

NPO GOVERNANCE TOOL BOX SERIES

Vol. 5, Issue 4

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POLICIES – GENDER POLICY



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GENDER POLICY

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1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Until the 21st century, the organizational policies were largely concentrated on the expansion of the business operations. Consideration to workplace safety gained less attention since women were not frequently involved in the business activities. Women joining the professional sectors were limited to teaching and nursing. After the post industrial revolution and social movements, women began to enter the occupational and professional careers to supplement the rising needs of the family. Gradually the need based involvement of women in the industry shifted to interest based involvement in the top notch professions which impacted the choices of hiring amongst organizations. They became more open and flexible in acquiring women employees and were looked from a macro perspective then being a homemaker. This change in the mindsets halted the myths and assumptions concerning the difference of masculinity & femininity and ensuring that both genders have equal rights, authority, power and access to different set of resources.

2 HOW TO MEASURE SUCH EQUALITY

But now the question arises, how such equality in the organization or any workplace is achieved and measured? One possible solution could be formulating a comprehensive Gender Policy covering all key issues necessary in ensuring the equal rights, participation and access to men and women in the organization.

A well drafted and properly disseminated Gender Policy demonstrates the level of transparency and attention given to gender equality in the organization by the top management. The term 'Gender' has a wide scope to cover than just by limiting to the total number of women involved in the organization. A sound Gender Policy represents the organization's commitment to gender equality and incorporation of sensitivity involved with each staff member in the day to day decision making processes. In fact, Gender Policy is a comprehensive term which determines the protocol for a healthy workplace, lays guidelines on conduct with internal and external stakeholders, manner in which the private lives of the staff are taken into account and social complexities associated with a staff's background. Thus, all the areas affecting workplace is part of Gender Policy. *The 'Gender Policy' acts as a blueprint for the top management to integrate and promote gender equality within its organizational culture and programmatic operations.*

3 WHAT IS A GENDER POLICY?

Gender Policy is a set of principles and ideal practices applied across different levels of employment in the organization to build a healthy workplace culture and equality among all employees. The policy also provides a framework for action to ensure that the staff are equally treated and given full access to different resources and opportunities. The policy also focuses on 'mainstreaming' of gender both in implementation work as well as in the decision making processes. Gender Equality Tool of International Labour Organization (ILO) explains the degree of mainstreaming of genders '*Mainstreaming is not about adding a "woman's component" or even a "gender equality component" into an existing activity. It goes beyond increasing women's participation; it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear on the development agenda*'. The main objective of the policy is to maximize Fair Equitable participation and free access by all employees to key work areas in the organization.



4 RELEVANCE OF GENDER POLICY IN THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

The Constitution of India under Article 15 prohibits the state from discriminating on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth in various day-to-day activities; and Article 39 urges the state to ensure that citizens, men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood, right to shelter, food, education and work. Gender equality is a global phenomenon with international community taking initiatives in fostering this positive change in all spheres of life.

IMPORTANT LAWS TO BE KEPT IN FOCUS WHILE DEVELOPING A 'GENDER POLICY'

- *Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women 1993,*
- *Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1993*
- *Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013*
- *Vishaka Guidelines against Sexual Harassment at Workplace - Guidelines and norms laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Vishaka and Others Vs. State of Rajasthan and Others (JT 1997 (7) SC 384)*

India is also one of the many countries, which has ratified the Convention on elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) bill in 1993, making it legally bound to put its provisions in practice. By accepting the Convention, India has committed to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:¹

- To incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- To establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination;
- To ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

With the rise in easy access to technology and higher participation of western countries in the developing nations, Gender Policy has started getting due push and impetus. The existing NGO sector in India is unstructured and widely spread across far flung rural to cosmopolitan regions. Gender policy is a niche concept and not spoken much in the development sector as it is presumed to be followed by the organizations. In development sector, it becomes even more essential to create and implement a gender policy as the main forte is to empower vulnerable communities. Thus, developing an ethical and equal workplace is a must for implementing the welfare projects downward in the target locations. Every employee of the organization is a key player especially when the organization is working with and for the empowerment of communities.

Therefore Gender Policy should not be treated as a small section or chapter in the Human Resource Policy, in fact it should have its own space with clear set of principles, actions plan and a committee to resolve gender specific issues in the organization to which employees of all levels must adhere to.

¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

5 SPECIFIC PURPOSES OF GENDER POLICY

- To serve as a framework for maximizing fair and equitable access to opportunities in terms of Ownership, Leadership, Representation and Governance.
- To clarify roles and responsibilities of each position and level in the organization irrespective of the gender.
- To establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for handling grievances related to gender inequality.
- To form a committee equipped with adequate authority in order to take required action in case of any grievance or breach of provisions of the gender policy.
- To ensure compliance with the law of the land.

6 USERS OF GENDER POLICY

Gender Policy talks about the inherent values of an organization which covers wide range of stakeholders such as:

- I. Board
- II. Top Management
- III. Staff
- IV. External Agencies/ Donors
- V. Resource Partners
- VI. Any other person prescribed by the organization

The above mentioned stakeholders are expected to familiarize themselves with the conduct of the Gender Policy/Manual governing the code for a healthy and equal opportunity based workplace.

7 POTENTIAL AREAS UNDER THE POLICY

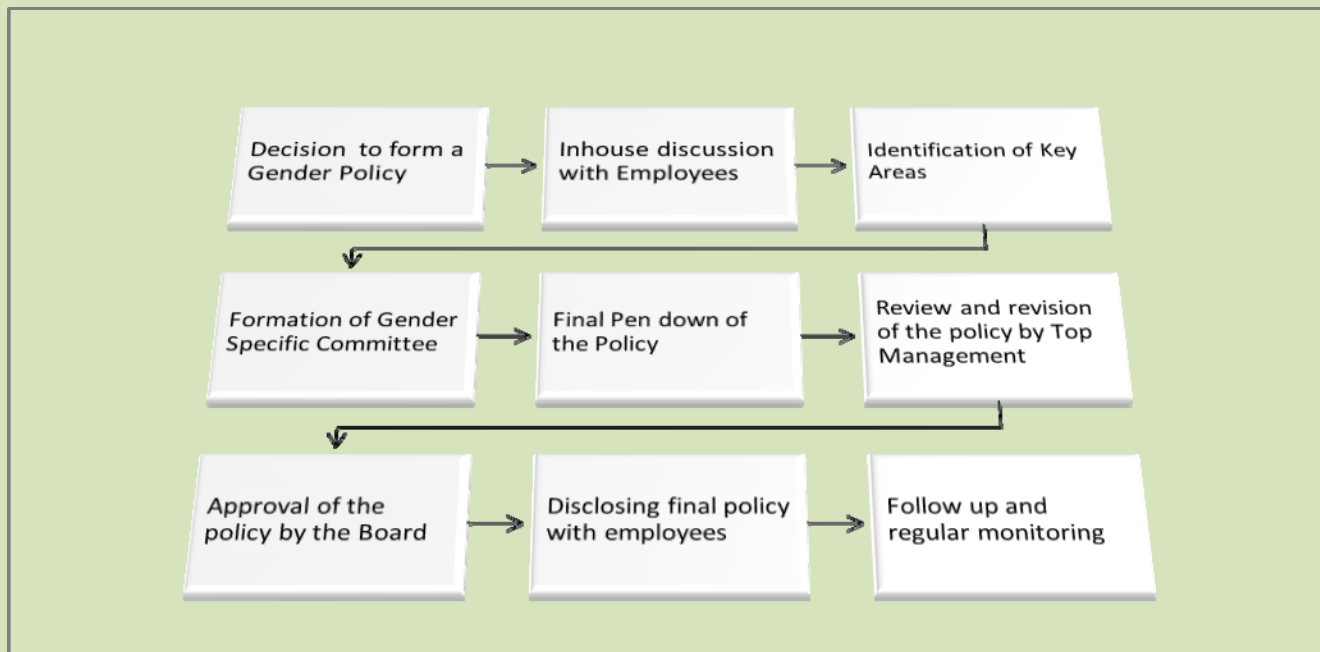
<p>Recruitment and Retention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Open dissemination of recruitment process, job description and work delivery expectations, -Fair selection process based on the requirement of the position, skills, experience, and knowledge of the candidate, -Fair and Equal monetary compensation to the selected candidate irrespective of the gender, -Organizing skill and performance analysis of all employees on regular basis to ensure the work performed by each employee is duly valued, -Providing Training and Development opportunities to all employees.
<p>Promotions and Growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conducting analysis of the number of promotions for both women and men annually, -Consider employees on parental leave for promotion, -Proper communication of opportunities for promotion so as to be easily accessed by all employees throughout the organization.
<p>Training and Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Implement mentoring or sponsorship programs in non-traditional areas for women particularly, -Conduct analysis on the number of women and men accessing training and development programs, -Ensure all employees have an annual career discussion with their senior managers that includes an annual training and development plan.

<p>Termination / Resignation</p>	<p>-To implement a process for capturing exit interview data for each employee to identify the correct of reason for termination or resignation,</p> <p>-To implement a process for tracking and comparing the number of women and men resigning from the organization.</p>
<p>Safety, and Freedom from Violence</p>	<p>-Ensuring the safety of female employees in the workplace, including travel to and from the workplace,</p> <p>-Prohibition and prevention of all forms of violence in the workplace, including verbal, physical, and sexual harassment,</p> <p>-Ensure flexible working conditions for women employees.</p>
<p>Equal participation in the Management and Governance</p>	<p>-Ensure fair representation of men and women in the Board, and Top Management,</p> <p>-Providing due responsibility and authority to all members of the board and management to initiate and execute given task.</p>

8 DEVELOPING A 'GENDER POLICY'

Generally, it is the *Human Resource Department* which is responsible for preparing the Gender policy taking the vision, mission and objectives of the organization into consideration. In some organizations a separate committee is formed to look into gender specific issues. The draft of the policy is then shared with the senior management for further feedback. After thorough reviews and revisions, the policy is approved by the Board.

9 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK



Once a strategic level planning through interactive sessions by top management is held and the same is transparently disseminated to all stakeholders mainly employees, it goes to the concerned department mainly HR department to identify the key areas that would form part of the policy in consultation with staff members.

After the initial exercise to form a Gender policy, process of selecting the committee members begin. The members selected should include staff from all levels, genders and diverse experience. While forming the committee members, below mentioned areas should be considered and disclosed to other staff members:

- Process of formation and selection criteria of the committee members,
- Mandate, Powers, Responsibilities, Authorities and different functions of the Committee Members,
- Recording of the meetings and agenda discussed during the respective meetings,
- Clearly specify the names and contact details of the members,
- Implementation framework of changes brought forward by the committee in this regard at the office and field level.

Further, it is essential the committee should develop a separate framework for the field staff that generally operates in far located disadvantaged areas.

Once the basic background is ready, it goes to the final assigned team to get it structured. If required external expertise can also be sought. The Gender Policy should cover internal, institutional, external service delivery issues as well as the issues arising in the field area.

Further, the draft policy is discussed and reviewed by top management and respective committee members before being approved by the Board members. Once the policy is approved by the Board it is shared and disclosed down to the employees.

10 KEY POINTERS WHILE DEVELOPING A GENDER POLICY

- A. Commitment to gender equality through a Board statement or comparably prominent means,
- B. Display the commitment in the workplace with due emphasis and make it available to all employees in a readily accessible form,
- C. Establish benchmarks to measure and monitor progress towards gender equality and report results publicly,
- D. Establish a clear, unbiased, non-retaliatory grievance policy allowing employees to comment or complain about their treatment in the workplace,
- E. Engage in constructive dialogue with stakeholder groups, including employees, non-governmental organizations, business associations, donors customers, and the media on progress in implementing the organization's commitment to gender equality.

11 CONCLUSION

Every organization has people from different walks of life and can have different approaches and opinions about various issues pertaining to Gender prospect. Some might not be comfortable to discuss these issues and others just overlook the long term repercussions of non-adherence of such policies.

Thus, it is imperative to understand the significance associated with the adverse effects of not adhering to the provisions of Gender Policy particularly the legal and reputational consequences. Looking at the upcoming global concerns over disadvantaged genders business operations cannot be performed in isolation. Also the policy should be in conformity with national, regional and international legal compliances specially if it funded by foreign sources. Stakeholders are now much more vigilant and participative in selecting its partners. Therefore, an issue which seems small might not be the way it appears. Moreover, maintaining a healthy workplace will contribute to the upward growth of the organization and assist the top management to retain its employees for a longer period. A good Gender Policy is an indispensable tool for ensuring fair working environment which is free from all forms of discrimination. Once the key components of the policy are finalized, it should be disclosed to all the employees and stakeholders for due adherence and practice in day to day operations.

Therefore Gender Policy should not be treated as a small section or chapter in the Human Resource Policy, in fact it should have its own space with clear set of principles, actions plan and a committee to resolve gender specific issues in the organization to which employees of all levels must adhere to.

12- SAMPLE POLICIES OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS PARTICULARLY FOR NGO SECTOR

12.1 Action Aid

https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/doc_lib/119_1_gender_policy.pdf

12.2. Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN), India

http://www.wassan.org/about_wassan/gender_policy.htm

12.3 TEAR, Australia

<https://www.tear.org.au/static/files/common/policyGender.pdf>

12.4 BRAC, Bangladesh

[https://www.brac.net/sites/default/files/Gender%20Policy \(English\).pdf](https://www.brac.net/sites/default/files/Gender%20Policy%20(English).pdf)

12.5 AMREF Health, Africa

<http://amref.org/silo/files/amref-gender-policy-and-guidelines.pdf>

ANNEXURE

SAMPLE FORMAT OF GENDER POLICY

1. About the Organization
2. Rationale for Gender Policy
3. Goal and Objective of the Policy
4. National and international trends (keeping the Gender and Development agenda in consideration)
5. Scope of the policy
 - 5.1 Brief description of the Policy
 - 5.2 Goals and Objectives of the Policy
 - 5.3 Guiding Principles/ Issues taken up in the Policy
 - 5.3.1 Recruitment and Retention**
 - A. Likely sub-areas along with the detail of activities covered under the Principle/Issue
 - B .The team responsible for implementing this principle (for example HR Head)
 - C. Likely Action plan in case of any breach of the principle
 - 5.3.2 Promotion and Growth**
 - A. Likely sub-areas along with the detail of activities covered under the principle/Issue
 - B .The team responsible for implementing this principle
 - C. Likely Action plan in case of any breach of the principle
 - 5.3.3 Training and Development**
 - A. Likely sub-areas along with the detail of activities covered under the principle/Issue
 - B .The team responsible for implementing this principle
 - C. Likely Action plan in case of any breach of the principle
 - 5.3.4 Termination / Resignation**
 - A. Likely sub-areas along with the detail of activities covered under the principle/Issue
 - B .The team responsible for implementing this principle
 - C. Likely Action plan in case of any breach of the principle
 - 5.3.5 Safety, and Freedom from Violence**
 - A. Likely sub-areas along with the detail of activities covered under the principle/Issue
 - B .The team responsible for implementing this principle
 - C. Likely Action plan in case of any breach of the principle

5.3.6 Equal participation in the Management and Governance

- A. Likely sub-areas along with the detail of activities covered under the principle/Issue
- B. The team responsible for implementing this principle
- C. Likely Action plan in case of any breach of the principle

6 Formation of Gender Committee and its detailed Functions including

- A. Process of formation, Mandate, list of committee members, meetings
- B. Description of likely roles & responsibilities, rotation of members
- C. Implementation Framework for any new change forwarded by the committee

7 Detail of Action Plan in case of identified Gaps

8 Follow up Mechanism

9 Reporting of significant impact of the Policy in the day to day operations

—XXXX—

Watch out for the next issue on “Policies – Gender Policy”



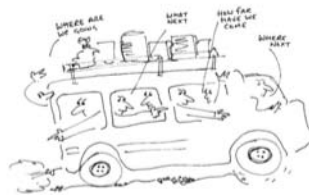
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