ASSEMBLY OF SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

A ROAD MAP FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

ASM
Assembly of Social Mobilization

K.Thavaseelan & Philip Murugiah

[Type the company name]

A ROAD MAP FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

1. Introduction

Since the early 2011 Assembly of Social Mobilization has taken significant steps to mainstream attention to gender equality in their work, therefore repeatedly and consist evaluation of gender mainstreaming have been found and the need to develop a comprehensive policy manual on Gender equity and sensitivity is emphasize within the organization circles.

The following benchmarks have been identified and stabilized by the ASM management during the Program designing, planning and implementation process with the results that can impact on the organization's mission in the showground.

- ➢ There is an applicable policy and system for gender mainstreaming is in place
- ➢ There is a wider understanding of Gender norms and its impact on the organization's work.
- ➢ There is a tendency to view women as a sector and address gender equality in standard process of sectoral analyzing and planning.
- ➢ Gender equality is included in the ToR of staff and consultants.
- ➢ Gender policy developed with staff and team and effectively implemented through understanding and commitment of project staff, management and the ASM Board.

The ASM has an important contribution to make towards the achievement of gender equality. The increased participation of women in the development process, in general is a positive, for developing a strong and broad skills base for the Socio economic and political development. The challenge is to ensure that it leads to women's Socio economic empowerment and does not further exacerbate inequalities between women and men. The guidelines proposed in this document have been developed through an analysis of the local context and internationally accepted definitions of gender equality and gender mainstreaming:

- **Gender equality** entails that the underlying causes of discrimination are systematically identified and removed in order to give women and men equal opportunities in every sphere and working context. However, we must remember that same treatment does not always lead to equal results. Therefore sometimes there may be need to treat women and men differently, to achieve sameness in results.

- **Gender mainstreaming** involves the incorporation of gender considerations into all policies, programmes and practices so at every stage, an analysis is made of the effects for women and men. There is no area of work, which is gender-neutral.

This guideline has been drawn based on institutional principles, values, and obligations contained and consolidated within the Assembly of Social mobilization.

The objectives of a Gender Policy are to:

1. Serve as a tool and framework for enhancing gender equality in the organization, particularly in the work-place.
2. Enable action to integrate gender into key organizational practices
3. Stimulate reflection, provide some direction and to drive action.

The key goal of this Gender Policy is:

- To provide effective leadership and management this serves as a framework for mainstreaming gender equality.

GETTING STARTED

Why a gender policy?

Women and men organize their lives differently according to their gendered roles. Their participation in decision making processes, access to justice or the legal system and economic resources is not equitable. The manner in which gender relations are defined in the workplace often mirrors the division of labor in the home, where roles are based on gender stereotypes. Thus for example, women tend to be well-represented in positions that are synonymous with motherhood, caring and "nimble fingers". These have limited advancement prospects and lower benefits. Men on the other hand are over-represented in positions that command significant decision-making power, higher salary scales and prospects for advancement. In working towards transformation of gender relations, the rights and responsibilities of women and men at all levels need to be redefined. The formulation of a gender policy is an indication of an organization's commitment to this transformation process. A gender policy also promotes a generic understanding of the principles within the entire organization, and facilitates the continuous monitoring of the policy.

Why should we be concerned about Gender equality?

In most societies, it gives more power to men than to women. Also it preserves the exiting power structure

This manual seeks to improve the effectiveness of organization and its staff working together to promote wider definition of gender for both men and women thus reducing discrimination and stereotypes of men and women.

This manual is developed with participation of ASM Program manager, staff and volunteers, Women groups, human right activist, local government authorities during the series of consultation meetings.

This gender operational manual is developed from the conceptual framework to the practical and applicable elements of "gender perspectives" this policy document is concerned with discussing the major part of gender an power relations.

The manual also looks and deeply concern on GBV. The violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender or sex – anyhow ASM commits itself to Zero tolerance to the acts that inflict physical ,mental or sexual harm or sufferings, intimidation and other deprivation from liberty – while women, men, boys and girls are working together.

ASM does not encourage the underlying root causes of SGBV historically caused by the unequal power relations between men and women which under any circumstance of domination over and discrimination against women by men.

We are committed to understand the serious consequences faced by vulnerable community particularly in the war /disaster affected locations we serve and the plight of the Women and Girl children in the most vulnerable landscapes in the region.

Stand-alone policy

The positives:

• Serves as an educational tool

• Shows a clear commitment and will.

• Clear reference framework for concerted work on gender.

• More scope for challenging existing policies and practices by setting the new agenda and shifting paradigms in the Development field.

Mainstreaming

The positives

• Gender issues get integrated throughout the organization and in all processes.

• Implementation and monitoring becomes the responsibility of everyone/every sector and stakeholder.

• Shows clear commitment to integrate gender in all aspects of project implementation.

GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES

Discrimination in; recruitment, remuneration, inflexible working conditions, as well as insufficient services such as child care continue to restrict employment and advancement opportunities for women. Negative attitudes also stand in the way of women's advancement. Discrimination manifests itself differently across the spectrum of organizational practices. Very often, gender discrimination, (as distinct from sex discrimination), can be very hard to pick out. This is because it is very subtle, it is based on beliefs and practices that have been there for centuries and regarded as "normal". Thus gender policies must be crafted very carefully challenging aspects that many might take for granted and or that may not appear so obvious.

The following areas of human resource or people development practice should be addressed:

Human resource planning

Before going into the specifics there is a need to plan and project what your human resource requirements are currently and what they will be in the future. Key questions are:

- Where does the company want to be in five (or more), years' time?
- What are the human resources needed now?
- What will be our needs in future?
- What are the key competencies required?
- Can these be built internally through training or do we need to recruit?

This kind of planning will help clearly define the major skills and competencies that you will require. It helps eliminate discriminatory tendencies because you will simply focus on the requirements for the jobs rather than other extraneous factors like gender and sex.

Recruitment:

Person specification:

- Include gender awareness in all job specifications.
- The organization intends to employ more women; the advertisements for recruitment should be marked explicitly and encourage them to apply. It is not always sufficient to say that you are "an equal opportunities employer".
- Specifications that will discourage certain groups from applying are not acceptable.
- Include gender competence as a requirement in job specifications. This will enable the organization to recruit people who have no problems coping with diversity and women's advancement.
- Job titles and specifications that enhance gender stereotypes are not acceptable, e.g. cleaner women/girl.
- Subjective and sexist language or requirements discourage women, for example, "out-going, fun-loving female wanted". Such a specification would automatically discourage some married women with children".
- In order to encourage them to apply, include those areas where women have generally greater expertise. In the same vein avoid emphasizing those areas where men have tended to predominate.

Information and communication

- Use media that is accessible to women, women in rural areas in particular, for example, radio, community radio, magazines or newspapers that are popular among the particular group.
- Encourage women to apply through appropriately worded advertising.
- Reach out to relevant women's groups, networks, and systems to widen recruitment possibilities.

Selection

- All questions must focus on what is required for the job.
- Comparable questions must be posed to female and male incumbents.
- Ensure that gender aware and gender competent persons sit on the selection panel.
- Have some female candidates in every interview, even if the women may not meet all requirements on paper.

- Use gender awareness as criteria for selection, particularly for senior management - Subjective and sexist criteria is not acceptable, for example; marital status, dress, physical attributes. These often have no relation to the job.

Remuneration and grading

- There must be equal pay for equal work.
- There must be equal pay for work of equal value. For example male messengers tend to get paid more than female office cleaners. This is not acceptable.
- Women are income earners in their own right. So paying women so called "pin money", or lower wages on the basis that they do not really need it because their husbands will earn more, is not only discriminatory it is against the law.
- Jobs must be graded in terms of their content and value, not in terms of which sex does them.
- Women are entitled to benefits in their own right, for example a married woman can choose to be on her own medical aid, not on her husband's and she can put him on her medical aid as her spouse if she wishes.
- Performance management and appraisal must be equitable and not subtly discriminate against women.
- Job descriptions must reflect the full complexity of the job.
- Job evaluations processes and methodologies must be fair and equitable. Subjective criteria and considerations must be eliminated.
- Use evaluation criteria which reasonably reflect the range of skills in the entire work-force.
- Recognize and reward certain responsibilities and skills that women have and bring to the job. There is a tendency for example to under-value women's co-ordination role value "supervision" - because it is done by males.
- The scoring system in job evaluations must also value the skills and demands in jobs done by women.
- Recognize and reward skills that an employee gains through work, life, and informal training. Because the majority of women have not had the same access to formal training as men, there is need to look at other skills that women bring to the work-place.
- Vague language, ambiguous or subjective evaluative criteria must be eliminated.
- Have an objective way of assessing skills for example competency based assessment, rather than relying on the length of service or the "reputation", of a person.
- Acknowledge and reward women's hard work and level of responsibility particularly in what are seen as typically female jobs or in lowly paid jobs.
- Measuring levels of responsibility only in terms of supervision may obscure the amount of work involved in jobs women do. For instance, secretaries tend not to supervise anyone, yet they perform a very wide range of tasks.
- Performance evaluation should not penalize women for trying balance their social and professional responsibilities. For example judging a woman who cannot work over-time less "committed" than her male colleague.

Promotion and advancement

- Promotion must be based on a valid set of clearly articulated criteria.
- Recognize women's disproportionate family responsibilities and do not use these as an excuse to down-grade them.
- You can have a deliberate policy to promote certain groups e.g. Black women to particular posts. Spell out this policy and the reasons for it.
- Where the above happens this should be accompanied by training, counseling and mentoring.

Training and development

- Increase training expenditure on women in organizational levels where they are under-represented.
- Deliberately train women for jobs that have traditionally been men's preserve, e.g. technical fields.

- Increase expenditure on basic literacy training.
- Implement gender sensitivity and awareness workshops for all in the organization from the field level to senior management**.**
- Ensure that training times, facilities, and opportunities are appropriate and friendly to women's participation. For example organizing a three-week training away from the place where women with young families live would be a way of discouraging them from participating!

Family friendly practices

- Where possible have child and dependent care facilities.
- Ensure enough leave and benefit provisions for women and men to balance family and professional responsibilities, e.g. paid maternity/paternity leave.
- Provisions that enable both women and men to fulfil their social responsibilities must not be touted as "women friendly", but as family friendly.
- Do not just comply with the minimum legal requirements, do what would be most beneficial to all workers and would make you attract and retain the best employees.
- Do not penalize women for trying to balance professional and social responsibilities, e.g. not promoting a woman whose child is ill or has a disability.

Working Environment, culture and practices

- Everyday working practices must not exclude anyone or make them uncomfortable. For example: long working hours, and holding meetings in drinking places.
- Do not make assumptions about what women "should do", e.g. pouring out the tea at meetings, or taking minutes.
- Do not make assumptions about what women can't do, e.g. going on over-seas trips.
- Eliminate sexist practices and cultures, for example dress codes that make women appear like sex objects, or hiring females to perform at a company retreat.

Affirmative Action

There are many misconceptions about what affirmative action is and what it entails. It is therefore necessary to point out the following:

- Affirmative action is about supporting competency, and opening up spaces for the previously excluded.
- Collect data on the current situation and what needs to be addressed. For example; how many women are in top management? How many are black?
- Having a clear picture of the situation at the beginning will enable you to monitor the impact of your affirmative action policy.
- Set specific priorities and targets in respect of women, black women in particular.
- Monitor implementation of the policy. Address obstacles.
- Monitor women's participation in decision making processes and address gender based problems.
- Affirmative action policies must go beyond increasing numbers, to enhancing qualitative participation.

Sexual harassment

All human beings have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Sexual harassment is a manifestation of the power relations existent in society, between women and men. It is rife in the workplace, because the majority in positions of power and authority are men.

Some of these men abuse their positions of power culminating in sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is one of the biggest problems affecting women's entry, retention, productivity and advancement in the work-place. It is therefore not only in the women's interests but in the company's as well, to have a sexual harassment policy and redress system.

- The definition of sexual harassment must be clear and understandable to all employees.
- Structure a reporting channel which is friendly to complainants. Insisting that all cases must come through the normal hierarchy might be problematic since it is often in this channel that the harassment comes from in the first place.
- Investigation and disciplinary procedures should be effected in a short time frame. Dragging cases further traumatizes complainants.
- Set and effect strong penalties. This will send a message to both complainants and perpetrators that the company takes sexual harassment seriously.
- Provide counseling where possible. If not provide possibility for complainants to take time off to get counseling, as well as some financial support.
- Conduct awareness raising programmes to sensitize both women and men at all levels of the organization.
- Provide possibility for women to report cases anonymously e.g. "suggestion boxes".

Gender equality and the organization's external focus

- Maintain good stakeholder relations with both male and female stakeholders.
- Front line staff should be trained to treat all stakeholders with the same standards.
- Promotion and advertising briefs to agencies must make it clear that women are to be represented positively.
- To promote women's advancement, the organization should have a definitive policy on procuring services from female owned businesses.
- Corporate social investment activities can also include job creation, education, early learning activities that focus on skills upliftment among certain groups of women.

Communication, Monitoring and Evaluation

- Build an information base on gender issues so that all people can have access. Gender is a relatively new discipline and there is still need for people to learn what it means not only to be gender sensitive but to be gender competent.
- Produce information in a way that is appropriate and accessible to all. For example written pamphlets may not be useful to those who cannot read.
- Facilitate training and gender awareness sessions. Gender may be built into programmes like diversity training.
- Linking with leadership and management training will make gender training more effective as staff and management will see its necessity rather than as an "optional extra".
- Allocate sufficient time and resources to communicate and educate about gender. It takes more than one communication session to gain understanding and application to day to day activity.

- Designate specific persons to monitor. These must have a high level of authority so that they can be heard and taken seriously at all levels of the organization. Consider establishing a diversity Board/Committee that has line management representation (male and female) charged with monitoring and reporting to the organization executive team.
- Set time frames for reporting and comprehensive formats in which the reports should be done.
- Have both qualitative and quantitative indicators for assessing change and effectiveness.
- Involve all key stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation processes, particularly the women themselves. This will foster ownership of the policy and its impact.