



Voluntary Health Association of Tripura

(DONATIONS EXEMPTED U/S 80G OF INCOME TAX ACT, 1961)

GENDER POLICY

(25th February 2018)

Introduction:

Gender is psychosocial component of the individual. Gender is social and sex is anatomical and physiological differences between two groups of individuals. So gender is reflected in each and every social & psychological setup of the individual. Our society is passing through a gender – biased setup where the social, economic and political rights of women are neglected or least addressed or do not addressed at all. VHAT -a state level network of NGOs and CBOs, has its existence in this gender biased society with the possibility to be effected by gender discrimination.

Over the time, it was realized that VHAT should have its Gender policy formally written, approved and publicized so that it not only gives direction for the organization in practice, but also holds the organization accountable. It also comes from the understanding that, inequality between men and women is deep rooted and it is manifested in discrimination against women in different forms. To whatever extent, one might be sensitive; it needs conscious and continuous efforts to achieve a balanced environment both at organizational level and also in work with the partners at field level. Framing a Gender policy is a commitment towards those efforts. The overall effort is to provide an enabling environment for women within the organization, member NGOs, various partners and the communities with whom we are working and strengthen the gender sensitivity among all.

VHAT Gender Policy was first formulated in 1999. Over the years it was felt that the Gender Policy should be revised to make it more gender sensitive. As a result the present Gender Policy was evolved.

Objectives of Gender Policy:

- To explicitly state the organizational commitment towards gender equality
- To provide a framework for effectively integrating gender concerns into the organizational agenda and policy domain
- To create equal opportunities and a conducive environment for women and men at work place
- To promote equal representation and participation of women in decision making at the professional/ programmatic and administrative levels.
- To promote gender justice and gender empowerment through gender sensitive network of voluntary organizations.

Gender Definitions for VHAT Gender Policy:

Gender:

Gender is a socially constructed definition of women and men. It is not the same as sex (biological characteristics of women and men) and it is not the same as women.

VHAT 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. 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.

Gender equality:

Gender equality is the state of equal ease of access to opportunities, resources, services, benefits, decision-making power and the state of valuing different behaviors, aspirations and needs equally, regardless of **gender**. Gender equality describes the absence of obvious or hidden disparities among individuals based on gender.

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Gender equity:

Gender equity refers to justice in the distribution of resources, benefits and responsibilities between women and men, boys and girls. The power relations in present society between girls and boys, men and women are unequal. VHAT is committed to address such inequalities in its policies & activities.

Gender Mainstreaming:

Gender Mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy /means for promoting gender equality. This concept of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of society was clearly established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the Platform for Action adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing (China) in 1995. It is the public policy concept of assessing the different implications for women and men of any planned policy action, including legislation and programmes, in all areas and levels. It values the diversity among both men and women.

Gender-based violence:

It is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males. Examples include sexual violence, including sexual exploitation/abuse and forced prostitution; domestic violence; trafficking; forced/early marriage; harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; honour killings; and deprivation of widows from properties.

Women's Empowerment:

It involves awareness-raising, building of self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. Empowerment comes from within; women empower themselves. Increase women's power through power to; power with and power from within which focus on utilizing individuals and collective strengths to work towards common goals without coercion or domination.

The Policy

The following systems would be put in place and necessary strategies would be tried -

A) General Committee

The General Committee of VHAT consisting of representatives of the organizations and individual members will maintain a percentage of women ranging between lowest one third and highest half of the total strength. VHAT will encourage the women organizations to become members and to maintain the same percentage in constituent of the strength of the member organizations.

B) The Executive Committee

VHAT Executive Committee shall constitute women representatives in the order of lowest one third and highest half of the total strength of the members. At least one Office Bearer shall be from the women members of the Executive Committee.

C) Staff composition/representation

- 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
- Ensuring equal opportunities among male and female staff for personal growth, in promotion benefits, training and working conditions
- Ensuring equitable representation and participation of men and women in the core group

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D) Organizational policies and systems

- Making all HR systems and policies gender-sensitive and responsive, and integrating gender indicators into staff performance appraisal systems.
- 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.
- 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
- Initiating and building the advocacy around gender balance and making efforts to integrate gender concerns into the scaling up and mainstream developmental programs

E) Member Organizations (Network)

- The Member organizations are the partners of VHAT network participating in the developmental activities in their areas. VHAT would extend support to partner organizations in developing their own gender policies, strategies and programs.
- Sharing Gender reports with our network members to promote gender sensitivity
- Supporting and expressing solidarity with member organizations / partners at field level in taking up issues of discrimination or harassment against women , if needed

GENDER Components in VHAT's Program:

Training on Gender Sensitization: Understanding the power relations between women and men and between other subordinate and dominant groups, empowering women and other marginalized groups is a significant part of VHAT's work on promoting Gender Equality.

Thus the Training for gender equality and women's empowerment is an essential component to provide knowledge, techniques and tools to develop skills and changes in attitudes and behaviors. It is a continuous and long-term process that requires political will and commitment in order to create inclusive societies that recognize the need to promote gender equality.

Embedding Gender contents in projects / program : VHAT implements developmental projects by direct involvement or indirectly as catalyser through the members & non-member organizations. VHAT is committed to embed gender components in each of the project/program of any form and of any content.

Specific program for Women Empowerment: Unequal gender relations are one of the underlying causes of poverty and rights denial that cuts across most of the communities where we work. VHAT, on principle, will organize specific program for women empowerment in the society which would constitute – i)Policy level advocacy, ii)Formation of Women Self Help Groups/microcredit groups for promotion of income , thus promotion of health, literacy & social inclusion.

GENDER guideline for personal behaviour:

Every individual is different. Nevertheless, gender often plays an important role in determining how individuals behave in an organization. Males and females in general have different traits. Knowledge of these traits helps individuals, particularly those of opposite genders, work together effectively in an organization. When genders learn to interact with one another, mixing traits of males and females creates a stronger organization.

Equal respect: VHAT members ,members of associated organizations, staff and volunteers will show equal respect to both male and female. Any proof of indecent behaviour which may affect the gender dignity shall disqualify him or her to remain associated with VHAT. Any proof of indecent behaviour of a male staff to the female staff may lead to termination from the job , after one warning , if found necessary.

Indiscriminate work load: The women staff members shall share equal work load for equal job requirement with male staff members. VHAT management should create such a work culture so that the women feel no psychological discrimination regarding work load distribution between the two genders.

Equal salary for equal job: Women staff shall be awarded with equal salary/honorarium against equal job requirement as the male staffs. They will enjoy all facilities like their male colleagues according to capacity of the organization.

Monitoring of Implementation of VHAT Gender Policy:

- A **monitoring Committee** will be formed and re-formed during the first Executive Committee Meeting of each financial year consisting two senior staff members(one female, one male), Executive Director, President and one member from member organization. The VHAT President will be the convener of this committee. This committee will also be regarded as the '**Sexual Harassment Complaint Committee of VHAT**'.
- This committee will generally hold meeting once in a year to examine the proper implementation of the gender policy. However, the meeting can be held as and when necessary.
- If there is any complaint of sexual harassment, this committee will act as per '**Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**'.

Review of the Policy:

The review of this policy will be at the end of every fifth year with participation of staff and two representatives from member organizations . Then the reviewed policy will be approved by the General Committee during the Annual General Meeting.

Conclusion:

This is a policy statement, which outlines VHAT's sensitivity towards Gender and its operational framework to address the related concerns. VHAT Gender Policy will not only help in application of the gender democracy in the organization but also inspire the NGOs & CBOs of Tripura to become gender sensitive and active in establishment of gender equity in the social organizations in particular and the society in general. This policy will empower the women to participate in policy making, program planning and implementation, thus empowering VHAT to work for promotion of realization of women's rights and gender equality.

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