


SOCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY		
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Title: GENDER EQUALITY POLICY	Policy Number: GEP –01	
Approved by: The Governing Body of SARDS	Date Effective: 01.04.2004	
Executed by: R. Suneel Kumar, Executive Secretary	To be circulated to all the staff, Consultants, vendors, CBOs, Volunteers, Visitors of SARDS and other personnel for strict adherence	

1. VISION

SARDS envisages a society driven by values where every child, family and the community realizes wholeness of life.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

“**SARDS** will entrench an enabling environment for women within the organization, various partners and the communities with whom it is working and strengthen the gender sensitivity among all.”

3. PREAMBLE

- 3.1** All governments made commitments to the advancement of women and gender equality goals in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995)¹, and recognized gender mainstreaming – “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels”—as the principal means to achieve these goals. SARDS maintains this approach, and includes the advancement of women as a core thematic cross-cutting area within its sustainable human development framework.
- 3.2** SARDS’ vision of a desirable society is where relations across individuals, families and communities are characterized by equity and justice. Besides socio-economic equity, SARDS believes in gender justice as a cornerstone of such relations in the family, community and society.
- 3.3** SARDS’ mission directs it to work towards promotion of policies, institutions and capacities that strengthen the voice and participation of the poor and the marginalized, especially the women, in improving their socio-economic status through democratic governance in society. This is achieved through three broad strategies – capacity building, policy advocacy and knowledge building, which operate in an integrated and interlinked manner.
- 3.4** SARDS’ analysis of existing situation of discrimination in society provides the basis for identifying the poor and marginalized especially women. It believes that gender discrimination necessitates focusing upon changing women’s role and status, as agents and leaders of change.
- 3.5** SARDS’ core values that inform its interventions, therefore, include mainstreaming gender-justice and equity through analysis of social reality,

¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/beijingdeclaration.html>

organizational policies, systems and structures, and programme priorities and plans as integral to its vision.

3.6 Gender mainstreaming in the institutional development of SARDS has become an explicit Governing Board Policy, which is driven by SARDS' long-standing concern about gender equity at workplace. Taking recognition of these and adhering to its commitment to gender-justice SARDS formed 'Gender Awareness and Mainstreaming Committee (GAM-C).

3.7 SARDS believes that only with a gender perspective can a complete picture of human relationships, human development and ecosystems be built up. Therefore, the gender policy is an integral part of all its organizational policies, programmes and projects and involves building a culture that understands the issues and policies, which respect diversity and gender, related concerns.

4. WHAT WE MEAN BY GENDER...

4.1 SARDS understands that gender refers to the attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the socio-cultural relationships between women and men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context specific and changeable.

4.2 In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in activities undertaken, access to and control over resources as well as decision-making opportunities.

4.3 Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, which also taken into consideration factors such as class, race, economic status, ethnic group and age.

4.4 SARDS adopts gender perspective, which means focusing on both women and men and their relationships with each other and resources. In addition, it means working with a global perspective that allows for and appreciates regional diversity.

5. OBJECTIVES

5.1 To explicitly state the organizational commitment towards gender

5.2 To provide a direction towards building gender related agenda

5.3 To provide a framework for effectively integrating gender concerns into the organizational agenda and policy domain

5.4 To create equal opportunities and a conducive environment for women and men at work place

5.5 To promote equal representation and participation of women in decisionmaking at the professional / programmatic and administrative levels

6. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

SARDS believes a mere statement of policy and objectives does not ensure the concerns relating to addressing the gender. Towards achieving the above objectives, clear indicators need to be defined to evaluate and assess the organizations commitment towards gender equity on a periodic basis. For this, following systems would be put in place and necessary strategies would be tried out internally and externally: At **Organizational** level and at **Partners level**.

6.1 AT ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL:

6.1.1 Staff Composition / Representation

6.1.1.1 Recruiting adequate women staff and ensuring the balance also at senior levels; with an objective of achieving a numerical gender balance in all posts at all levels.

6.1.1.2 All interviews for staff recruitment in the organization will have women equal represented on the interview panel.

6.1.1.3 Ensuring equal opportunities among male and female staff for personal growth, in promotion benefits, training and working conditions.

6.1.1.4 Ensuring equitable representation and participation of men and women in the core group, Board of Governance and in various functional committees of the organization.

6.1.2 Workplace

6.1.2.1 Providing a safe and secure workplace for women staff, free from sexual harassment with a Gender Complaints committee to look into specific concerns.

- 6.1.2.2 Providing an enabling and friendly work environment in the organization and its various branch/field offices, where both men and women enjoy and actively participate in work. This includes providing flexible working hours and allowing working from home, wherever possible.
- 6.1.2.3 Extending work related concessions and relaxations for women staff depending upon the situations and requirements; e.g. providing secure transport facilities when they work late hours; giving relaxation over travel time for the next day for those in the field; ensuring security measures along with minimum basic facilities for women staff traveling in the field.
- 6.1.2.4 Reviewing the organizational structure, functioning, problems in relation to gender imbalances among staff and the work environment time to time and taking definite steps to address the same.
- 6.1.2.5 Strategic orientation to staff in the field based programmes and advocacy initiatives towards increasing women's access, control and ownership over the natural resources.
- 6.1.2.6 Placing Gender in existing committees of the organizational as well as facilitating the CBOs to have gender balance in the existing committee compositions.

6.1.3 In the Field

- 6.1.3.1 Furthering deliberate and intense efforts to promote participation of women and their collectives in various aspects of development and natural resource management.
- 6.1.3.2 Facilitating participation and even representation of women in various institutional structures created for the development and the management of natural resources like committees, user groups etc.
- 6.1.3.3 Analyses of gender disaggregated roles and work patterns, and make special efforts to reduce the workload of women.
- 6.1.3.4 Extending constant orientation of field-level partners on gender perspectives in development as part of long-term gender goals like formal recognition of women's rights over resources like land, assets, etc.
- 6.1.3.5 Ensuring equal wages to equal work for both men and women in the works of the programmes, where SARDS is directly or indirectly involved either as an anchor of the programme or as a facilitating support service provider.
- 6.1.3.6 Making special efforts to constantly identify vulnerable women and provide them the necessary support and guidance.
- 6.1.3.7 Sensitizing the men and mobilizing their support towards gender balance
- 6.1.3.8 Building awareness and sensitivity by processing information and publishing communication materials in diverse media to appeal different strata of people in our functional domain.

6.1.4 Staff Capacity Building

- 6.1.4.1 All new staff members joining the organization shall be oriented to on SARDS' Gender Policy and the role and functions of Gender Awareness and Mainstreaming Committee (GAM-C) within the organization. It will be an important component of the induction programme.
- 6.1.4.2 Facilitating staff capacity building processes and trainings to enhance perspectives and conceptual clarity on Gender issues (*for all the staff members*).
- 6.1.4.3 Ensuring that all trainings (*internal and external*) facilitated by the organization are gender-sensitive:
 - 6.1.4.3.1 Training content / methodology / mode of facilitation
 - 6.1.4.3.2 Logistics part – time / location of venue / crèche facilities / other logistics / first-aid kit
- 6.1.4.4 Conducting Gender trainings for both men and women; and ensuring participation of women in all the field level meetings and trainings
- 6.1.4.5 All SARDS organized events/programmes, both internal and external, will have a gender component and address gender specific needs of the participants.

6.1.5 Organizational Policies and Systems

- 6.1.5.1 Making all HR systems and policies gender-sensitive and responsive, and integrating gender indicators into staff performance appraisal systems.
- 6.1.5.2 Incorporating and explicitly mentioning gender sensitivity as an essential element in the tasks/job profiles in all terms of reference, including TORs for external consultants.
- 6.1.5.3 Ensuring that the conceptual clarity and sensitivity on gender issues will be one of the important selection criteria in recruitment processes and capacity building efforts of staff.
- 6.1.5.4 Initiating and building the advocacy around gender balance and making efforts to

integrate gender concerns into the scaling up and mainstream developmental programmes.

6.1.5.5 Periodic reviews of the policies would be done through a gender lens to ensure that gender sensitivity is maintained.

6.1.6 Staff Benefits

6.1.6.1 Following all statutory requirements related to maternity and paternity leaves.

6.1.6.2 A woman employee who has put in 3 months of service after confirmation shall be entitled for 4 months of Maternity Leave on full pay and under probation, she will be eligible for leave without pay for the same length of period.

6.1.6.3 Men employees when their spouses have children shall be entitled for 30 days of leave either immediately after child or fifteen days before childbirth and fifteen days after child birth for primary parenting and child nurturing.

6.1.6.4 In case of miscarriage / abortion, women staff can avail 2 weeks of Maternity leave with full pay and spouses are entitled for one week's leave.

6.1.6.5 Making efforts to develop infrastructure for childcare facilities in the office premises in order to ensure that the parents can bring their children in circumstances in which the child cannot be taken.

6.1.6.6 Ensuring that staff access to and use of information technology is gender equitable.

6.1.7 Performance Reviews

6.1.7.1 All performance review forms of individuals by self or supervisors/subordinates will have indicators to assess gender sensitivity in the overall performance.

6.1.7.2 Towards achieving this goal, it would organize regular workshops/seminars and exposure to a variety of other inputs regularly.

6.1.8 Sexual Harassment

6.1.8.1 SARDS is intensely committed to immediately act on complaints relating to sexual harassment made by staff members, guests, and participants to workshops etc., through the active involvement of GAM-C.

6.1.8.2 SARDS is responsible to set up structures where staff members may feel free to seek redressal of their complaints.

6.1.9 Documentation of Processes and Dissemination

6.1.9.1 SARDS would also ensure a detailed documentation of all the processes related to the activities on the issues of gender within the organization.

6.1.9.2 This would be accessible to all those who wish to use the same to promote and strengthen gender equality within their work spheres. These would also be reported in SARDS newsletter and website regularly.

6.1.10 Mainstreaming

6.1.10.1 SARDS would set up systems to ensure that gender equity forms an essential element of all project planning, implementation and monitoring with specific indicators to measure the progress that has taken place with respect to the same.

6.1.10.2 All reports and evaluations would also include a specific focus on the gender component.

6.1.10.3 Similar interventions will be ensured with all those in collaboration with SARDS are also gender just and equitable.

6.1.10.4 Gender audits and gender analysis would form a part of SARDS' gender mainstreaming efforts.

6.1.10.5 In an attempt to focus on, address and integrate issues of gender equity within the organization, the GAM-C will play a key role in the mainstreaming of gender within the organization.

6.1.10.6 The basic principles to be followed in mainstreaming gender will be:

6.1.10.7 Establishing adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring of progress institutionally and as well as programmatically.

6.1.10.8 The identification of issues and problems within the organization should focus on the gender differences and disparities wherever they exist.

6.2 AT PARTNERS LEVEL:

6.2.1 SARDS would proactively make several efforts to promoting gender concerns in the work with partners. It involves extending support to partners in organizing training

programmes, conducting gender studies, preparing resource material, providing documentation support, etc.

- 6.2.2 SARDS would extend support to partner organizations in developing their own gender policies, strategies and programmes.
- 6.2.3 SARDS would further associate and strengthen linkages with all possible Gender Agencies, State and Central level; GO and NGO level; to work on various women issues to find amicable, acceptable, lasting and law-abiding solutions.
- 6.2.4 Sharing Gender reports with our network members and partner organizations and also facilitating similar process within the partner organizations to promote gender sensitivity.
- 6.2.5 Supporting and expressing solidarity with partners at field level in taking up issues of discrimination or harassment against women

7. GENDER GLOSSARY

- 7.1 **GENDER** is used to describe those characteristics of women and men, which are socially constructed.
- 7.2 **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 behaviour makes up gender identity and determines gender roles.
- 7.3 **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 and development. The way power is distributed in most societies means that women have less access to and control over resources to protect lawful rights.
- 7.4 **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.
- 7.5 **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.
- 7.6 **GENDER MAINSTREAMING** is defined as "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, 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 programmes 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"² "Mainstreaming gender is both a technical and a political process which requires shifts in organizational cultures and ways of thinking, as well as in the goals, structures and resource allocations...Mainstreaming requires changes at different levels within institutions, in agenda setting, policy making, planning, implementation and evaluation. Instruments for the mainstreaming efforts include new staffing and budgeting practices, training programmes, policy procedures and guidelines."³

8. CONCLUSION

SARDS, based on the BEIJING DECLARATION, China-September 1995, signed by the Government of India, affirms its commitment to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere, especially in its operational areas, in the interest of all humanity which is in line with its vision. To SARDS, gender is a crosscutting issue and the implementation of the Gender Policy and mainstreaming of the same is a committed task, which involves all stakeholders at every level. It is extremely important to mention at this juncture that the standards, guidelines and code of behavior mentioned in this policy must be continuously updated to incorporate good practices in the field of Gender and Development besides taking into account local understanding of gender sensitivities, culture, religion, local law, traditional practices and partnership arrangements and changing realities. All staff should be aware of the spirit and substance of each of these tenets (to the extent of reading through it/being oriented to it by signing a pledge or acceptance policy) before a formal acceptance of employment.

² (E/1997/L.30 Para Adopted by ECOSOC 14.7.97)

³ (Development and Gender, Issue 5: Approaches to institutionalizing gender, Gender in Brief, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, England, May 1997.)

9. DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

To be signed by all SARDS committee members, staff, volunteers, visitors and partner organizations. A copy will be kept on file in the SARDS office.

I declare that :

- I have read and understood the SARDS Gender Policy and have attended / will attend the (date) Gender Policy training.
- I will work within the procedure as laid out in the SARDS Gender Policy.
- I have not been accused or convicted of any offence involving gender discrimination of any form.
- I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding the gender discrimination while engaged in SARDS activities, the allegation will be thoroughly investigated in cooperation with the appropriate authorities.

Signature :

Date :