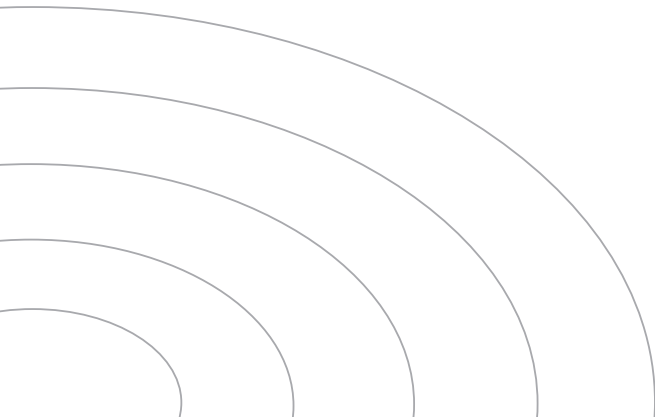




Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke

**MS Danish Association for
International Co-operation**

POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY



MELLEMFOLKELIGT
SAMVIRKE'S
**POLICY ON
GENDER EQUALITY**

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1. Aim of the policy

1.1 Why this policy?

This policy represents the organisational commitment to gender equality in Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke (MS). MS is committed to implementing this policy and the values upon which it is informed both in the way the organisation and its partners operate and in the objectives they seek to achieve. The need for a gender equality policy in MS was discussed and agreed by members at MS's General Assembly in the autumn of 2006. It is recognised by members and the Board that implementing the MS' gender policy will require the active leadership of management as well as the release of funding and allocation of staff time to engage with gender related issues.

1.2 How will the policy be used?

The policy encompasses a number of principles that will guide the work of the organisation. Many of the principles are not new, and are already incorporated in strategies, systems and structures. Where this is not the case, it will have to be done. The policy will therefore be further elaborated in programme strategies, internal guidelines, procedures and policies as well as being reflected in the organisational culture, management style and activities. Gender indicators will also be integrated into staff objectives as well as accountability and performance management systems.

The management team in MS Copenhagen and its Country Directors are responsible for implementing the policy as well as ensuring timely monitoring of implementation. Furthermore, it will be a management responsibility to set up appropriate structures and promote the required attitudinal changes implied by the policy. However, it is also the duty of all staff in MS to make sure that the gender equality policy is followed up by action at all levels of the organisation, in other words, "walking the talk" in MS. Ownership to the gender equality principles and strategies by staff and partners are thus key to successful gender mainstreaming.

It is also necessary to focus on the specific contexts within which MS works in order to achieve the desired impact of gender activities in MSiS. Therefore, all country offices will use the new MS gender policy to formulate country implementation strategies based on the specific context in which they work in terms of the cultural setting, socio-economic factors, religion, and ethnicity.

1.3 Main objectives of the policy

The overall objective of MS' gender equality policy is to support the achievement of equality between women and men to ensure sustainable development. MS wishes to advance women's equal participation with men as decision makers in shaping the sustainable development of their societies. MS will address the unequal power relationship between men and women with the aim of promoting structural change and full realisation of women and girls' human rights.

MS will strengthen the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment into the full range of MS activities, products, and practices. MS' own internal structures and practices must also reflect MS' commitment to gender equality. This includes staff policies, modes of communication, campaigns as well as all programme work.

MS understands gender equality as:

- Equal opportunities to participate in and influence political and economic decision making for women and men.
- Equal political, civil, economic and social rights for women and men.
- Equal consideration, valuation and favouring of the needs and aspirations of women and men.
- Equal access to and control over resources such as land, income and other productive assets.

Gender equality means that women and men have the right to equal opportunities when it comes to participating and benefiting from economic, social, cultural, and political development. In other words, equality means that one's rights or opportunities do not depend on being male or female. MS sees gender equity as a major means for achieving greater equality between men and women in the long run

and thus specifically supports women in order to compensate for ingrained historical social and political inequality and discrimination against women.

2. Gender equality, poverty and democracy

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are important goals in their own right, but are also vital to poverty elimination and building local democracy. Although some progress has taken place during the last decade, gender continues to be one of the most important factors that causes the discrimination and marginalisation of women. Throughout the organisation, MS will base its work on an understanding of gender equality and empowerment as central to overcoming poverty as well as furthering democracy and global equity. Within the democracy focus, MS will often prioritise work which specifically raises the status of women.

MS' definition of poverty as expressed in the MS policy paper "Partnership against Poverty" (2005) goes beyond the purely economic to encompass capabilities, powerlessness and inequality and states that "across the globe women are experiencing inequality at the household, community, and national levels: this impacts negatively on their enjoyment of basic rights, control over resources, and participation in the economic and political spheres. This inequality is a barrier to development and it affects the welfare of women and their families" (MSIS Policy Paper 2005: 14).

MS recognises that unequal power relations between women and men are major obstacles for achieving democratic development and for fighting poverty and injustice. A strong gender perspective is therefore critical in MS' work aimed at building local democracy. MS works towards strengthening democratic development through the participation and influence of civil society in developing countries. Building local democracy and holding local leaders accountable requires the active involvement and ownership of both men and women.

3. Gender mainstreaming as a strategy

3.1 MS' strategy

MS adheres to the gender mainstreaming approach as gender should not be seen as a separate topic but indeed be an integrated part of all work. However, at the same time MS acknowledges that gender mainstreaming is not the only strategy for achieving gender equality. MS will therefore in future adopt a twin-track approach that aims at integrating gender into all existing operations as well as developing specific initiatives that address gender inequalities.

3.2 Challenges with mainstreaming gender

The general criticism of gender mainstreaming is that it has led to a reduction in funding and a weakening of focus on initiatives that specifically target women. Another critique is that mainstreaming processes do not recognise the diverse needs and experiences of women suffering multiple forms of discrimination. But the major critique of gender mainstreaming is that gender has remained at the policy level, without any real operational impact. It is a general experience that strong backing from management at all levels of the organisation is essential for gender mainstreaming to be successful. It is important to hold all staff accountable for implementing gender goals and not just to leave it to the gender focal point groups alone to be responsible for implementing gender mainstreaming.

3.3 MS lessons learned on mainstreaming gender

Similar to many other development organisations, MS has also faced challenges in mainstreaming gender. Findings from gender assessments carried out in 2006 in three MS focus countries reveal that attempts to fully mainstream gender into all programme activities had largely failed. Gender analyses have not been systematic and consistent, and good practices from various country offices have not been sufficiently exported and used in other MS focus countries. Gender-disaggregated data is not strong in country analyses and the impact of efforts has not been systematically monitored in order to document results. Although much has been learned about what is required for

mainstreaming to be effective, our ability to achieve it, explain it and measure it, is yet to be developed. Above all, mainstreaming gender requires positive action to ensure outcomes and improved results. By using a twin-track approach MS wishes to make sure that gender mainstreaming is followed up by specific interventions. Specific interventions will be directed at addressing the structural causes of gender inequality which are embedded in institutions, policies, legislation and in the allocation of resources.

4. Principles

The overall principles for how MS will work with gender equality are as follows:

- MS will address the unequal power relationship between men and women. MS recognises that addressing structural gender inequalities is in essence a political project aimed at promoting structural change.
- MS recognises the importance of actively engaging both men and women in promoting gender equality.
- MS believes addressing structural gender inequalities requires working with gender at the household, the community and the societal levels. MS will work with both women and men to address the stereotypes, including traditional belief systems and practices that create and reinforce gender inequalities.
- MS recognises that women and men are not homogenous groups and therefore works to promote gender equality without losing sight of the ways in which gender interacts with other identities such as ethnicity, class, race, religion, nationality, disability or sexual orientation.
- MS will build the capacity needed to address the fundamental causes of gender inequality. MS will seek to influence the policy and practice of partners and organisations with which we work and encourage them to participate in relevant gender equality networks.

- MS will prioritise work that specifically raises the status of women and girls.
- MS recognises that gender is not just about designing programmes and policies or ensuring personnel balance. It is also about practising an organisational culture within MS which promote care, flexibility and empowerment, which will inform behaviour, rules, programmes and impacts in MS.

5. Overall strategies for achieving gender equality

5.1 Implementation of programme in the South (MSiS)

All programmes will include explicit gender specific objectives to prevent and correct inequalities between women and men.

Guidelines, action plans and systems for monitoring will include concrete and measurable gender specific objectives. Resources necessary for establishing the capacity to achieve this will be allocated. Gender analyses will be consistently carried out to reveal basic structural factors impacting on the possibilities and perspectives of women and men. Indicators for all programmes and projects shall explicitly reflect both sexes. Initiatives and objectives for promoting gender equality in programmes will be formulated and 'gender screening' at all phases of the programme/project cycle will be carried out.

Responsibility: International Director and Country Directors

Tools and methods for ensuring gender mainstreaming in programmes and projects will be made available to staff and MS' partners.

This will be supported by providing the necessary resources in the form of tools and opportunities for competency development. Systematic and consistent attention will be given to gender equality objectives throughout the programme cycle.

Responsibility: International Director and Country Directors

When establishing partnerships, the commitment and capacity of potential partners to adhere to MS' gender policy will be assessed.

The commitment and capacity of partner organisations to implement gender policies that live up to MS' gender policy will be an important criterion for entering into a partnership with MS. Whether country offices or partner organisations adhere to MS gender policy will be monitored on a continuous basis, and this will be supported by an on-going dialogue on challenges and opportunities. Failure to support or live up to MS' gender policy will lead to the termination of a partnership.

Responsibility: International Director and Country Directors

Integration of learning and experience on gender equality will be prioritised.

MS will form appropriate structures to monitor implementation, provide support and facilitate the sharing of knowledge within the field of gender equality.

Responsibility: International Director and Country Directors

5.2 Public image, information and campaign activities

Information and campaign activities in MS will reflect MS' commitment to promoting gender equality.

All materials and general communications will be formulated to reflect MS' goals and objectives on gender equality and equity. These will challenge gender stereotypes and recognize diversity. Gender perspectives will be consistently incorporated in relation to the selection of target group and focus areas, in criteria for results, in objectives of annual plans and in indicators for the implementation of campaign and information activities. The Information and Campaign teams play important roles in mainstreaming gender as effective information flows are a prerequisite for mainstreaming gender equality, including information about new and innovative gender programming internally and externally.

Responsibility: Management Group, Communication and Campaign Directors

Membership and network activities shall appeal to both men and women.

As a membership based organisation MS wishes to be an organisation with offers a variety of network activities that appeal to both men and women.

Responsibility: Management Group and Campaign Director

Gender sensitive language will be used in all internal and external communications.

Language and styles of communication must appeal to both sexes, and managers and staff members must have the capacity to communicate in this manner. Gender sensitive language and images will be used in all internal and external communications.

Responsibility: Management Group, Communication and Campaign Directors

5.3 Global Contact

Activities under Global Contact must reflect MS' commitment to promoting equality.

Global Contact campaign materials will appeal to both sexes through use of appropriate language, contents and visual materials. Global Contact travels shall target men as well as women. This will be ensured through the identification of projects that reflect the interest areas of both sexes.

Responsibility: Campaign Director and Communication Director

5.4 Human resources

MS' personnel policy will reflect the gender principles for MS as an organisation.

The existing personnel policy will be extended with elements that ensure gender equality based on organisational development principles.

Responsibility: Management team and Country Directors

Gender perspectives must be incorporated into job identification processes, job descriptions and job advertisements.

When positions are established the job functions will be 'gender screened'. In cases where jobs pose special challenges for women, men, single parents or other groups, these challenges will be reflected and explained in the job description. This will be done within the overall framework of Danish legislation on gender equality. In addition to professional aspects, job advertisements will include a description of MS as a family-friendly workplace. The language used in job advertisements will appeal to both sexes. The Human Resources Team in MS will be assigned special responsibility for monitoring and following-up on MS' gender policy and will report to the management team and the board.

Responsibility: Human Resources

5.5 Organisational management and development principles

The Secretary General will report on the principles in the yearly personnel policy report to MS' Board.

MS will work towards gender balance in staffing and in steering committees/bodies.

The target is a 50/50 distribution of women and men. This balance ought to be reflected in the management team, the board as well as each individual team in the secretariat and MS' country offices.

Responsibility: Management Group and Board Chair

MS will practice a flexible working culture which will take the individual family situation of women and men working in the organisation in Denmark and country offices into consideration.

MS staff at the head and country offices will enjoy working conditions ensuring a good balance between family life and work. This will be ensured through the personnel policy.

Responsibility: Human Resources and Management Group

MS will practice a non-discriminatory gender and diversity culture policy to ensure that the organisation allows room for women and men with varied backgrounds.

Communication and decision-making processes in MS should reflect equal opportunities for the two sexes at all levels: the board, staff, volunteers, managers.

Responsibility: Management Group

MS will ensure a workplace free from sexual harassment.

MS intends to maintain a workplace free from sexual harassment and with respect for sexual integrity. MS condemns sexual exploitation, abuse and discrimination in all its forms. MS will develop a code of conduct for sexual harassment which includes effective and transparent procedures in cases of physical or verbal sexual assault or abuse of or by staff members. MS will continuously take preventive initiatives in the secretariat and at the country offices to prevent sexual harassment. This includes safe means of travelling for women.

Responsibility: Human Resources and Management Group

MS will ensure equal access to competency development for women and men and will prioritise gender related training.

Equal access to competency development will be provided through clear principles and resource allocation for training and further education.

Responsibility: Management Group

MS will integrate gender indicators into staff objectives.

Gender perspectives will be incorporated into performance criteria for monitoring country directors and MS management teams.

Responsibility: Management Group



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