



## **Vision Action policy on Gender Equality**

### **An organisational strategy to achieve gender equality**

#### **Background**

This Gender Equality policy represents Vision Action, formally known as Vision Aid Overseas, commitment to take special interest, allocate resources and lead a coordinated approach to gender, not just as an organisational focus, but as an integral part of the organisation's foundation. The policy defines Vision Action's explicit commitments to support gender equality and the principles expressed in both international and national agreements.

#### **Scope**

This policy describes specific commitments, implementation mechanisms and common standards for Vision Action to ensure gender equality is fully incorporated in its work. It calls on Vision Action to work in a collaborative way towards the goal of gender equality as envisaged in the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls). It requires and urges individual staff and partners we work with to strengthen actions to ensure that human rights of women, girls, boys and men are equally promoted and protected; and that everyone in need of a safe space gets one.

#### **Rationale**

Vision Action strategic focus on women's empowerment is one of the most comprehensive organizational standards and resolves to advance women's empowerment, child protection and safeguarding. International humanitarian, human rights, child protection, and refugee laws share a common goal in aiming to prevent and relieve suffering, and to protect and promote the rights and freedoms of women, girls, boys as well as men. As such, they complement and reinforce each other, thus providing a comprehensive framework to ensure equal rights of women, girls, boys and men.

#### **Vision Action Gender Policy**

Through this policy, Vision Action seeks to promote equal realisation of dignity and human rights for girls, women, boys and men, and the elimination of injustice, discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation of all persons, irrespective of their physical, socio-economic and psycho-social backgrounds. Specifically, this policy is intended to clearly incorporate gender in programmatic and organisational practices and shall be a standard guideline for the organisation's engagement with partners, consultants, beneficiaries and our benefactors or sponsors.

Vision Action commits to:

- a) Promote gender equality as an explicit internationally and nationally recognised human right.
- b) Address systemic and structural practices that create barriers to the realisation of women's rights and gender equality; including prevention and response to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.

- c) Support the empowerment of women and girls as a key strategy toward ending poverty, conflict, human suffering, gender inequality and social exclusion.
- d) Actively involve men and boys as active participants in promoting gender equality and social inclusion.
- e) Analyse and implement strategies to manage potential risks and harms to women, girls, boys and men.
- f) Engage and coordinate with partners, governments, funders and civil society organisations to promote and support effective, creative and impactful ways to promote gender equality and social inclusion.
- g) Monitor, evaluate and institutionalise organisational learning regarding specific gender equality results.
- h) Actively hold us and others accountable to gender equality standards.
- i) Ensure that key organisational policies, systems and practices including but not limited to budgeting, human resource recruitment, training and management, and decision-making support women's rights and gender equality.
- j) Ensuring adequate funding to realise our Gender Equality commitments.
- k) Apply these commitments within Vision Action and across all programme areas using integrated planning approaches and recognised gender sensitive tools and techniques such as gender analysis frameworks, collection of age/sex disaggregated data, and results-focused design and evaluation.

### **Policy Implementation**

This Gender Equality policy has a proposed implementation plan, common standards and supporting definitions. Over time, more operational guidance and enforcement will be developed as required to support realisation of the policy implementation. Vision Action will implement, monitor and evaluate this policy. Each staff is encouraged to devise a context-specific and realistic implementation plan / process, with appropriate investment of resources – including use of in-house and external expertise, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Integration of this policy shall be considered a priority to ensure that inadequate resources do not constrain the implementation of the policy.

### **Vision Action guide to ensuring Gender Equality**

Vision Action board of trustees and staff are required to meet these standards in order to ensure empowerment of women and young people and support the dignity of all people. Vision Action staff will ensure that the following standards are applied, monitored, adhered to and reported on. Key organisational policy, planning and programmes will sufficiently incorporate gender relations, power analysis and social inclusion as a mandatory operational and/or design as follows:

- 1) Data disaggregated by sex and age
- 2) Explicitly state gender equality results
- 3) Include relevant and feasible gender sensitive indicators for every stage of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- 4) Ensure enough funding to meet gender requirements
- 5) Ensure gender analysis of budget and expenditure
- 6) explicitly state excluded groups in operational areas
- 7) We will undertake research with local partners to fully understand the barriers to eye care services facing excluded groups (including women and girls) and the best ways to remove such barriers to access

## Policy Implementation Matrix

Policy Theme	Strategy for application	Responsible person/s
<p><b>Support for gender work</b></p> <p>Acknowledge, encourage and support work that addresses the similarities and differences between women and men, and boys and girls in their development needs, aspirations and challenges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject all programme activities and projects to a gender analysis review.</li> <li>• Apply a gender checklist in various decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Use gender expertise to guide programming initiatives</li> <li>• Encourage the use of gender disaggregated data in all manner of reporting.</li> <li>• Support periodic gender reviews of Vision Action’s projects and programmes.</li> </ul>	<p>All staff</p>
<p><b>Decision-making</b></p> <p>Encourage and facilitate processes of using Affirmative Action/Positive Discrimination to increase women’s participation in the governance structures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek and use gender expertise in decision-making and strategic initiatives</li> <li>• Use gender checklist and other tools to guide decision –making processes</li> <li>• Encourage and support women’s participation in leadership and governance systems of all projects.</li> </ul>	<p>SMT and all Country Directors</p>
<p><b>Programming</b></p> <p>Develop and implement programmes that encourage beneficiaries and partner organisations to engage and promote gender equality and social inclusion work in their organisations and in their partnership with Vision Action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate gender analysis in all the programme areas of the organization</li> <li>• Create effective feedback mechanisms (loops) for all categories of beneficiary populations, especially marginalized and excluded groups.</li> </ul>	<p>Dir. Programmes and all Country Directors</p>
<p><b>Partnership</b></p> <p>Encourage partnership/ collaboration, comparing and sharing among gender- and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support gender work that draws from collaboration within Vision Action, partner organisations, institutions and communities.</li> <li>• Encourage and facilitate inter and cross-sectoral programmes that draw on internal gender expertise among staff and partner organizations</li> </ul>	<p>All staff</p>

<p>non-gender focused-organisations toward mutual and collective benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate and consistently renew our membership in gender networks.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Capacity –Building</b></p> <p>Develop or adapt tools and packages to support staff to have the appropriate expertise to identify and address gender issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise periodic sensitisation sessions for and among staff, partners and beneficiaries.</li> <li>• New employees and consultants will be required to demonstrate gender knowledge and skills</li> <li>• New employees and consultants would be handed and briefed on gender policy and checklist</li> <li>• The programme will be subjected to periodic gender reviews to reflect gender commitments.</li> </ul>	<p>All line managers</p>
<p><b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b></p> <p>To ensure, promote and support its gender equality commitments, Vision Action will institute and pursue measures that will enable it to track and assess its progress and performance as well as extend such support to interested partners on demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and apply gender indicators in assessments</li> <li>• Apply gender responsiveness checklist as a guiding tool in implementation.</li> <li>• Collect and analyse Gender-responsive data.</li> </ul>	<p>Country Directors</p>
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>We recognise the importance of using language that doesn't reinforce inequalities and stereotypes but rather helps to subvert them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All materials and general communications will be formulated to reflect Vision Action's goals and objectives on gender equality and equity, challenging gender stereotypes and recognising diversity.</li> <li>• Gender-sensitive language and images will be used in all internal and external communications.</li> <li>• Whenever possible, women's and girls' voices will be heard in the first person.</li> <li>• Ensure that women and men are proportionately represented during press releases and other public facing activities</li> </ul>	<p>All staff</p>

## **Definitions of Key Terminologies:**

**Gender:** Social or cultural distinctions associated with being a female or male. It refers to the social differences between females and males throughout the life cycle that are learned, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between cultures.

**Gender equality:** equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys and men of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. Equality is not the empirical claim that all groups of humans are interchangeable; it is the moral principle that individuals should not be judged or constrained by the average properties of their group. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are not governed or limited by whether they were born female or male.

**Gender equity:** Justice in the distribution of resources, benefits and responsibilities between women and men, boys and girls. The concept recognises that power relations between girls and boys, men and women are unequal, and that such inequalities should be addressed.

**Gender Equality Programming:** it is a broader term encompassing all strategies to achieve gender equality. Important examples include gender mainstreaming, gender analysis, prevention and response to Gender Based Violence promotion and protection of human rights, empowerment of women and girls, and gender balance in the workplace.

**Gender mainstreaming:** is a globally recognised strategy for achieving gender equality. The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations defined gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels.

**Gender-based violence (GBV):** is a broad term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions. Examples include sexual violence, including sexual exploitation/abuse and forced prostitution; domestic violence; trafficking; forced/early marriage; harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; honour killings; and widow inheritance.

**Sexual abuse:** the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or intimidating conditions.

**Sexual Exploitation:** the abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. (UN SGB Definition)

**Empowerment:** is a process through which men, women, boys and girls acquire knowledge, skills, capacity and willingness to critically analyse their situation and take appropriate actions to change the status quo for the better.

**Women's Empowerment:** Involves awareness-raising, building of self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. Empowerment comes from within; women empowering themselves.

**Social Inclusion:** aims to empower poor and marginalised people to take advantage of burgeoning global opportunities. It ensures that people have a voice in decisions which affect their lives and that they enjoy equal access to markets, services and political, social and physical spaces.

### **Conclusion**

Achievement of this policy and strategy requires a lot of commitment. This will require conscious and continuous investments in staff and organisational policies and systems that address gender equality and women's rights, and social inclusiveness in general. It envisages a total incorporation of gender equality into the broader Vision Action results-based management of programmes and projects; it requires of Vision Action to be a leader in gender equality acknowledgement, resourcing and implementation always, across all locations and in every context. This policy rejects gender inequality wholly.