



Minah Academy Mission (The Mission)

POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY



Minah Academy Mission is pleased that the evaluation of the implementation of its policy on gender equality validated the mission's good work and strong leadership to date. The report recognized the continuing relevance of THE MISSION's Policy on Gender Equality both within the community, and nation Affairs and in the development cooperation community.

Minah Academy Mission remains committed to creating, with our partners, a better nation for all-a nation where inequality on any grounds, be it gender, class, race or ethnicity, is finally overcome.

Goal and objectives

Goal

The goal of THE MISSION's gender equality policy is to support the achievement of equality between women and men to ensure sustainable development.

Objectives

The policy aims to:

- To advance women's equal participation with men as decision makers in shaping the sustainable development of their societies;
- To support women and girls in the realization of their full human rights; and
- To reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over the resources and benefits of development.

Gender equity and gender equality

Gender equity means being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures are often needed to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating as equals. Equity leads to equality.

Gender equality means that women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunity to realize their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results.

Originally it was believed that equality could be achieved simply by giving women and men the same opportunities. Same treatment, however, was found not necessarily to yield equal results. Today, the concept of equality acknowledges that women and men may sometimes require different treatment to achieve similar results, due to different life conditions or to compensate for past discrimination.

Gender equality, therefore, is the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and the differences between women and men, and the varying roles they play.

Principles

Minah Academy Mission's Policy on Gender Equality is rooted in the following principles:

1. Gender equality must be considered as an integral part of all THE MISSION policies, programs and projects. Addressing gender equality requires that woman's views, interests and needs shape the development agenda as much as men's, and that the development agenda supports progress toward more equal relations between women and men.
2. Achieving gender equality requires the recognition that every policy, program and project affects women and men differently. Women and men have different perspectives, needs, interests, roles and resources-and those differences may also be reinforced by class, race, caste, ethnicity or age. Policies, programs and projects must address the differences in experiences and situations between and among women and men.
3. Achieving gender equality does not mean that women become the same as men. Equality means that one's rights or opportunities do not depend on being male or female.

Empowerment

Empowerment is about people — both women and men — taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems, and developing self-reliance. It is not only a collective, social and political process, but an individual one as well — and it is not only a process but an outcome too.

Outsiders cannot empower women: only women can empower themselves to make choices or to speak out on their own behalf. However, institutions, including international cooperation agencies, can support processes that increase women's self-confidence, develop their self-reliance, and help them set their own agendas.

1. Women's empowerment is central to achieving gender equality. Through empowerment, women become aware of unequal power relations, gain control over their lives, and acquire a greater voice to overcome inequality in their home, workplace and community.
2. Promoting the equal participation of women as agents of exchange in economic, social and political processes is essential to achieving gender equality. Equal participation goes beyond numbers. It involves women's equal right to articulate their needs and interests, as well as their vision of society, and to shape the decisions that affect their lives, whatever cultural context they live in. Partnership with women's organizations and other groups working for gender equality is necessary to assist this process.
3. Gender equality can only be achieved through partnership between women and men. When choices for both women and men are enlarged, all society benefits. Gender equality is an issue that concerns both women and men, and achieving it will involve working with men to bring about changes in attitudes, behavior, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, in the community, and in national, donor and international institutions.

4. Achieving gender equality will require specific measures designed to eliminate gender inequalities. Given ingrained disparities, equal treatment of women and men is insufficient as a strategy for gender equality. Specific measures must be developed to address the policies, laws, procedures, norms, beliefs, practices and attitudes that maintain gender inequality. These gender equity measures, developed with stakeholders, should support women's capacity to make choices about their own lives.
5. The Mission policies, programs, and projects should contribute to gender equality. Gender equality results should be incorporated into all of the Mission's international cooperation initiatives although application will vary among branches, programs and projects.

Gender analysis as a tool

Gender analysis is an indispensable tool for both understanding the local context and promoting gender equality.

The Mission defines knowledge of the local context as: "the recognition that development interventions operate within existing social, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional and political structures in any community, country or region.

Gender analysis examines one of these relationships, that between women and men. It identifies the varied roles played by women and men, girls and boys in the household, community, workplace, political processes, and economy. These different roles usually result in women having less access than men to resources and decision-making processes, and less control over them.

Gender, gender roles and the gender division of labor

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviors of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). These roles and expectations are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures. Gender analysis has increasingly revealed how women's subordination is socially constructed, and therefore able to change, as opposed to being biologically predetermined and therefore static.

Gender analysis is an essential tool for understanding the local context. It is particularly useful in mission design as it helps planners identify constraints and structure mission so that objectives can be met and measured. The use of gender analysis, throughout the project cycle, provides information on:

- The differential perspectives, roles, needs, and interests of women and men in the project area, country, region, or institution, including the practical needs and strategic interests of women and men;
- The relations between women and men pertaining to their access to, and control over resources, benefits and decision-making processes;
- The potential differential impact of program or mission interventions on women and men, girls and boys;
- Social and cultural constraints, opportunities, and entry points for reducing gender inequalities and promoting more equal relations between women and men;
- The capacity of institutions to program for gender equality; and

- The differences among women and men and the diversity of their circumstances, social relationships and consequent status (e.g. their class, race, caste, ethnicity, age, culture and abilities).

Practical needs and strategic interests

Practical needs can be defined as immediate necessities (water, shelter, food, income and health care) within a specific context. Projects that address practical needs generally include responses to inadequate living conditions. Strategic interests, on the other hand, refer to the relative status of women and men within society.

These interests vary in each context and are related to roles and expectations, as well as to gender divisions of labor, resources and power. Strategic interests may include gaining legal rights, closing wage gaps, and protection from domestic violence, increased decision making, and women's control over their bodies.

To ensure sustainable benefits, both practical needs and strategic interests must be taken into account in the design of policies, programs and projects.

Gender analysis provides information to determine the most effective strategies in a particular context and to identify results that support gender equality. For example, programs or projects may be identified whose principal objective will be to support gender equality, or entry points for the support of gender equality may be identified within programs or projects where gender equality is one of a number of objectives.

Gender analysis is required for all THE MISSION policies, programs and projects. Application of gender analysis will vary according to the nature and scope of initiatives.

Elements of gender analysis

For gender analysis to be effective, resources and commitment to implement the results of the analysis are necessary. Consider three important points:

- It requires skilled professionals with adequate resources.
- It benefits from the use of local expertise.
- The findings must be used to actually shape the design of policies, programs and projects.

Good practices to promote gender equality

Two decades of experience within THE MISSION have taught us several lessons that are relevant to supporting gender equality throughout THE MISSION programming initiatives. Gender equality is more apt to be achieved if the following conditions exist:

At the corporate level

- Senior management is committed to gender equality; There are sufficient resources and knowledgeable personnel, along with an enabling corporate environment to promote gender equality;
- There are accountability frameworks, which ensure that the gender equality policy is implemented;
- Qualified gender equality specialists (especially locally-based ones) are employed on a regular basis; and
- Gender equality is treated as an objective in and of itself.

In the planning process

- Gender equality is recognized as relevant to every aspect of international cooperation from macroeconomic reform to infrastructure projects;
- Gender analysis is carried out at the earliest stages of the project or program cycle and the findings are integrated into project or program planning;
- Institutional weaknesses or cultural biases that could constrain the achievement of gender equality results are recognized in policy, program, or project design, and strategies are developed to address them;
- Means are identified to ensure there is broad participation of women and men as decision makers in the planning process;
- Clear, measurable, and achievable gender equality results are developed in the earliest phases of the process;
- Gender-sensitive indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, are developed (this requires the collection of baseline data disaggregated by sex, as well as by age and socioeconomic and ethnic groups);
- A specific strategy and budget is provided to support the achievement of gender equality results;
- Partners and implementers are selected on the basis of their commitment and capacity to promote gender equality; and
- Gender equality specialists are involved from the start of the planning process.

During implementation

- Gender equality specialists are part of project teams;
- External support is sought from women's organizations, key female and male decision makers, leaders and allies;
- The objective of gender equality is not lost in rhetoric or in preoccupation with agency processes;

- There is flexibility and openness to respond to new and innovative methods, and to opportunities for supporting gender equality that present themselves during implementation; and
- There is broad participation of women in the implementation.

Performance measurement

- Gender equality results are expressed, measured and reported on using qualitative and quantitative indicators;
- Data, disaggregated by sex, as well as by age and socio-economic and ethnic groups, is collected;
- Qualified gender equality specialists (especially locally-based ones) are involved in performance measurement;
- Information on progress in reducing gender inequalities is collected and analyzed as an integral part of performance measurement;
- A long-term perspective is taken (i.e., social change takes time); and
- Participatory approaches are used, where women and men actively take part in the planning of performance measurement frameworks, in their implementation, and in the discussion of their findings.

Gender analysis guidelines

Gender analysis: What to ask

- Who will lose?
- Have women been consulted on the 'problem' the intervention is to solve? How have they been involved in development of the 'solution'?
- Does the intervention challenge the existing gender division of labor, tasks, responsibilities and opportunities?
- What is the best way to who is the target (both direct and indirect) of the proposed policy, program or project? Who will benefit?
- Build on (and strengthen) the government's commitment to the advancement of women?
- What is the relationship between the intervention and other actions and organizations — national, regional or international?
- Where do opportunities for change or entry points exist? And how can they best be used?
- What specific ways can be proposed for encouraging and enabling women to participate in the policy/program/project, despite their traditionally more domestic location and subordinate position?
- What is the long-term impact in regard to women's increased ability to take charge of their own lives, and to take collective action to solve problems?

Gender analysis: What to do

- Gain an understanding of gender relations, the division of labor between men and women (who does what work), and who has access to, and control over, resources.
- Include domestic (reproductive) and community work in the work profile. Recognize the ways women and men work and contribute to the economy, their family and society.
- Use participatory processes and include a wide range of female and male stakeholders at the governmental level and from civil society — including women's organizations and gender equality experts.
- Identify barriers to women's participation and productivity (social, economic, legal, political, and cultural).
- Gain an understanding of women's practical needs and strategic interests, and identify opportunities to support both.
- Consider the differential impact of the initiative on men and women, and identify consequences to be addressed.
- Establish baseline data, ensure sex-disaggregated data, set measurable targets, and identify expected results and indicators.
- Outline the expected risks (including backlash) and develop strategies to minimize these risks.

