling resources and their social and economic contributions are often undervalued.

To “identify gender relations” is to look at the attribution and organisation of roles, responsibilities, resources and values attached to women and men in order to assess the differences and inequalities between them and to map out their specific interests, opportunities, constraints and needs in development.

Unlike biological characteristics of women and men, gender relations are context-specific.

They vary between and within countries (e.g. rural/urban regions), but also between households. Often, households present different patterns of male-female relations depending on their structure e.g. if they are women-headed, nuclear or extended.

Because women and men interact in all aspects of life, gender relations are omnipresent in the private sphere (i.e. household level) as well as the public sphere where women and men interact as community members or colleagues.

- Gender relations are not static. Even in traditional cultures, gender relations change as a result of economic, legal, political or environmental conditions. Some changes are intentional and positive in terms of gender equality – for instance, many countries have taken steps in laws to eradicate gender discrimination. Deliberate steps can also be taken to maintain/increase gender inequality (e.g. in Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive).

¹ These definitions are mainly based on the following publications: the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)-Gender-Kit; the Orientation Framework Gender in Development by DWHH in cooperation with VENRO; the Gender Mainstreaming Glossary as developed by UNDP.

- Gender relations interact with other social relations. Not all women and all men are the same: Age, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and ability (physical and mental) influence women's and men's activities and responsibilities, as well as their status, opportunities and constraints in life. Individuals carry multiple identities. In different circumstances, one identity may prevail over others. In India, a high caste woman may have more power than a low-caste man, but she may still be subordinated to men in her own caste. However, rich or poor, young or old, muslim or catholic, "people" are always women or men, meaning that gender is an unavoidable relation.

- Gender relations are power relations. Institutions in private (e.g. the family, marriage) and public spheres (e.g. religion, school, labour market) reflect and maintain gender relations. Therefore, attempts to change them to improve gender equality are often perceived as threats to "traditions" and culture. Gains towards gender equality may be difficult to achieve, but they can easily be lost. There are many examples of societies calling for a return to traditional values, including the subordination of women, when they feel "threatened" by external forces or ideas. Traditional gender relations, where women's status is inferior to men's, are often flagged up as a symbol of cultural identity.

Gender equality

When one sex is not routinely privileged or prioritized over the other, that is, when women and men, girls and boys have equal rights, obligations and opportunities to security and good health, to a viable livelihood and to remunerative work, to participate in the care of home and dependent family members, to take active part in public and political life and are recognized, respected and valued for their capacities and potential as individuals and as members of society. The aim is not that women and men become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances become and remain equal. Gender equality includes the right for women and men to be different. It signifies an aspiration to work towards a society in which women and men (girls and boys) are able to live equally fulfilling lives and to equally contribute to designing the society they want.

Gender equality then refers to the absence of discrimination on the basis of sex.

Gender equity

Aspects of parity between females and males in terms of fairness and justice in the distribution of resources, benefits and responsibilities.

This concept recognizes that girls and boys may have different needs and negotiating power, and that these differences should be identified and addressed so as to rectify imbalances between the sexes.

Gender discrimination

Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender roles, norms which prevents a person from enjoying their full human rights.

Gender justice

The concept of gender justice underlines the role of duty bearers for the rights of girls and boys. Gender justice is the ending of inequalities between females and males, that result in

women and girls subordination to men and boys. It implies that girls and boys, men and women have equal access to and control over resources, the ability to make choices in their lives, as well as access to provisions to redress inequalities, as needed.

A commitment to gender justice means taking a position against gender discrimination, exclusion and gender-based violence. It focuses on the responsibility to hold duty bearers accountable to respect, protect and fulfill human rights, particularly of girls and women

Gender Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming gender is a strategy to achieve gender equality. It means recognizing that women and men often have different needs and priorities, face different constraints, have different aspirations and contribute to development in different ways. A key hypothesis is that organisations and societies must be transformed to accommodate women's and men's needs and treat them as equals.

Mainstreaming implies that actors and institutions normally involved in development are able to incorporate a gender equality perspective in the way they work (their institutional culture, competence etc.), as well as in all their policies and programmes, at all levels and at all stages of their planning cycle.

Gender as a cross-cutting issue

Working with gender as a transversal theme is one of the strategies for mainstreaming gender. It is a planning methodology. At a programme/project and sector level, it implies that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men respectively. It requires the participation of women as well as men throughout the planning cycle and the systematic integration of their respective priorities and needs.

Gender specific programme

Gender specific programmes do not automatically or exclusively target women. Experience has shown that to improve the situation of women (girls), it is often necessary to involve men too. Working with men to change their gender relation to women but also to themselves (e.g. challenging their own assumptions of masculinity) is essential for the promotion of gender balanced development. Gender specific programmes can also support institutions that deal with women/gender strategic issues, such as National machineries, NGO or networks.

Gender analysis

Gender analysis is a fundamental precondition aiming at introducing a gender perspective into projects, programmes and institutions. It is a good instrument to identify the specific problems, targets and potentials of women and men. It differentiates between "practical needs" of men and women to ensure their basic needs and "strategic interests" aimed at improving conditions in structural terms.

Gender-specific or gender-segregated data must be collected to conduct a gender analysis. The data first has to be differentiated according to the biological gender (sex). This differentiation does not suffice, however, as women and men do not form any homogenous group in which everyone is subjected to the same discrimination and everyone has the same interests and needs. Additional characteristics of the target groups relating to gender roles

have to be examined already at the stage of data analysis such as, for example, age, family status, employment and health condition.

A gender analysis can be done not only for an institution or organisation; it must be introduced into the project cycle; at all stages, from project proposal to implementation of the project and monitoring and evaluation, a gender perspective based on gender-segregated data should be kept. During the past 20 years a number of useful tools and instruments for gender analysis have been developed.

Women's Empowerment

The notion of empowerment comprises strategies and measures which help people lead self-determined, independent lives. Empowerment is aimed at putting them in a position to defend and articulate their interests. In the field of development co-operation, empowerment is above all viewed to be a process which strengthens the self-confidence of disadvantaged social groups and help them articulate their interests and take part in the political process. At the heart of the matter is the strengthening of the human potential which is present. Empowerment is thus considered to be a prerequisite for projects to be sustainable.

"Working towards gender equality and women's empowerment means enabling women to express their potentials, as producers, managers of resources and providers of services, to the benefit of their households and their communities....Women are not viewed as vulnerable recipients of assistance but as powerful allies in the process of social and economic change.... Initiatives are designed with specific measures to empower women, enabling them to 'catch up' and acquire the means and ability to participate in the mainstream of social and economic development" (IFAD 2003c: 7-8).

Women's promotion

Women's promotion refers to projects and programmes which seek to directly improve women's lives and alleviate the economic, social and political disadvantage that they suffer. This comprises for example continuing education and training, income-generating measures, involvement in political decision-making processes and an improvement in their legal status. Women's promotion aims at self-determination, the expansion of self-organisation and a more active role of women in all processes of the society. Social, economic, legal and political institutions reflecting current power constellations should be changed.