



Gender Policy

“The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities”.

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Introduction

Gender is a social construct whereby the roles, rights, responsibilities and obligations of men and women within a particular society are determined by one’s biological sex. Although norms may vary from society to society, these culturally determined identities mean that the two genders are valued differently. This is almost always to the disadvantage of women who, being viewed as inferior or subordinate to men, have fewer opportunities, lower status and less power and influence than men and boys, as highlighted below:

- Women in most countries earn, on average, only 60-75% of men’s wages¹ with more women than men working in vulnerable, low-paid, or undervalued jobs²;
- Almost 90% of 143 economies studied have at least one legal restriction on women’s economic opportunities. Of those, 79 economies have laws that restrict the types of jobs that women can do while husbands can object to their wives working and prevent them from accepting jobs in 15 economies³;
- On average, women make up 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries (rising to 70% in some parts of Africa) yet less than 20% of landholders are women providing them with limited access to inputs, seeds, credits and extension services essential to invest, operate to scale and benefit from new economic opportunities⁴;
- A study of time and water poverty in 25 sub-Saharan African countries estimated that women spend at least 16 million hours a day collecting drinking water. By comparison, men spend 6 million hours⁵;
- 92% of women reported experiencing some form of sexual violence in public spaces in their lifetime while 88% reported experiencing some form of verbal sexual abuse⁶;
- From a decision-making and power perspective, women make up just 22.9% of parliamentarians globally⁷;

Whilst the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1945) enshrines the equal worth and dignity of all women and men, as well as their universal entitlement to civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights in international law, it is clear from the above indicators that the achievement of equal rights for men and women remains some way off. Although gender inequality is, without question, a global issue, its impact is perhaps most keenly felt in developing

¹ World Bank Gender Data Portal

² ILO, Global Employment Trends for Women, 2012

³ World Bank, 2014, *Women, Business and Law 2014: Removing Restrictions to Enhance Gender Equality*

⁴ FAO

⁵ World Health Organisation and UN Children’s Fund, 2012, *Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation*

⁶ UN Women

⁷ World Bank Gender Data Portal

countries where traditional roles and cultural norms mean that women lack access to the capabilities, resources and opportunities that permit the enjoyment of social, economic and political power, as well as health and well-being. Since the year 2000, the international community's efforts to tackle the gender gap have focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular Goal 3 which aimed to *promote gender equality and empower women*. Whilst significant progress has been made, particularly with regards to achieving overall gender parity in access to primary education⁸, women continue to experience significant gaps in terms of poverty, labour market and wages, as well as participation in private and public decision-making. Future efforts and investment in tackling gender inequality will be measured against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aim to build on the MDGs and complete what was not achieved by the year 2030. *Achieving gender equality and empowering all women* has been designated as Goal 5 in this new global agenda.

At a strategic level, Aidlink adheres to the view that gender equality is a development goal that acts as an essential pre-requisite to the elimination of poverty and the achievement of our organisational vision: *a world that recognises the dignity of each individual person having the right, the duty and the means of self and community development*. In line with our Rights Based Approach (RBA) to Development, we work with partners to ensure that the underlying causes of gender inequality in target communities are not only recognised, but also addressed through targeted intervention strategies (outlined below). In mainstreaming gender throughout our work, we aim to ensure that we are aligned with, and contributing to the targets established by the SDGs and the 'high-level outcomes' of the Irish Aid Framework for Action⁹.

Scope

This policy paper sets out Aidlink's objectives with regards to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It also seeks to provide guidance and focus for partners in developing their programmes and ensuring that **gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is mainstreamed** at all stages of that process. Further, it clarifies, both internally and for partners, the priorities and limits for support from Aidlink within this theme. Aidlink, through its partners, recognises the importance of working with local communities and local government in implementing any programme, and in ensuring the involvement of women and girls at all stages of the programme (from planning through implementation to ensuring the long-term sustainability of interventions), we aim to ensure that all stakeholders recognise the need to promote gender equality, and transform roles, identities and power relations in order to create a fairer and more prosperous society for all.

Focus

Aidlink's programmes, implemented in partnership with local NGOs, support women to exercise their **Voice, Choice and Control**¹⁰ in order to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. In practice, this means that women and girls will have:

- A **Voice** in decision-making at the household, community and national level;
- A **Choice** to complete their education, to benefit from paid employment and other opportunities, and to decide whether, when and with whom to have sex, marry, and/or have children, effectively ending early and forced marriage; and
- **Control** over their own bodies and mobility including safety from violence and discriminatory social norms such as female genital mutilation; and control over income, productive assets and other resources, with equal legal rights and access to justice.

⁸ Although it should be noted that Africa, Western Asia and Oceania are trailing behind the rest of the world having only achieved "close to parity" - http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20PC%20final.pdf .

⁹ <https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/allwebsitemedia/20newsandpublications/publicationpdfsenglish/Action-for-Framework.pdf>

¹⁰ DFID (2013). *Stepping up a Gear for Girls and Women*.

In relation to gender equality, Aidlink and partners aim to ensure that interventions address the three main domains in which women and girls are disadvantaged, namely:

- **Capabilities**, referring to the basic human abilities as measured by education, health and nutrition. These are fundamental to individual well-being and are the basic means by which individuals access other forms of well-being;
- **Access to Resources and Opportunities**, referring to economic assets (land, property, infrastructure), resources (income and employment) and political opportunity (representation in parliament and other representative bodies). Without access to resources and opportunities, women are unable to employ their capabilities to ensure the well-being of themselves, their families, communities and wider society; and
- **Security**, referring to a reduced vulnerability to violence and conflicts which result in physical and psychological harm and reduce the ability of individuals, households and communities to fulfil their potential¹¹.

With regards to women's empowerment, we aim to ensure that women are being empowered:

- **Socially**, so that a women's place within society is respected and recognised on the terms by which they themselves want to live, not on the terms dictated by others;
- **Politically**, so that women are able to use their influence to ensure that decision-making is more inclusive and recognisant of the needs of women; and
- **Economically**, so that women have equal wages and rights to land ownership and inheritance, enabling them to make a real and lasting difference to their families and communities¹².

Aidlink's programmatic interventions, which seek to ensure that *people (especially women and girls) are able to achieve healthy and fulfilling lives*¹³, take place within the poorest communities in Africa, i.e. those characterised by social, economic and political disenfranchisement. Typically, these communities are situated in rural and peri-urban areas within Kenya and Uganda. The communities and schools targeted by Aidlink are identified by partners following a needs assessment. This is carried out prior to the intervention in consultation with local government officials and the targeted communities.

Strategies

The following strategies are employed by Aidlink and its NGO partners in order to ensure the explicit incorporation of gender equality and women's empowerment in programmatic and organisational practices:

- Promoting gender equality as a core component of our work in line with the implementation of a **Rights Based Approach (RBA) to Development**;
- Monitoring progress in enhancing gender equality against specific results in line with a **Results Based Management (RBM) system**;
- **Working programmatically** to ensure equal access to capabilities, resources and opportunities for women and girls and eliminate gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse;
- **Involving men and boys as allies** in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

¹¹ UN Millennium Project.

¹² Eyben, Kabeer and Cornwall, 2008, *Conceptualising Empowerment and the Implications for Pro-Poor Growth*

¹³ Aidlink Strategic Plan 2017 - 2021

- **Engaging and coordinating with relevant stakeholders** in order to advance and support effective means of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- **Capacity Building of Aidlink and partners' staff** in order to up-skill and develop competencies in gender programming
- **Holding ourselves and our partners accountable to gender equality and empowerment standards** by ensuring that key organisational policies, and systems and practices (for Aidlink and partners) support women and girls' rights and gender equality;
- Implementing these commitments **using integrated planning approaches and gender sensitive tools and techniques**;
- **Ensuring adequate funding** to realise our commitments

Approach

Whilst Aidlink has always prioritised gender as a cross-cutting issue in programme design, we are, in developing this policy, aiming to ensure that both we and partners are drawing on recognised best practice in the sector in order to ensure a structured and coherent approach to gender issues. As such, the following overarching approaches will be utilised by Aidlink and partners in order to ensure that programmes are truly effective in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women:

- **Gender Audit.** A gender audit enhances the capacity of an organisation to examine its activities from a gender perspective and identify strengths and weaknesses in promoting gender equality issues. It helps to build organisational ownership for gender equality initiatives; and supports organisational learning on gender through a process of team-building, information sharing and reflection¹⁴. It is the first stage in an organisation's approach to ensuring it is effective in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Aidlink will support partners to carry out a gender audit of their organisations and appoint a gender "champion" with the responsibility of ensuring gender mainstreaming throughout the organisation.
- **Gender Analysis.** Working towards the achievement of gender equality doesn't simply mean targeting equal numbers of men and women in programming. It is about recognising that men and women often have different needs and priorities, face different and unequal constraints, have different aspirations and contribute to development in different ways. As such, partners will carry out a gender analysis during programme design in order to recognise the differences between men's and women's interests and needs and ensure that the programme is developed with these in mind. Gender analysis should examine both the practical interests/needs and the strategic needs/interests of men and women as addressing these will require markedly different approaches.
- **Gender Profiling.** Following Gender Analysis, partners will develop a gender profile for each programme area whereby the profile of women in the communities in which we work is clearly identified. This statistical information, collected from a range of sources (organisational and government reports, other NGOs) can be used for a number of purposes including: informing field-based activities, establishing gender baseline information and sex disaggregated data, and identifying impacts and trends for M&E purposes.
- **Gender Planning.** Following the gender audit, analysis and profiling, it should become clear where specific strategies are needed to be introduced into the design of the programmes in order to tackle gender inequality and the empowerment of women and girls. As with all Aidlink programmes, this process will take the form of a participatory approach in which partners bring together local communities and local authorities in an open, accountable and transparent manner to bring about community-owned and sustainable change.

¹⁴ International Labour Office (ILO), 2007, *Manual for Gender Audit Facilitators*

- **Gender Budgeting.** Gender budgeting attempts to address the needs and interests of all individuals by eliminate any biases that arise because a person is male or female, whilst also taking into account any disadvantage suffered as a result of ethnicity, caste, class, location and age. Gender budgeting does not necessarily require a 50/50 allocation of finances, rather it is about determining the different needs of men and women and allocating budgets in accordance in order to level the playing field. Whilst gender budgeting has typically been under-estimated or ignored, UNWomen and other agencies advocating for gender equality cite the need for dedicated and consistent investment and resources. This includes attributing funding to the capacity-building of staff, the introduction and implementation of gender tools, and on-going M&E. The gender “champion” within each organisation is responsible for monitoring budgets in order to ensure that the necessary resources are attributed to tackling gender inequality and the empowerment of women.
- **Gender Mainstreaming.** Gender mainstreaming is a long-term, transformative strategy which ensures that the different concerns and experiences of men and women are an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all organisational policies and programmes. It is about moving gender from the margin to the mainstream within an organisation’s day-to-day work and is a process rather than a goal in itself. As such, it can cover a number of actions, from basic steps like using gender-sensitive language to the development of more complex gender analysis tools. The primary objective behind gender mainstreaming is to design and implement development projects, programmes and policies to ensure that they are:
 - **Gender Neutral**, i.e. they do not reinforce existing inequalities;
 - **Gender Sensitive**, i.e. they attempt to redress existing inequalities;
 - **Gender Transformative**, i.e. they attempt to re-define men and women’s gender roles and relations.

Aidlink and partners aspire to implement programmes that will be gender transformative. Ensuring that gender is mainstreamed within organisational policies and programmes is the responsibility of the gender “champion” within each organisation with Aidlink fulfilling a monitoring and oversight role within the context of our own Strategic Plan and organisational policies and guidelines.

- **Gender Impact Assessment.** A Gender Impact Assessment involves partners examining policies and practices to determine the impact of our work, and see whether they affect men and women differently, with a view to adapting these policies/practices in order to make sure that any discriminatory effects are neutralised. To assist in measuring the impact of our work on gender equality and women’s empower, it is important to develop gender-sensitive indicators which can demonstrate the extent to which development programmes have contributed to gender-related changes in society over time. These can be specific to programme interventions for the purpose of localised data, i.e. measuring girl-child attendance at school, or higher indicators such as the UNDP Gender Inequality Index (GII) which measures gender inequality over three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and labour market participation.

Additional Resources

BRIDGE – Specialised gender and development research and information service
www.bridge.ids.ac.uk

Care International Gender Toolkit
www.gendertoolkit.care.org

ELDIS – Gender knowledge sharing platform
www.eldis.org/

OECD Gender Data Portal
www.oecd.org/statistics

Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform

<http://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org>

UNESCO Gender Mainstreaming

www.unesco.org/gender-equality

UNDP Gender Development Index

<http://www.hdr.undp.org/gender-development-index-gdi>

UNWomen

www.unwomen.org

World Bank – Gender Data Portal

www.datatopics.worldbank.org/gender

World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index

www.reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014