SOCIETY FOR HARMONY, AID AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMY (SHAPE)

GENDER POLICY

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Over the time, it was realized that SHAPE should have its Gender policy formally written, approved and publicized so that it not only gives direction for the organization in practice, but also holds the organization accountable. It also comes from the understanding that, inequality between men and women is deep rooted and it is manifested in discrimination against women in different forms. To whatever extent, one might be sensitive; it needs conscious and continuous efforts to achieve a balanced environment both at organizational level and also in work with the partners at field level. Framing a Gender policy is a commitment towards those efforts. The overall effort is to provide an enabling environment for women within the organization, various partners and the communities with whom we are working and strengthen the gender sensitivity among all.

OBJECTIVES OF GENDER POLICY:

1. To explicitly state the organizational commitment towards gender
2. To provide a direction towards building gender related agenda
3. To provide a framework for effectively integrating gender concerns into the organizational agenda and policy domain
4. To create equal opportunities and a conducive environment for women and men at work place
5. To promote equal representation and participation of women in decision making at the professional/ programmatic and administrative levels.

ELEMENTS OF GENDER POLICY

SHAPE understands that gender refers to the attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the socio-cultural relationships between women and men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context specific and changeable. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in activities undertaken, access

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to and control over resources as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, which also takes into consideration factors such as class, race, economic status, ethnic group and age. SHAPE adopts gender perspective, which means focusing on both women and men and their relationships with each other and resources. In addition, it means working with a global perspective that allows for and appreciates regional diversity. The organization aims at mainstreaming gender by creating an enabling working environment that in turn attracts and helps to retain gender sensitive staff. Only with a gender perspective can a complete picture of human relationships and ecosystems be built up. The gender policy is an integral part of all its organizational policies, programmes and projects and involves building a culture that understands the issues and policies, which respect diversity and gender, related concerns. A mere statement of policy and objectives does not ensure the concerns relating to addressing the gender. Towards achieving the above objectives, clear indicators need to be defined to evaluate and assess the organizations commitment towards gender equity on a periodic basis. For this, following systems would be put in place and necessary strategies would be tried out internally and externally: at organizational level and at partners' level.

Organizational level

Staff composition/representation

a) Recruiting adequate women staff and ensuring the balance also at senior levels; with an objective of achieving a numerical gender balance in all posts at all levels
b) Ensuring equal opportunities among male and female staff for personal growth, in promotion benefits, training and working conditions
c) Ensuring equitable representation and participation of men and women in the core group, Board of trustees and in various functional committees of the organization

Workplace

a) Providing a safe and secure workplace for women staff, free from sexual harassment with a Gender Complaints committee to look into specific concerns.
b) Providing an enabling and friendly work environment where both men and women enjoy and actively participate in work. This includes providing flexible working hours and allowing working from home, wherever possible

c) Extending work related concessions and relaxations for women staff depending upon the situations and requirements; e.g., providing secure transport facilities when they work late hours; giving relaxation over travel time for the next day for those in the field; ensuring security measures along with minimum basic facilities for women staff traveling in the field.

d) Reviewing the organizational structure, functioning, problems in relation to gender imbalances among staff and the work environment time to time and taking definite steps to address the same

e) Strategic orientation to staff in the field-based programs and advocacy initiatives towards increasing women-access, control and ownership over the natural resources.

f) Placing Gender in existing committees: A woman employee who has put in 3 months of service after confirmation shall be entitled for 4 months of Maternity Leave on full pay and under probation, she will be eligible for leave without pay for the same length of period.

g) Men employees when their spouses have children shall be entitled for 30 days of leave either immediately after child birth or fifteen days before child birth and fifteen days after child birth for primary parenting and child nurturing. In case of miscarriage / abortion, women staff can avail 2 weeks of Maternity Leave with full pay and spouses are entitled for one weeks leave.

h) Making efforts to develop infrastructure for childcare facilities in the office premises in order to ensure that the parents can bring their children in circumstances in which the child cannot be taken.

Field

a) Furthering deliberate and intense efforts to promote participation of women and their collectives in various aspects of natural resource management.

b) Facilitating participation and even representation of women in various institutional structures created for the management of natural resources like committees, user groups etc.

c) Analysis of gender disaggregated roles and work patterns, and make special efforts to reduce the work load of women

d) Extending constant orientation of field-level partners on gender perspectives as part of long-term gender goals like formal recognition of women's rights over resources like land, assets etc.

e) Ensuring equal wages to equal work for both men and women in the works as part of the programs, where SHAPE is directly or indirectly involved either as an anchor of the program or as a facilitating support service provider.

f) Making special efforts to constantly identify vulnerable women and provide them the necessary support and guidance

g) Sensitizing the men and mobilizing their support towards gender balance

h) Building awareness and sensitivity by processing information and publishing communication material in diverse media to appeal different strata of people in our functional domain.

Staff capacity building

a) Facilitating staff capacity building processes and trainings to enhance perspectives and conceptual clarity on Gender issues (for all the staff members). It will be an important component of the induction programme

b) Ensuring that all trainings (internal and external) facilitated by the organization are gender-sensitive. - a) training content/methodology/mode of facilitation b) logistics part -time/location of venue/creche facilities/other logistics/first-aid kit

c) Conducting Gender trainings for both men and women; and ensuring participation of women in all the field level meetings and trainings

Organizational policies and systems

a) Making all HR systems and policies gender-sensitive and responsive, and integrating gender indicators into staff performance appraisal systems.

b) Incorporating and explicitly mentioning gender sensitivity as an essential element in the tasks/job profiles in all terms of reference.

c) Ensuring that the conceptual clarity and sensitivity on gender issues will be one of the important selection criteria in recruitment processes and capacity building efforts of staff

d) Initiating and building the advocacy around gender balance and making efforts to integrate gender concerns into the scaling up and mainstream developmental programs

Staff benefits

a) Following all statutory requirements related to maternity and paternity leaves.

b) Ensuring that staff access to and use of information technology is gender equitable

c) Arrangements should be made for recording all information and open access for reviewing the performance of tasks mentioned at organizational level regularly in different forums from staff meetings to Annual meetings.

Networking

a) SHAPE would proactively make several efforts in promoting gender concerns in the work with partners. It involves extending support to partners in organizing training programs, conducting gender studies, preparing resource material, providing documentation support etc.

b) SHAPE would extend support to partner organisations in developing their own gender policies, strategies and programs

c) Sharing Gender reports with our network members and partner organizations and also facilitating similar process within the partner organizations to promote gender sensitivity

d) Supporting and expressing solidarity with partners at field level in taking up issues of discrimination or harassment against women

Note: This is a policy statement, which outlines SHAPE sensitivity towards Gender and its operational framework to address the related concerns. The exact operational procedures would have to be worked out in detail for all the above outlined statements in a consultative process; internally involving all the staff with possible external facilitation support. The idea of formulating gender policy for the organization started some time back. There were initial rounds of internal discussions within the team. Later a preliminary workshop on evolving the policy was anchored by SHAPE where the entire staff was involved. Various staff concerns relating to gender were discussed.