

INF Australia GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

Version	4	Developed:	April 2012
Owner:	Board	Latest revision:	May 2020
Users:	INF Directors, Staff, Volunteers and Overseas Development Partners	Scheduled review date	May 2022

This Policy Complies With: Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (CTH); Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW); Fair Work Act 2009 (CTH)

RELATED INF AUSTRALIA POLICIES: BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY; COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY; DEVELOPMENT POLICY; DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE POLICY; EQUITY, INCLUSION & RESPECT POLICY; PARTNERSHIP POLICY; PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE, EXPLOITATION AND HARASSMENT POLICY

RELATED INF AUSTRALIA PRACTICE DOCUMENTS: COUNTRY AND SECTORAL STRATEGY; PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT MANUAL

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines INF Australia’s commitment to gender equality both in its operations in Australia and through the development work of its partners in Nepal. We understand gender equality as “equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys.”¹ Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is a core goal within the sustainable development agenda [Sustainable Development Goal 5] and it informs and underpins all aspects of our work.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Theological Rationale

Our concern for gender equality arises from our Christian faith. Christians believe that women and men are both created in the image of God, equally endowed with dignity and the mandate to steward creation [Gen 1:27-28]. Gender inequality is therefore contrary to God’s intended order, which was “very good” [Gen 1:31].

The ministry of Jesus demonstrated inclusion, empowerment and partnership with women in a culture where women had low social status and little power. We seek to follow the example of Jesus and love one another [John 13:34, John 15:12], regardless of gender, as he instructed.

2.2. Development Rationale

Nepal in general remains a patriarchal society, where women and girls have traditionally held low social status and bear the heaviest impacts of poverty. Given our commitment to work with the

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, DFAT, Gender equality and women’s empowerment strategy, 2016 p.3 <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-strategy.pdf>

poorest and most disadvantaged people in Nepal, it is imperative that we work with women and girls to promote their rights and wellbeing. Gender equality is central to the achievement of sustainable development and to our vision of “life in all its fullness.”

In addition, we believe that, at minimum, effective development must consider how interventions will differentially impact upon genders. Development that does not consider gender has the potential to, at best, miss opportunities to promote gender equality and, at worst, do harm.

Gender equality is a priority of the Australian Aid program through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). INF Australia aligns itself with the three priority areas for action identified by DFAT, namely:

1. Increasing women’s voice in decision making, leadership, and peace-building;
2. Women’s economic empowerment; and,
3. Ending violence against women and girls at home, in their communities, and in disaster and conflict situations.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

1. Promote and ensure gender equality through all of INFA’s operations in Australia.
2. Clearly outline INFA’s approach to promoting gender equality in Nepal through the work of our partners.

4. POLICY

4.1. IN AUSTRALIA

INF Australia does not tolerate unlawful discrimination based on sex, gender, or gender identity in the workplace. INF Australia does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of sex or gender when remunerating employees. INF Australia will encourage all staff to develop professionally, and will not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of gender when offering professional development opportunities. Any incidents of such unlawful discrimination will be addressed according to our Complaints Handling Policy. INF Australia also has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation, bullying, abuse and harassment in the workplace.

INF Australia wants to achieve equal representation of men and women among staff and volunteers, regarding this as beneficial through the breadth of experiences and insights brought through diversity.

INF Australia wants to achieve a gender-balanced Board that provides an appropriate and necessary skill mix.

INF Australia recognises the role of both men and women in parenting. In addition to unpaid parental leave entitlements mandated by the Fair Work Act 2009 and the Federal Government Paid Parental Leave Scheme, INF Australia provides four weeks pro-rata paid parental leave to both male and female employees, within the first twelve months of the birth or adoption of a child. This is also available at half-pay rates. INF Australia is also committed to offering flexible working conditions to allow parents to both work and care for their families, to be developed on a mutually-agreed basis between employer and employee.

INF Australia recognises that domestic and family violence is a significant issue in Australia that primarily affects women. INF Australia will provide five days paid domestic and family violence leave, and up to five days additional unpaid leave. In the instance of an employee requesting to take domestic and family violence leave, INF Australia will ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

INF Australia is committed to using gender-inclusive language in its engagement with the public, including when quoting from the Bible – preferring inclusive language where reference to both genders would or should be understood.

Where appropriate, INF Australia will promote gender equality more broadly, including when sharing with Australian Christian churches and audiences about the development work of our partners.

4.2. WITH DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

INF Australia is committed to empowering women and girls and supporting progress towards gender equality in Nepal through the work of its development partners. In particular, it supports community development projects and programs that prevent and respond to gender-based violence, increase women’s economic development, improve local health services [including maternal and child health], and encourage female leadership and decision-making.

INF Australia commits to ensure gender equality is an outcome of its partners’ community development work by supporting projects that adopt either a targeted or mainstream approach to gender equality [see section 6].

All projects supported by INF Australia, whether targeted or mainstream, are required to meet these requirements:

- A gender analysis is conducted, with findings informing project design.
- Barriers to the participation of women and girls are identified, and strategies are designed to overcome these.
- Projects consider systemic and structural barriers to gender equality and wherever possible and appropriate, seek to address these, for example through advocacy.
- All potential risks to women and girls are identified during project planning and appropriate treatments are proactively devised. Risks are monitored throughout the life of the project. Projects that pose or develop significant risks of harm to women and girls, which cannot be effectively mitigated against, will not be supported.
- Gender equality outcomes, indicators and targets are explicitly identified in project logics and logframes.
- Gender equality outcomes are monitored and evaluated. Project data collected is disaggregated by age and sex, and outcomes for women and girls are explicitly reviewed in evaluations.
- There is sufficient time and resources for projects to achieve these outcomes and make genuine change.

INF Australia believes that engaging men and boys as key stakeholders and allies is critical to the success of both targeted and mainstream projects, and will ensure that partners do so

appropriately. Recognising, influencing and addressing interpersonal, social, economic and political power dynamics is critical to achieving gender equality.

INF Australia recognises that working towards gender equality in Nepal involves challenging patriarchal norms and addressing sensitive issues, including harmful practices like early and/or forced marriage, chhaupadi (menstruation practices), dowry, son preference, and violence against women. Whilst always seeking to support the wellbeing of women and girls, and achieve gender equality in Nepal, INF Australia will support and follow the leading of its local partners in the work of influencing culture. INF Australia will strive to understand these practices within their social, economic, political and religious contexts and refrain from sensationalising them.

Recognising the significant and historic imbalance of decision-making power between men and women in Nepal, where possible and appropriate, INF Australia will support and encourage female leaders and leadership in its development partners.

5. Monitoring & Review

INF Australia will undertake an organisational gender audit every five years, developing a Gender Action Plan each time to continuously improve our gender equality practice.

INF Australia requires our development partners to undergo systematic gender audits every three years, to continuously improve their practice organisationally and through programming. Gender equality outcomes will also be monitored through partners' semi-annual and annual reports, monitoring visits by INF Australia staff, and in all project evaluations.

6. Glossary

Gender: The socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men.[1] These are learned, vary across and within cultures and are changeable.

Gender analysis: Highlights the differences between and among women and men, girls and boys in terms of their relative distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints, and power in a given context.[2]

Gender balance: Equal representation and participation of men and women.[3]

Gender equality: Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys.[4]

Gender identity: The gender-related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person's designated sex at birth.

Gender justice: The protection and promotion of the dignity of women and men who, being created in the image of God, are co-responsible stewards of creation. Gender justice is expressed through equality and balanced power relations between women and men and the elimination of

the institutional, cultural and interpersonal systems of privilege and oppression that sustain discrimination.[6]

Gender mainstreaming: 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. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.[7]

Sex: The different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females.

Targeted approach: Targeted projects refer to those whose main objective is to improve gender equality. This is also known as gender programming.

Women's empowerment: The process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices.[8]

[1] WHO, 'Gender' in Gender equity and human rights. 2019, viewed 12 August 2019, <https://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/gender-definition/en/>.

[2] Commonwealth of Australia, DFAT, Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) Manual, 2019, p. 23, <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/anccp-manual.pdf>.

[3] E Neuenfeldt (ed.), Gender Justice Policy, The Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches, Switzerland, 2013 p. 37, https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/DTPW-WICAS_Gender_Justice.pdf.

[4] DFAT 2016, p.3.

[5] European Institute for Gender Equality, 'Gender identity in Glossary & Thesaurus. 2019, viewed 12 August 2019, <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1179>.

[6] Neuenfeldt, p. 38.

[7] United Nations Economic and Social Council, Gender Mainstreaming, 1997, p. 2, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/GMS.PDF>.

[8] European Institute for Gender Equality, 'Empowerment of women' in Glossary & Thesaurus. 2019, viewed 12 August 2019, <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1102>.

REVISION HISTORY

Date	No	Summary of Changes	Section/s that changed	Authorised by:
April 2012	v1	created		
June 2015	v2	New format	1, 2.2	INFA Board
Nov 2017	v3	Additions	2.2 changed, 2.3 added	INFA Board
May 2020	v4	Major revision and additions Reviewed by Pro Legis	1 changed, 2.1 and 2.2 expanded, 3 added, 2.3 "Specific commitments" removed and revised commitments incorporated in 4.1 and 4.2, 5 added, 6 added	INFA Board