Gender Policy

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Gender Policy

Introduction:

DACAAR undertook an internal survey to identify gender issues that are relevant to DACAAR. Direct research was carried out in Kabul and four field offices. The study laid down a series of recommendations to mainstream gender. One of the recommendations of the study was to formulate a gender policy and set up a gender team to facilitate the process of gender mainstreaming. A workshop was conducted wherein DACAAR employees contributed to the design of this policy and identified strategies to implement it. It recommended that DACAAR includes *gender equity* as one of its core values, which means that DACAAR gives equal rights and respect to its male and female employees; and that its vision and mission includes *encouraging and promoting* equal participation of men and women in all aspects of DACAAR's structure, procedures, policy and programming.

This Gender Policy is an outcome of those guidelines and has been further developed through consultations in the Main Office and Regional Offices.

DACAAR Gender Policy:

Gender issues are particularly sensitive in Afghanistan where a conservative cultural context favours a strict segregation of men and women in the public sphere. Due to an uneven distribution of resources and the associated discrimination and exclusion of women and girls, both in the public and private spheres, women and girls are some of the most vulnerable groups in Afghanistan. Recognizing empowerment of women and girls as an important part in DACAAR's mission to support sustainable development in Afghanistan, in its Programme Framework Document (2021 -2024), DACAAR clearly locates its commitment to Gender Mainstreaming.

This Gender Policy is an expression of that commitment. It aligns with gender specific goals, targets and benchmarks of international and national. In doing so, it seeks to re-define gender and its approaches to clearly reflect Afghanistan's culture and religious values.

The Gender Policy is divided into 5 parts:
1. Principles of the Gender Policy.
2. Gender mainstreaming approach.
3. Goals and aims of the Gender Policy.
4. Roles and responsibility of employees in policy implementation.
5. Beneficiaries of the Gender Policy.

1. Principles of the Gender Policy:
The Gender Policy offers a framework for the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in DACAAR. It recognizes that-

- Gender mainstreaming is an *ongoing process* rather than an end goal.
- Gender issues and approaches to engage with it will be redefined to make it relevant and appropriate to Afghan culture and religious values.
- Gender equity and equality are central to DACAAR's identity, thinking and practice.
- All phases of project implementation are gender inclusive, i.e. DACAAR carries out gender sensitive planning, baseline surveys, design, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.
- Gender mainstreaming is not *'additional'* work. Every DACAAR employee understands and demonstrates behaviour and commitment to gender equity.

- Responsibility for implementing the Gender Policy is across the organisation and rests at the highest levels
- Gender mainstreaming requires that every effort is made to broaden women's participation at all levels of decision-making.
- There is clear will and adequate resource allocation (financial and human resource) to ensure effective adherence.
- Extensive and clear communications of the gender mainstreaming commitment within the organisation.

2. Gender mainstreaming approach:

The main contribution to the overall goal of gender equity and the empowerment of women and girls made by DACAAR is to mainstream gender into all aspects of its programme, policy, organisational development and public engagement.

Gender mainstreaming is an ongoing process that recognises that women, men, girls and boys have different roles and responsibilities in the society and hence have different needs, concerns and experiences. It enables an understanding of these differences, making it integral to all aspects of programming, policy, budget allocations and organisational development.

3. Gender Policy- goals and aims:

The goal of this Gender Policy is the- *'enhancement of gender equity and equality principles in meeting DACAAR's long term development objective of contributing to equitable and sustainable livelihoods of rural Afghans, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups'*

Levels of operating-
a. Programmes- at all levels and stages of the project cycle
b. Organisational Development (OD)
c. Advocacy and public information initiatives.

The following section indicates priority action points in each of these areas.

a) Programmes: Action Points:

- Develop tools for gender mainstreaming- such as gender analysis, the use of data disaggregated by sex and age, sector-specific gender surveys, as well as gender sensitive studies, guidelines and checklists for programming. Use these at all stages of programme and policy work -needs assessment, planning, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating.
- Review and revise existing programme strategies from a gender perspective to improve gender aspects into overall programming vision and planning.
- Promote greater attention to gender perspectives in the preparation of short term projects, long term plans and programme budgets.
- Develop programme specific gender indicators for all stages of project cycle and consider it for every project.
- Develop gender indicators for monitoring and evaluating; and from these develop gender focused learning indicators for DACAAR's ongoing work.
- Initiate and build women specific projects that improve their scope and quality of participation at improved levels of decision making, in addition to ensuring inclusion of gender dimension in ongoing programmes.

Gender Policy

- Develop gender inclusive approaches and methods for working with the targeted communities.
- Ensure resource allocation (people, budgets, time) to promote effective gender mainstreaming in programmes
- Build capacity of programme teams on gender issues relevant to the project/ programmes and equip them with specific skills to use gender mainstreaming tools and methods.
- Set up clear roles and responsibility of programme teams and other relevant members to ensure gender issues are included in all stages of project cycle.
- Develop links with groups/ networks/partners and associations that work on gender issues at national and local levels.
- Find creative and acceptable ways to engage with men and boys and other important stakeholders to make them significant promoters of gender mainstreaming.

b) Organisational Development: Action points

Structure-
- The final responsibility and decision making authority to implement the Gender Policy will lie with the Director of DACAAR, in consultation with the Senior Management Team (SMT).
- Commit adequate level of resources of people, time and finances at all levels of the organisation to operationalise the commitment made through this Gender Policy.
- Set up an internal operative structure, to ensure implementation and accountability to gender commitments made through this policy.
- Ensure that the structure is established, functional, adequately resourced and capacitated.
- Ensure functional efficiency of the structure, develop a mechanism called the Gender Auditing committee, comprising of the senior staff members both at Main Office and Regional level.

Process-
- Translate the Gender Policy into local language.
- Ensure widespread and ongoing visibility of the Gender Policy across the organisation and in our engagement with all key stakeholders. The pace and nature of this process will be defined by the different regional contexts- for example initially in some areas /regions/ communities this may be less acceptable and hence will require a slower and patient process of dialogue and engagement, while in others it may be more acceptable.
- Promote gender awareness and knowledge of gender issues as a significant, continuous learning area across all levels of the organisation.
- Develop clear gender sensitive indicators on OD issues and make all Human Resource (HR) systems, policies and procedures inclusive of, and responsive to them- including recruitments (will involve capacity building of panel members to ask and evaluate gender questions), job descriptions, job announcements, developing Terms of Reference (internal and external consultants) and performance appraisal systems.
- Share this Gender Policy and DACAAR's commitment to gender mainstreaming with *all* new employees as part of their induction programme.
- Explore creative ways to encourage employment of women in leadership positions and non-traditional roles.
- Set specific targets for the ratio of women to men employees at the main office and provincial offices across different staff categories.

Gender Policy

- Ensure that there is no discrimination in the distribution of, and access to, office facilities, employment benefits and opportunities such as ICT, transport, accommodation, salaries, promotions etc on the basis of gender.
- Develop policies and procedures to facilitate a working environment characterised by an awareness of, and respect for, specific needs of women employees to facilitate their ongoing development and motivation.
- Develop a clear set of gender benchmarks to measure, monitor and evaluate the gender mainstreaming progress.
- Ensure that all relevant trainings conducted in DACAAR are gender sensitive.
- Develop financial systems that maintain and report annually on gender related expenditure within DACAAR.

Organisational Culture-
- Gender commitments to be re-iterated through formal and informal processes including during the performance assessments processes, senior management level meetings, quarterly and annual reporting and other similar internal communication forums/events.
- Encourage and promote behaviours and attitudes that are respectful of gender mainstreaming principles.
- Establish spaces and mechanisms to raise gender specific concerns with special emphasis on women specific issues.
- Strong emphasis on process management skills (time management, team management, meeting management, document), as gender mainstreaming is a process.

c) Advocacy and public information initiatives: Action points
- Develop communications guidelines (both internal and external) that are respectful of gender principles.
- Ensure inclusion of gender dimensions in stories covered and communications developed on DACAAR's activities –both for internal and external newsletters.

4. How to implement gender policy-roles, responsibilities and operative mechanism
Gender mainstreaming is not a one off event or activity. It requires continuous re-iterating of the organisational commitment through diverse methods.

- After the finalisation of this policy it will be rolled out by the HR & Administration Department, under the leadership of the Director of DACAAR.
- In its initial stage, the process of creating awareness about the policy will be anchored within HR & Administration Department, under the leadership of the Director of DACAAR.
- Based on the initial response to the implementation of the policy, a review and revision will be considered after _One year_ of its roll out to accommodate contextual differences in various field work locations.
- A Gender Action Plan (GAP) that has specific activities consistent with the Gender Policy will be developed through a participatory process with the GWG. A regular update on this will be given to the Senior Management Team (SMT).

Operative Mechanism: This is the responsibility of all staff to implement the Gender Policy specially the staff in the managerial positions.

5

Gender Policy

The HR Team will facilitate the awareness raising in regards to the Gender Policy through conducting the trainings and orientation sessions to the newly recruited staff.

The Gender Focal Points: The Head of HR & Administration, in consultation with the Head Programme and Regional Managers will play the primary role in identifying and appointing the Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in the field and main offices. A detailed TOR for the GFPs will be developed.

5. The beneficiaries of the Gender Policy

- This Gender Policy applies to all employees across all DACAAR offices. It is to be integral to all aspects of their everyday work.
- The principles of the Gender Policy will also be applicable to all 'third party' associations that DACAAR engages in for the purpose of its work, i.e. with consultants, agencies/organisations in new partnerships/collaborations and the like.
- Other existing and new policies will be read/revised/drafted with the Gender Policy principles herein formulated.

DACAAR's Programme Framework Document: (2021 -2024):
Gender as Cross – cutting issue, # 3.4.
Goal: To ensure enhanced women participation in decision making and the contribution to growth and poverty reduction by influencing the underlying structures and cultural dynamics.

Implementation approaches # 5:
Gender-sensitive programming: Gender Equality will be central to DACAAR's work in 2021-2024. Its field teams already help to cultivate a network of male and female allies that are crucial to ensuring that women and girls' needs, and capacities are fully considered in all programmatic efforts, but more actions are needed:

Basic Concepts and Definitions:

Sex: biological/physical differences between girls and boys, women and men, based on their sexual and reproductive functions, which we are born with, are generally unchangeable.

Gender: refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men, girls and boys. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a girls or a boy, woman or a man in a given context.

Socialisation: is the process, by which roles are constructed. They indicate the expected behaviours for different members in a society such as girls, boys, women and men. It includes our beliefs, attitudes and practices.

Gender stereotypes: are ideas that people have on what women and men are better at or are more capable of doing. These stereotypes are unlikely to have

Gender Policy

been tested and are often a form of prejudice. For example, the statement 'women are better at housework than men.' Or 'men are more intelligent than women.'

Does gender matter?

Gender matters. Women, men, girls and boys experience violence, conflict, and displacement differently and hence respond differently to them. Gender roles differ across cultures, and change across age and over time. Women, girls, boys and men have different needs, strengths and capacities and so do different ethnic groups, groups with different socio-economic and legal status. In addition, the differences in needs and capacities between different gender groups are very likely to change in a conflict and/or displacement situation.

Gender needs to be understood clearly as a cross-cutting variable that needs to be applied to all other cross-cutting variables such as environment, age, disability, protection race, class, ethnicity etc.

Gender issues cannot be addressed effectively unless women and men, girls and boys are equally included as equals in challenging roles and expectations that create unequal and often discriminatory practices.

What is gender mainstreaming?

It was adopted globally in 1995 at the Beijing Platform for Action to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women. *Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a measure to achieve the goals of gender equality.*

Mainstreaming of women does not mean developing separate women's projects within work programmes, or even women's components within existing activities in the work programmes. It requires that attention is given to gender perspectives as a key aspect of all activities across all programmes. This involves making gender questions – what women and men do, resources and decision-making processes they have access to – more central to all policy development, research, advocacy, development, planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of projects.

Mainstreaming women in gender mainstreaming: These are complementary to each other and equally important. Women-specific initiatives can create an empowering space for women and can be a place where they can try new ideas and pilot projects before transferring them to the mainstream space. It is crucial to understand that these two strategies - gender mainstreaming and women's specific project - are in no way in competition; neither do they replace each other. Women's projects may be regarded as a sub-part of the larger gender mainstreaming strategy within an organisation

Gender equity and gender equality: These two are often confused but are totally different.

Gender equity is the fair distribution of resources and benefits between girls and boys, women and men to ensure equal outcome between them.

It refers to 'what' is done to make things equal.

Gender equality: refers to 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 and men's right*s*, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

This explores the reason 'why' things are unequal and then formulates process and outcomes to ensure equality.

Gender equality involves ensuring that the perceptions, interests, needs and priorities of women and men (which can be very different because of the differing roles and responsibilities of women and men) will be given equal weight in planning and decision-making.

Gender Programming: means taking into account gender differences in all stages of the project cycle from design to evaluation. It involves an understanding that men and women may want different things and that outcomes may also be different between men and women. No programme work is gender neutral.

I hereby approve the Gender Policy contained of 8 pages.

Best Regards

[signature]

John Morse
DACAAR, Director

Gender Policy