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GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

POLICY, GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES & ACTION PLAN FOR THE
SOUTHERN AFRICA FEDERATION OF THE DISABLED (SAFOD)

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1.0 GENDER POLICY: BASIC PRINCIPLES AND AIMS

1.1 BASIC PRINCIPLES

SAFOD is committed to GENDER EQUALITY. We will work towards this goal by:

- Promoting equal access to and control over power and resources between men and women.
- Promoting equal opportunities and opposing all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, class, religion, sexuality, age, disability, HIV status or marital status.
- Deepening our understanding of gender and gender relations.
- Enhancing organisational capacity to achieve these aims.
- Devoting adequate resources (including human, information and time resources) for their realisation.
- Living up to the standards and principles we advocate.

1.2 AIMS OF THE GENDER POLICY

The gender policy is not intended to provide a blueprint for practice throughout the organisation. That would be neither feasible, nor desirable. The key objectives of the gender policy are as follows:

- To develop a common language throughout SAFOD based on a common understanding of the meanings of gender concepts, aims and objectives as they relate to policy and practice.
- To provide a clear vision of what SAFOD as an organisation is aiming to achieve, setting this within the context of SAFOD's own internal evolution, as well as within the evolution of gender debates in the international arena.
- To provide some targets and indicators against which progress can be measured

2.0 LEVELS OF ORGANISATIONAL FUNCTIONING:

- **Ideology**, i.e. rules, values and conceptual frameworks which inform the way the organisation functions
- **Practices**, i.e. the organisation's everyday behaviour and procedures; and
- **Agents**, i.e. the actors who put the concepts used by SAFOD into practice, both directly and indirectly.

2.1 Goals

SAFOD is committed to promoting gender equality and views this as a universal principle. This reflects the views of its members and staff and is in line with the fundamental principle enshrined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:

"Equality is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental pre-requisite for equality, development and peace"

SAFOD will work towards the achievement of this overall goal as follows.

2.1.1 Promoting equal access to and control over power and resources between women and men

The disproportionate poverty experienced by women world-wide is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy for women, lack of access to economic resources, education and services and to their minimal participation in decision-making.

In order to contribute to the promotion of greater equality in Malawi, SAFOD will promote programme interventions aimed at enhancing equal access to opportunities and resources and increasing women's control over key assets and decision-making. In particular, interventions aimed at empowering women to challenge their subordinate status in the home, the community and society at large will be encouraged and supported. The critical importance of empowerment emerged strongly from the Beijing conference:

“Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.” (Beijing Declaration, para.13)

SAFOD's programming priorities will fall broadly in line with the major areas of concern highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action:

- Feminisation of poverty
- Unequal access to resources
- Unequal access to education and training
- Unequal access to health care and related services
- Violence against women
- Effects of armed and other kinds of conflict
- Inequality in decision-making and power structures
- Lack of respect for and protection of women's human rights

This list is not intended to be exhaustive and SAFOD will deal with other areas of concern in line with the overall goals of gender equality and non-discrimination.

In promoting gender equality, SAFOD is not denying the obvious differences that exist between men and women. As noted in guidelines produced by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):

“Gender equality requires equal enjoyment by women and men of socially-valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Gender equality does not mean that men and women become the same, but *that their opportunities and life chances are equal*. (DAC Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment)

2.1.2 Promoting equal opportunities and opposing all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, class, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, HIV status or marital status.

SAFOD recognises that equality between men and women cannot be achieved without addressing discrimination on any of the above grounds. Thus, SAFOD's commitment to gender equality goes hand in hand with its commitment to equal opportunities in general.

In accordance with the vision and values outlined in the strategic plan, SAFOD is committed to promoting equal opportunities in all spheres: in its own recruitment procedures for new employees, in the terms and conditions of employment for existing employees and through our staff training and development policy. In addition, we will promote organisational structures and management styles conducive to this aim.

2.1.3 Deepening our understanding of gender and gender relations

SAFOD recognises that gender as a concept is not static, nor have we attained a definitive level of understanding of what we mean by this concept and what we hope to achieve. Gender should be seen as an integral part of a wider search for deep understanding of human behaviour, including both physical and emotional needs, perceptions, motivations, relationships and structures. SAFOD will support and promote efforts to deepen understanding of the meaning and relevance of gender concepts at all levels of the organisation. This will require collaboration and networking across programmes and with other agencies, and indeed with cross-disciplinary academic specialists.

Gender analysis in much of the national developmental activities in general has tended in the past to focus on women's economic and productive roles. An expanded understanding of gender differentiation will need:

- to move away from the previous concentration on women and instead embrace the gendered dimensions of men's as well as women's lives, and
- to match a concern with production and community with a concern with personal development, personal relations, and the emotional dimension (including issues of sexuality and sexual and reproductive health)

2.1.4 Enhancing organisational capacity to achieve these aims

SAFOD will aim to maximise its own organisational capacity to achieve these aims by ensuring that adequate support, guidance and training are provided to staff.

In addition, organisational structures, working practices and management styles that reflect the principles of gender equality and equal opportunities will be promoted throughout SAFOD. In particular, SAFOD will promote management styles that work against stereotyping, give emphasis to teamwork and joint decision-making, promote transparency and good communications practices and provide opportunities for personal development.

2.1.5 Devoting adequate resources for their realisation

SAFOD will aim to ensure that adequate material and human resources are made available at all levels of the organisation for translating these goals and principles in practice.

2.1.6 Living up to the standards and principles we advocate

SAFOD recognises that the promotion of gender equality in the organisation's internal policies, structures, procedures, and in the values and standards it sets itself is an essential pre-requisite for the achievement of greater gender equality in the communities where we work. All staff will be responsible for reflecting SAFOD's values in their behaviour and SAFOD will strive to apply and adhere to the same basic principles and standards inside the organisation as those promoted outside it.

2.2 *Principles for the implementation of gender equality goals*

In committing itself to the achievement of these basic goals, SAFOD will be guided by the following principles:

2.2.1 Acknowledging variety in cultural contexts

Programmes operate within different cultural, political and legal contexts and therefore start towards the goal of gender equality from different departure points. Each context will require analysis, problem identification and the development of appropriate methodologies for reaching the goal. It is not expected that each context will necessarily generate identical problems or that the path towards the goal will proceed in the same way or at the same pace.

2.2.2 Recognising diversity

While many aspects of women's experiences unite them, their living conditions and social status vary widely across different cultures and different social, economic and political groupings. SAFOD acknowledges the full diversity of women's and men's situations and conditions. It is important for SAFOD to deepen its understanding of differences, as well as similarities, and to work in ways that promote unity within diversity.

2.2.3 Equality and participation

SAFOD is committed to developing and applying participatory methodologies, as the basis of all its work with communities. SAFOD is also committed to the principle of participation in relation to its own decision-making structures and management style, as a prerequisite to promoting gender equality within its own structures.

2.2.4 Involving women/men or girls/boys in the process of change

SAFOD recognises that 'gender' and 'women/girls' are not synonymous and that deepening our understanding of gender relations necessarily entails finding out about how societal conditioning, norms and traditions, impact on the behaviour of men/boys, as well as women/girls. Similarly, the achievement of gender equality implies a redefinition of the rights and responsibilities of women and men, or girls and boys in all spheres, and its achievement requires women/girls and men/boys to work in partnership.

2.2.5 Addressing conflict and resistance

The goal of gender equality is a transformative one, and, like all processes of change, is likely to threaten the entrenched interests of individuals and groups (both men and women). The conflictual nature of such change needs to be acknowledged frankly, and skills developed within the organisation to handle the resolution of conflict carefully without diluting the goal itself.

2.2.6 Commitment to child safeguarding

Considering that SAFOD and her affiliates work with children and young people, including those aged 18 years or below, who may be vulnerable to sexual and other forms of abuse, SAFOD shall, therefore, adhere to all measures or standards stipulated in the organization's Protection of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) policy – together with its own relevant code of conduct – to protect and safeguard the rights all children involved in our work. We shall commit to upholding appropriate standards of conduct such as investigation of suspected violations, reporting, and monitoring of confirmed violations, as well as other preventive and corrective measures.

SAFOD shall take appropriate preventative and corrective measures against the following violations:

- i. Sexual exploitation and abuse.
- ii. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18), regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.
- iii. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior.
- iv. Any sexual relationship between the volunteer and a person benefitting from SAFOD's work involving improper rank or position. Such relationships can potentially undermine the credibility and integrity of SAFOD's work.

3.0 ACTION PLAN

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