



## Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy

<b>Policy &amp; Procedure Owner</b>		ERFA Board
<b>Approved by</b>		ERFA Board of Directors
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### 1. Introduction

Edmund Rice Foundation Australia’s (ERFA) Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy is in line with the Third UN Millennium Development Goal - *to promote gender equality and empower women* and is aligned with DFAT’s policy on gender equality and empowering women and girls.

Globally, gender based discrimination is the most systemic and widespread of all forms of discrimination.

Development activities should benefit women and men equally.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with ERFA’s Diversity & Inclusiveness Policy, which gives expression to ERFA’s commitment to inclusiveness and offering support in a spirit of human solidarity regardless of race, culture, gender and religious or political beliefs.

### 2. Rationale

ERFA’s Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy is grounded in the following logic:

- the principles of sustainable development are pivotal in working to eradicate poverty (see ERFA Sustainable Development Policy)
- there can be no real solution to the eradication of poverty through sustainable development without an understanding and promotion of human rights
- gender rights are human rights – hence, the promotion of gender justice is an essential element in the promotion of human rights
- empowering women empowers communities and is of central importance in eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development

ERFA recognizes that gender equality and female empowerment are now universally recognized as core development objectives, fundamental for the realization of human rights and effective, sustainable development outcomes. ERFA affirms the critical role women play in accelerating progress in development.

### 3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to articulate ERFA’s commitment to the principles of gender equality and female empowerment and its expectation that its in-country partners will adhere to these principles in all stages of the project cycle.

## 4. Definitions

### 4.1 Female Empowerment

Female empowerment is achieved when women and girls acquire the power to exercise their rights, act freely and fulfil their potential as full and equal members of their society.

### 4.2 Gender Equality

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women states that gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. These rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on whether persons are born male or female. Gender equality is not a women's issue but concerns and fully engages men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for and indicator of sustainable people-centred development.

### 4.3 Gender Integration

Gender integration involves identifying and addressing gender inequalities at all stages of the project cycle, including project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

### 4.4 Partners

Edmund Rice Foundation Australia (ERFA) is a company limited by guarantee. The objects of the company are set out in clause 3 of ERFA's constitution. Clause 3 (f) reads as follows: *To develop partnerships with overseas aid agencies or formal arrangements with other delivery agents related to the Company but resident in Developing Countries for the implementation of the objects in paragraph (a).*

One of ERFA's roles is to act as trustee of the Edmund Rice Overseas Aid Fund.

Throughout its policies and official documentation ERFA uses the term Partners for those organisations with which it has formed alliances in developing countries for the receipt of overseas aid funding for the in-country delivery of education, health and development projects. These are not partnerships in the legal sense. Rather they are alliances for funding that ERFA has formed with in-country organisations with whom ERFA has communicated its vision, mission, values, policies and expectations with respect to sustainable development and whose own vision, mission, values, policies and development goals are congruent with those of ERFA.

## 5. Policy

With respect to Gender Equality and Female Empowerment, ERFA is committed to:

- adopting a rights-based approach to issues of gender which promotes and advocates the rights of women and girls and models best practice in gender justice
- increasing the capacity of women and girls to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes and influence decision-making in their households, communities and societies
- eliminating gender inequalities in access to, control over and benefits from resources, education and health services and employment opportunities
- ensuring that gender equality is taken into account in every stage of the project cycle
- ensuring women's equal participation in community consultations, decision-making processes in program design and implementation
- integrating gender equality issues into program monitoring and evaluation
- providing specific support to strengthen women's organisations and women's networks
- supporting women in achieving leadership positions in their communities and societies

- encouraging gender balance in all working groups and initiatives
- eliminating all forms of discrimination based on gender
- responding to gender-based violence (which is an expression of unequal power relations) and mitigating its harmful effects on individuals and communities
- ensuring that gender equality and female empowerment training is provided for all project personnel as a capacity building measure
- actively encouraging men to promote gender equality and female empowerment
- ensuring that language and images portraying women and girls are culturally sensitive and promote gender equality and female empowerment

## **6. Conclusion**

In summary, ERFA affirms its belief that:

- There is a direct correlation between effective sustainable development and equal access for females and males to the distribution of opportunities, resources and choices, so that they have equal power to shape their own lives and contribute to their communities.
- Societies with greater gender equality experience faster economic growth and benefit from greater productivity.
- Empowering women to participate in and lead civic and private organizations makes these organizations more representative and effective.
- Increasing girls' and women's education and access to resources improves the health and education of the next generation.
- Women play critical roles as effective peace advocates, community leaders and champions of human rights.