Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society

(STARS)

Gender Equality / Equity Policy and Guide

1. Introduction - STARS

1.1. Policy Statement of STARS

Gender is used to describe those characteristics of women and men, which are socially constructed, while sex refers to those which are biologically determined. People are born female or male but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. This learned behavior makes up gender identity and determines gender roles.
Gender analysis identifies analyses and informs action to address inequalities that arise from the different roles of women and men, or the unequal power relationships between them and the consequences of these inequalities on their lives, their health and well-being. The way power is distributed in most societies means that women have less access to and control over resources to protect their health and are less likely to be involved in decision-making.
Gender analysis in health often highlights how inequalities disadvantage women's health, the constraints women face to attain health and ways to address and overcome these. Gender analysis also reveals health risks and problems which men face as a result of the social construction of their roles.
Gender equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex in opportunities, in the allocation of resources and benefits or in access to services.

Gender equity refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. The concept recognizes that women and men have different needs and power and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalance between the sexes.

Gender mainstreaming defines mainstreaming gender as "...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or program, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and social spheres, such that inequality between men and women is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality

Men and women must have equal rights and opportunities in all areas of the economy and society if real sustainable economic and social development is to be achieved. Furthermore, gender discrimination is a violation of fundamental human rights.

From STARS point of view society prescribes to women and men different roles in different social contexts. There are also differences in the opportunities and resources available to women and men, and in their ability to make decisions and exercise their human rights, including those related to protecting health and seeking care in case of ill health. Gender roles and unequal gender relations interact with other social and economic variables, resulting in different and sometimes inequitable patterns of exposure to health risk, and in differential access to and utilization of health information, care and services. These differences, in turn have clear impact on health outcomes. Evidence documenting the multiple connections between gender and health

is rapidly growing.

The donors recognize that not all projects will lead to a maximum impact on gender equality. However, the inclusion of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue of the financial mechanisms acknowledges the fact that to be effective the grants available through the financial mechanisms should include gender equality considerations.

1.2. Scope

The purpose of STARS in this document is to provide guidance as to how the activities carried out under the mechanisms shall contribute to furthering gender equality.

Furthermore, this document, as with the other cross-cutting policy documents and checklist, is intended to give applicants a better understanding of the cross-cutting issues. Together, these documents indicate how gender equality considerations, and the considerations of the other cross-cutting issues, will be evaluated by the senior management and for the project applications both in terms of their eligibility and suitability.

This gender equality policy is intended to be complementary to the strategies of other actors with similar objectives to prevent the act in Afghanistan. The policy has been developed based on the legal frameworks, combined with input from a number of these organizations.

1.3 Goal and Objectives:

The goal of STARS gender policy is to contribute to better health for both women and men, through health research, policies and programs which give due attention to gender considerations and promote equity and equality between women and men. STARS will analyses and address gender issues in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs, projects and research in order to achieve the following objectives:

- increase coverage, effectiveness and efficiency of interventions;
- promote equity and equality between women and men, throughout the life course, and ensure that interventions do not promote inequitable gender roles relations;
- provide qualitative and quantitative information on the influence of gender on health and health care; and
- Support Member States on how to undertake gender-responsive planning, implementation and evaluation of policies, programs, and projects in Afghanistan.

These objectives will be achieved through the incorporation of gender analysis in the work of STARS at Headquarters, and in Regional Offices. This analysis will examine the differences in the relationships between women and men and their roles, and how these differences impact on:

- protective and risk factors;
- access to resources to promote and protect mental and physical health,

including information, education, technology and services;

- the manifestations, severity and frequency of disease, as well as health outcomes;
- the social and cultural conditions of ill health/ disease;
- the response of health systems and services;
- the roles of women and men as formal and informal health care providers.

This analysis will include identification of ways to overcome constraints so that improved health outcomes for women and men can be achieved.

2. Gender equality - definition

In respect to the financial mechanisms, the donors understand the term 'gender equality' to mean:

> *"That all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles; that the different behavior, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally considered, valued and favored".*

Implementing gender equality fully requires equal representation and participation of both men and women in the economy, decision-making, as well as in social, cultural and civil life. Only in this way will men and women reach their full potential in society. It implies a fair distribution of resources between men and women, the redistribution of power and caring responsibilities, and freedom from gender-based violence.

Closely linked to the concept of gender equality, is that of gender mainstreaming. Gender equality cannot be achieved by dealing with the issues of one gender seen in isolation from those of the other, nor from those of society as a whole. Hence, gender mainstreaming is used in order to ensure that gender issues are dealt with at all levels and at all stages. It involves all general policies and measures, so that they may specifically bring about equality by actively and openly taking into account, at the planning stage, their effects on the respective situations of women and men in implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

3. Key dimensions of Gender equality

STARS believe in the considerable progress which has been made regarding gender equality in the beneficiary states of the financial mechanisms; however formal rights do not necessarily reflect actual rights/rights in practice. This consideration - combined with persistent under-representation of women in politics and economic leadership, as well as violence against and trafficking in women - shows that despite the legal framework, structural inequalities persist.

Although the dimensions of gender equality often contain overlapping elements and may be divided in different ways, for the purposes of the financial mechanisms they have been broadly grouped into the following categories:

- economic and social rights
- human rights
- prevention of violence
- participation and decision-making

The overlapping characteristics of the categories listed naturally results in the outcomes not being linked to a specific category of gender equality, but rather that activities in one area are likely to have outcomes in one or more of the others.

3.1. Economic and social rights

The essence of the economic rights element of this dimension of gender equality is that women and men must have the opportunity to participate equally in economic development. It entails the full integration of women into the economy and is therefore very closely linked to social rights. The economic dimension of gender equality is also found to some extent in both of the other two categories of gender equality listed below. Failure to protect social rights relates directly to the feminization of poverty, which emerges as a result of dated models that do not take into account the family role. This can be due to career breaks, part time work, lack of education and training, etc.

By its very nature, there is a wide range of activities relating to economic and social rights in gender equality. Initiatives that may contribute to the inclusion of gender equality issues into the economic dimension include:

- eliminating gender gaps in the labor market,
- equal pay for equal work,
- access to education,
- Provision of day-care facilities, more flexible work environments, etc.

Initiatives that promote gender equality in social rights may include such initiatives that take into account parental leave, maternity protection, working time, part-time and fixed -term contracts, and particularly those that impact women's daily life such as public transport, public health, etc. Due to the nature of economic and social rights in gender equality, the initiatives in these areas are closely linked.

3.2. Human rights

As affirmed at the UN Conference on Human Rights, and reaffirmed at the UN World Conference on Women, women's rights are human rights; they are not a special category of rights in every country so why not in Afghanistan. Hence this dimension of gender equality relates to the issue of the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all nation of Afghanistan. This element focuses predominantly on women's of Afghanistan who are subject to multiple types of discrimination.

3.3. Prevention of violence

This dimension includes issues relating to all Afghan women who face gender-based violence, domestic violence/violence in intimate relationships, and sexual exploitation. However, this dimension relates not only to the prevention of gender-based violence, but also to support to those that have been the victim of such violence. Furthermore, issues relating to reproductive rights and sexual health also fall under this category. Initiatives include those activities that seek to reduce discrimination, promote women's rights as human rights and prevent trafficking in women.

3.4. Participation and decision-making

This dimension includes representation and participation in decision-making both at a political and an economic level. The political level encompasses the equal participation and representation of women in the societal systems and local decision-making processes, including elections. Decision-making at an economic level relates to the step from education and training into working life, including recruitment and career development aspects.

There is a general under-representation of women in all areas of decision-making, which represents a fundamental democratic deficit. Initiatives include, among others activities, promotion of the involvement of women in political, economic and social decision-making at all levels.

4. Gender equality in the Grants

Experience among that promoting gender equality STARS has shown that it is insufficient to work only with gender equality- oriented projects. Gender equality issues must be a part of entire processes, policies and actions. Care must also been taken to secure the focus on gender equality throughout the project cycle. Therefore, gender equality is defined as a cross-cutting issue that is evaluated in all project applications of the financial mechanisms. However, the notion of gender equality may also exist as the key focus of a project; an element without which the project would not exist. In such cases, it will naturally be appraised on a full set of project indicators and hence falls outside the scope of this policy.

4.1. As a cross-cutting issue

Gender equality is one of four cross-cutting issues identified for projects supported by the financial mechanisms. The cross-cutting issues are:

- Sustainable development
- Good governance
- Gender equality
- Bilateral relations

Gender equality is inextricably linked to the other cross-cutting issues. On a broad level, without gender equality, sustainable development cannot be achieved. Moreover, gender equality is an inherent component of good governance, without which there would be an inefficient use of a country's resources and good governance could not be achieved.

The involvement and the full and equal participation of both women and men are crucial aspects of economic and social development, if effective and sustainable development is to be achieved. The related issues of 'poverty and social exclusion' and 'economic and employment exclusion' tend however to be more significant problems for women than for men, and have led to a feminization of poverty in Afghanistan. The link between women and poverty/social exclusion is so strong that without the focus on gender equality, one cannot expect reductions in poverty levels.

As a cross -cutting issue, gender equality will as such be covered and followed up throughout the project cycle in Afghanistan. This starts with the preparation of the application, continuing with the appraisal and decision processes, as well as throughout project implementation and evaluation. Gender equality considerations have been incorporated into all areas of the project cycle, specifically in the documents listed below:

4.2. In projects

A key aspect of the success of any gender equality policy is to translate it into action. In the financial mechanisms this primarily entails its incorporation into projects and

the project cycle, starting at the project application stage. In essence, the potential and actual impact of the inclusion of gender equality must therefore be assessed both in project appraisal and followed-up within project monitoring.

In assessing the inclusion of gender equality of each project, a gender equality checklist has been developed. The checklist is meant as a tool throughout the process of project development, appraisal, monitoring, and result evaluation. It is one of a number of tools, including discussions with appraisal agents and project monitoring, that will be used to ensure the inclusion of gender equality.

Due to the differences in nature of projects possible under the Grants, some of the gender equality issues relevant to the project will vary. Therefore the checklist must be used in a flexible way, declaring the 'not applicable' questions as such, and focusing on the relevant ones.

When developing the gender equality element of projects, a number of elements should be considered in order to give an indication of its potential impact on gender equality issues. In particular, the applicant should address how the project takes the following issues into account.

General methodology

- how does the project take into account gender specific needs and address gender specific conditions?
- how does the project take past experiences and/or current gender equality activities in the country into account?
- how does the project address the gender equality issues and targets relevant to the project?
- how does the project provide qualitative information on gender issues where necessary?

Economic and social rights

- how does the project encourage lifelong learning and access by women to the labor market?
- how does the project enhance the income earning opportunities of women?
- how does the project strengthen social rights and/or contribute to participation in civil life by women?
- how does the project reduce the social exclusion of women?

Human rights

- how does the project contribute to strengthening organizations and public institutions working to improve the opportunities and rights of women, including NGOs?

Prevention of violence

- how does the project support awareness-raising actions and campaigns empowering women?

Participation and decision-making

- how does the project contribute to participation by women in decision making at both a political and an economic level?
- how does the project involve male and female stakeholders in the consultative process
- how does the project promote women's participation within the project, for example as project staff, members of steering committees?

Project applications with a discriminatory gender bias or that may contribute to reinforcing existing gender inequalities should be rejected. Likewise, applications with no reference to gender equality issues where such an inclusion is relevant should be approached for additional information. Furthermore, in such cases where an inclusion is relevant, this may be stipulated in the grant conditions.

Monitoring throughout the project and ex-post evaluation is necessary elements for assessing the actual impact of a project, and is key elements in securing the inclusion of gender equality in projects. To facilitate monitoring, data must be sex disaggregated, reporting requirements must include gender equality considerations, and ex- post evaluations must not only measure impact, but also provide lessons learned and suggest possible future improvements.

5. Implementing the gender equality policy

The implementation of the gender equality policy has to address the entire project cycle:

1. when projects ideas are developed by the potential project promoters
2. when the beneficiary state government makes their prioritization of the projects
3. when the projects are appraised
4. when the grant decision is made
5. when the project is implemented and monitored

This gender equality policy must therefore be implemented in all parts of the project cycle based on the following principles and activities:

- This policy is an integrated part of the grant policy adopted by the donors and they will thereby be committed to include gender equality assessment as an important decision criterion.

- The cross-cutting checklist is to be integrated in the appraisal manual in order to be used in each appraisal. This way the recommendation for grant decision will be based on sustainable development.

- The checklist shall also be referred to in the external project monitoring manual in order for the implementation also to be checked for the same criteria.

- The gender equality policies and guide will be referred to in next revision of the application form and its user guide of Vulnerable Person protection Policy.
- The *Gender equality policy and guide* and the checklist will be presented and thoroughly discussed with all the focal points in order for them also to consider the same criteria in their future assessments.