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## **Gender Policy of Human Rights Law Network**

### **Introduction**

This policy document represents the organizational commitment to gender equality. The document shall be read as gender policy of the organization which contains the principles and objectives that would guide HRLN's work and interventions as well as work environment within the organization with a gender perspective. The document also reflects upon gender mainstreaming strategies which would help the organization to realize the goal of gender equality within the organization and in its work.

HRLN is strongly committed to ensuring gender equality and equity within the organisation and all kind of interventions it undertakes. We have made efforts to mainstream gender and equity concerns into our work, and hence we do not have a separate cell within the organization that deals with women's empowerment issues, rather all the activities of the organization are supposed to be guided by concerns about gender, equity and democracy. This policy aims towards helping the organisation in reinforcing its commitment towards promoting gender equality and is fundamental for all policies and policy decisions made by the organisation to achieve the above goal.

The following three major areas are addressed and outlined in the Gender Policy:

- Goal, principles and objectives of gender policy
- Gender mainstreaming strategies
- Accountability and implementation mechanisms

### **Key words:**

#### **Gender concerns**

By gender concerns we mean all forms of discrimination, injustice experienced in terms of access to opportunities, decision-making, benefits, resources on the grounds of sex, class, caste, race and religion.

#### **Gender mainstreaming**

Developing a common understanding on gender and gender relations, equity, equality, social justice and based on this understanding developing interventions/strategies and implementing the interventions/strategies into actions which contributes towards achieving the above.

#### **Gender equality**

This means that both men and women members in the organization enjoy equal opportunities, responsibilities, benefits and resources at all levels of work and decision-making process.

*This note is meant as a draft for further discussion among staff and Trustee members of HRLN.*

## **Principles and Objectives**

Within the organization there exists deep concerns and commitment to work towards gender rights, empowerment, equality and social justice. However, in the context of the organization facing new challenges everyday and with stepping into new areas of intervention, challenges remains in strengthening the capacity to mainstream a gender perspective. This policy aims to articulate the broad principles, objectives and main areas of the gender mainstreaming strategy of organization and the approach to implement these.

### **Basic Principles:**

We will work towards the goal of gender equality and equity by:

- Deepening our understanding of gender and gender relations.
- Giving emphasis and working towards women's empowerment and gender equality both within the organization interventions as well as within the organization.
- Promoting equal opportunities in all spheres; in it's own recruitment procedures, in the terms and conditions of employment for existing staff and in staff personnel development policy and committed to having a healthy gender balance in the organizational team and creating a gender equal work environment.
- Enhancing organizational capacity to achieve these aims.
- Devoting adequate resources (including human, information and time resources) for their realization.

### **The objectives of gender policy are outlined as follows:**

- To adopt and develop approach and strategy promoting gender equality within the organization and into all kind of interventions based on common understanding on gender rights and equality.
- To develop strategy for incorporating gender perspective into all kinds of work to ensure that the interventions undertaken by the organisation helps in promoting gender equality.
- To develop institutional capacity and knowledge to enable gender mainstreaming within the organization.
- To create a healthy work environment within the organization where every individual (both men and women) share equal opportunities and benefits, equitable participation at all levels of decision-making and is considered as an equal member and work without any discrimination.
- To help in gender mainstreaming for realizing the aim into practice.

### **Gender mainstreaming approach**

The mandate of mainstreaming gender shall be carried out in both areas, within the organisation's interventions as well as within the organization. Our approach comprises of working out strategies and systems in the organization that helps in

increased understanding on gender and gender relations, issues, capacity enhancement of the members to enable mainstreaming gender and equity concerns into work etc. Efforts are also made to ensure that gender issues/concerns get high priority in all kinds of work and that the outcomes of interventions in different areas has a positive influence contributing to women empowerment and gender equality in natural resource management and sustainable livelihoods.

### **Gender mainstreaming strategies and actions:**

The following are the important strategies to facilitate gender mainstreaming at different levels:

#### **a. Gender mainstreaming within the organisation**

##### **Broad strategies:**

- The organization shall always strive towards achieving a gender balance within the team and create a gender equal healthy work environment which encourages women members to join in.
- Gender awareness and understanding along with knowledge on the concerned area will be given emphasis during recruitment of new member(s) in different thematic team(s) of the organization.
- Efforts shall be made to ensure equitable participation of all the members of the organisation (without any discrimination on gender lines) at all levels of decision-making process.
- Ensure and provide support for proper and fair working of the gender cell to address gender related issues/concerns, create a healthy gender work environment and improve gender relations within the organisation.
- Ensure availability of adequate resources (human, financial and information) at all levels for translating these goals and principles in practice.
- To facilitate and ensure that gender mainstreaming within the organisation is implemented effectively the organisation would undertake the following actions. This includes preparation of organisational plan for increasing gender sensitivity and capacity building of the staff members, which shall form a part of the overall organisational personnel development plan. The gender cell of the organisation shall be primarily responsible for implementation of the capacity building plan.
- Orientation of new staff members on gender policy of the organization forming a part of the induction program.
- Capacity building of the staff members in collection of gender disaggregated information, use of gender sensitive analysis and gender planning.
- Encourage the staff members to undertake gender studies, short-term courses on gender concepts, gender relations and it's relevance etc. as a step towards building up gender expertise within the team.
- Provision of gender trainings, orientation workshops, adequate support and guidance to all the staff members to improve their understanding and

strengthening of competency and knowledge regarding gender mainstreaming.

- Organise formal and informal meetings/discussions of the members on gender related issues and concerns and approach and strategies to deal with emerging issues in different thematic areas at regular period of intervals.
- Ensure implementation of policies relating to maternity leave, paternity leave, health insurance, working hours etc. geared towards creating a gender equal work environment. Undertake efforts to improve these policies as and whenever required aimed towards achieving the above objective.
- Undertake strategies to reactivate the women cell which shall function more like a **gender cell** with a mandate of addressing concerns of members of both the gender and creating a gender a healthy work environment within the organisation.

## **b. Gender mainstreaming into work/interventions**

### **Broad strategies:**

- Demonstrate commitment to gender equality in all kinds of interventions undertaken by the organization and ensure that these interventions support the promotion of gender equality.
- Ensure full participation and empowerment and capacity building of women in all areas of work.
- Capacity building of other civil society actors to address gender issues and work for increasing women's involvement in natural resources management.
- To ensure gender mainstreaming in work following areas would be given priority:
- The planning process in all thematic areas shall emphasise on gender planning and analysis in all kinds of work and implement the plans in the field. The planning shall also include developing specific indicators to assess the implications of interventions towards gender equality.
- Capacity building of other civil society actors that play a key role in natural resources management to address gender issues through trainings, orientation workshops etc.
- Undertake a process of regular assessments/evaluations of the likely impact of the interventions on improving gender relations, empowerment, gender equality etc. and accordingly revise or improve strategies to move in the above-mentioned directions.
- Building up and strengthening linkages with alliances and networks especially working on women issues and develop understanding through cross-learning and experience sharing.

### **At individual level:**

- Ensure implementation of organization's policy and perspective related to gender into actions.
- Ensure to be informed about the gender policy of the organization

- Ensure that personal behaviour doesn't affect the dignity of other persons within the organization
- Give respect to fellow member's work, problems etc.

### **Welfare and security provisions**

HRLN gives emphasis on welfare and security of the staff members. The policies especially relating to working hours, women cell, maternity leave and paternity leave etc. provides a healthy work environment for the women staff within the organization.

### **Working hours**

Out of total of six working days in a week five working days are of eight official hours and one day is followed as half day keeping in consideration gender concerns.

### **Gender cell**

The women cell constituted to address sexual harassment of women staff at work place shall function practically as a gender cell within the organisation. It shall address issues concerning the members of both the gender. The cell also has a mandate to work towards improving the gender environment in the organisation.

### **Maternity leave**

The organization has a provision of three months maternity leave for the female staff. The leave is extendable to two months more on the condition that the concerned member is willing to continue with her work in the organization.

### **Paternity leave**

The organization provides 15 days paternity leave to male staff immediately after his spouse has delivered a child.

### **Implementation and Accountability**

All staff shall be responsible for reflecting the principles and objectives adopted by the organization relating to gender equality in their work and behaviour. HRLN shall always strive to apply and adhere to the same principles and objectives inside the organization as those promoted outside it.

### **Review process:**

The programme staff shall be responsible to ensure routinely review of implementation of gender mainstreaming within interventions. This shall entail the process of review facilitated by the thematic teams in their respective area of work of the gender mainstreaming approach and strategies followed and impact of the interventions on gender equality, which shall represent the overall organizational commitment to gender equality.

### **Indicators and parameters:**

It will be ensured that the planning process include preparation of measurable indicators to evaluate the outputs of interventions in order to be able to follow-up and review the impacts. These indicators shall include both quantitative as well as qualitative and shall be developed in all the thematic areas. Some of these indicators which would be widely used for assessment of our position are:

**Achieving gender equality within the organization:**

- Frequency of meeting of gender cell
- Frequency of gender concerns, issues featuring in the discussions
- Follow-up actions undertaken on issues discussed
- Participation in workshop/trainings by the staff members
- Number of orientation-cum-workshops, discussions held within the organization and level of participation of the members
- Team composition (gender ratio) within the organization
- Incidences of gender related case
- Leadership roles
- Accommodation of gender concerns in organizational policies related to work environment, benefits and security, recruitment etc.
- Staff members pursuing academic course such as gender studies, short-term courses etc.

**Achieving gender equality in our work/interventions:**

- Collection and analysis of gender disaggregated information and impacts undertaken in all areas
- Reflection on gender issues in our interventions, publications and reports
- Participation of marginalized women and men in planning process
- Participation of marginalized women and men in the meetings organized
- Involvement of target group in different kinds of intervention
- Leadership roles
- Linkages established with women forums/alliances and sharing of experiences, learning

HRLN practices a process and result assessment system which also helps to monitor the strategies and implications of processes towards gender quality in the organization as well as in work.

**Follow-up and monitoring:**

The programme staff shall be responsible for implementation of the policy document in their day-to-day work and activities and shall be accountable for the outreach and impact of its objectives. In order to monitor the strategies and implications of the processes towards women empowerment and gender equality the thematic team shall use the process and result assessment system and undertake follow-up actions.

## Reflection exercises

**In every two year** perspective planning meeting is organized to reflect on vision, mission, emerging issues, approach and response of the organization. Alongwith, overall organizational intervention emphasis shall be given on the organizational commitment towards gender equality and emerging issues, strategies and implications of initiatives undertaken in this regard. Besides, the annual organizational planning shall also include a detailed exercise undertaken on these areas and it shall be ensured that the gender perspective is incorporated in each work of the organization.

Other than organizing reflection on gender concerns in work, in-house self-reflection exercise of all the members shall be held annually. This shall enable in identifying the areas of gender concerns within the organization structures, policies, assessing gender sensitivity among the members and areas of improvement of gender sensitivity and skill enhancement for the members. External resource person having expertise on gender and organizational development can be invited to facilitate such programme within the organization.

## Who are the implementers and users of the gender policy?

The policy is designed to be used by all the programme and administrative staff and management in their everyday work as a reference for planning, decision making and implementation of interventions.

As such, the staff members and the management are the primary stakeholders of this policy. Besides, the other stakeholders include community with whom we are working under the fold of different interventions.

## Specific action-plans:

We shall work towards the objectives described in this policy by undertaking the broad actions mentioned below. It may be noted here that the policy document only mentions about the broad areas of action and the document shall be used in preparing a detailed action plan which shall form a part of the annual organisational activity plan and personnel development plan.

<b>Specific actions</b>	<b>Period</b>
Orientation workshop to develop understanding on gender concepts, gender relations, issues and concerns, gender mainstreaming, rights, international conventions and	<i>Annually</i>

resolutions etc.	
Orientation of new staff members on gender policy as a part of induction program	<i>At the time of joining of new members in the organization</i>
Reflection on gender concerns, approach, strategies in overall organizational intervention with planning of specific indicators for assessment	<i>Shall be carried out during annual organizational planning and perspective planning(held once in two years)</i>
Review of approach and strategies and assessment of implications of interventions in thematic areas	<i>Quarterly</i>
In-house self-reflection exercise of all the members	<i>Annually</i>
Training of civil society actors and others on gender issues	<i>Annually</i>
Capacity enhancement of staff members on gender planning and budgeting, collection and analysis of gender disaggregated information etc.	<i>Atleast two members from the organization representing different thematic teams shall participate in training organized by outside institutions/organizations in a year</i>
<i>Building up gender expertise within the team</i>	<i>Atleast one member shall be encouraged to undertake relevant short-term course, gender studies etc. every year</i>