

Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy

Details

Policy & Procedure Owner	ERFA Board	
Approved by	ERFA Board of Directors	
Date Approved	Date of Last Revision	Next Review
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Abbreviations

ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ERFA	Edmund Rice Foundation Australia
QP	Quality Principle
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Vulnerability Context Analysis	VCA
GEFEP	Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy

Definitions

Associate	Anyone in the community who interacts with ERFA Staff and Partners
ACFID Member	A not-for-profit organisation that has obtained membership with ACFID
Donor	Members of the public who contribute to ERFA in cash or in kind
Partner	Any organisation which has an MOU / contract with / or receives funding from ERFA (also referred to as Implementing Partner)
Program	Programs are overarching development approaches and initiatives that set priorities and guide project outcomes, results and activities. Programs can comprise Edmund Rice Ministries or other entities
Project	Projects are the development activities of a Program
Project Beneficiary	Children and adults who participate in and benefit from ERFA-partner programs (also referred to as Primary Stakeholder)
Staff	Directors, employees, contractors, subcontractors, outworkers, apprentices and trainees, work experience students, volunteers, employers and any other person who performs work for ERFA or ERFK

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Related policies

- Complaints Handling Policy
- Diversity & Inclusiveness Policy
- Program Design, Funding & Management Policy

Related documents

- International Project Partnership and Funding Application Form
- Project Risk Management Framework
- Vulnerability Context Analysis Template

Implementation plan

- Included as part of Staff induction
- Included as part of briefing documents for all immersions, excursions and initiatives where staff and associates of ERFA are involved
- Specific reference to Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in partnership agreements/funding contracts
- Incorporated in Partnership and Funding Application templates
- Specific reference in quarterly monitoring report templates and annual acquittal forms

Compliance

This policy applies to Staff and Associates (as included in the definitions of this Policy) that act for, represent or visit ERFA and ERFA partner projects. Failure by ERFA Partners to fully comply with any aspect of this policy could result in termination of agreements including, but not limited to, MOUs, partnerships agreements and funding contracts.

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1.0 Policy overview

1.1 Policy purpose and commitments

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 Partners will adhere to these principles in all stages of the project cycle.

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 realise 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 and decision-making processes in program design and implementation;
- integrating gender equality issues into project monitoring and evaluation, learning from and adapting project outputs where necessary;
- 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.

1.2 United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #5: Gender Equality

ERFA's Gender Equality Policy is grounded in the United Nations Development Programme's 5th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), Gender Equality: to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. SDG #5 has 9 targets:

- to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;
- to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;
- to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation;
- to recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work;
- to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making;
- to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights;
- to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, property ownership and financial services;
- to promote empowerment of women through technology;
- to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

2.0 ACFID context

The ACFID Code of Conduct requires that members meet the following Compliance Indicators:

- 2.3.1 Members demonstrate an organisational commitment to gender equality and equity.
- 2.3.2 Members' planning process includes consultation with those marginalised due to their gender, in particular women and girls, contextual analysis of barriers to their inclusion and identification of opportunities for their participation.
- 2.3.3 Members promote opportunities for those marginalised due to their gender, in particular women and girls, to participate in decision-making.
- 2.3.4 Members monitor and evaluate their progress in promoting gender equality and equity.

This Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy completely satisfies these conditions.

ERFA's Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy is also informed by DFAT's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 Gender integration

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

4.0 Rationale for gender equality, female empowerment and development education

4.1 Guiding Principles

ERFA's Guiding Principles that govern the GEFEP are as follows:

- All people have the right to equality and to live a life free from discrimination on the basis of their gender and/or gender identity;
- Addressing gender inequality barriers is critical to creating sustainable development in communities.

4.2 International Legislation

This GEFE Policy adheres to the following international conventions:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR);
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

4.3 The importance of gender equality and female empowerment

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

- globally, gender based discrimination is the most systemic and widespread of all forms of discrimination;
- development activities should benefit women and men equally;

- 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;
- addressing the increase in discrimination and domestic violence due to COVID-19.

ERFA recognises that gender equality and female empowerment are recognised as core development objectives, fundamental for the realisation of human rights and effective, sustainable development outcomes. ERFA affirms the critical role women play in accelerating progress in development. According to the SDGs, gender bias undermines the social fabric and devalues all persons. As well as being a human rights issue, it is a tremendous waste of the world’s human potential.

4.4 Development education as means to achieving gender equality

ERFA’s Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy is grounded in its Vision for access to quality education and life-long learning opportunities for all, supporting empowered communities to determine their own futures. ERFA affirms the link between education and empowered, self-sustaining, healthy individuals and communities - an education that transforms and liberates lives.

Therefore, education is an indispensable component for the achievement of ERFA’s gender equality and female empowerment policy commitments. The specific educational context for the realisation of these commitments is Development Education, which enables people to understand and participate in tackling the root causes of injustices and inequalities in their communities. Key components in Development Education include human rights, social justice and inclusive education. Hence, education in gender equality and female empowerment are essential components in Development Education. For maximum effectiveness, this education needs to encompass whole communities.

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 organisations makes these organisations more representative and effective.
- Increasing girl’s 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.

5.0 Application

ERFA is committed to leading by example to promote gender equality within our policies and practices at all organisational levels, including ERFA’s Board of Governors. Within the organisation, ERFA will:

- Have a nominated gender focal point;
- Ensure all policies and procedures promote and contribute to gender equality amongst personnel;

- Develop personnel capacity to work in a gender sensitive and equitable manner;
- Assess the organisation's gender capacity as part of its effectiveness framework.

ERFA requires prospective Partners to demonstrate how their proposed Project contributes to gender equality and female empowerment through the submission of formal tools and applications. These include the International Project Application Form, the Project Risk Management Framework and the Vulnerability Context Analysis. Partners are required to demonstrate how women and girls have been engaged in the Project design and delivery, and identify the number of women and girl beneficiaries. If the gender diversity and equality policies of a Project is deemed insufficient, ERFA will engage in a process of mutual consultation with the Partner to build the capacity of female empowerment activities. Applicants that are unable to demonstrate their commitment to gender equality and female empowerment will not be considered eligible for ERFA support.

5.1 International Project Application Form

Prospective ERFA Partners are required to address their policies towards gender equality and female empowerment in the ERFA International Partnership and Funding Application. The applicant must:

- explain how they are addressing gender inequality;
- forecast the number of beneficiaries they intend to reach with their Project, separated by demographic categories including gender and age;
- explain how beneficiaries of different genders age (girls, boys, women and men) were consulted in the design of the project;
- account for Project processes intended to prevent vulnerable beneficiaries, including girls and women, from experiencing unintended harm;
- provide a copy of their Project's Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy;
- evidence the training sessions in gender equality and female empowerment extended to staff.

5.2 Project Risk Management Framework

The Project Risk Management Framework is a tool self-administered by implementing Partners to establish procedures for risk prevention, and in cases where risks cannot be reasonably prevented, effective risk mitigation. It is a requirement of ERFA support that all Partners have a Risk Management Framework (RMF) in place and that they review their framework on a regular basis. In addition to an overarching Program RMF, a Partner should maintain a specific RMF for each of its Projects. One of the risk categories Partners are required to report on is cross-cutting policies which includes issues of gender equality and female empowerment.

5.3 Vulnerability Context Analysis

The tool Vulnerability Context Analysis is used to map the unique characteristics of each Project that ERFA supports through a lens of vulnerability and marginalisation.

To form a holistic analysis of the vulnerability experienced by a Project's beneficiary community, this tool compiles information for each of the Projects that ERFA supports. This includes analysing the strategy a Project has in place to address the unique wants and needs of vulnerable beneficiary sectors. This includes girls and women.

6.0 Project monitoring

6.1 International Project Application Form

ERFA assessors focus heavily on a Partner's treatment of gender issues when considering whether to support a particular Project. ERFA assessors will only support Projects that:

- actively involve girls and women in the process of Project design;
- cater their activities to the unique needs of girls and women;
- actively consult with girls and women throughout the delivery of the Project;
- actively involve girls and women in Project decision making;

- implement processes to protect girls and women from unintended harm.

For Projects that don't have amelioration of gender inequalities as their core purpose (viz., whose beneficiaries are not solely comprised of females) ERFA encourages Partners to conduct separate consultation sessions for beneficiaries of different genders. ERFA believes that consultation sessions of mixed gender are less likely to reveal unique gender-specific wants and needs.

ERFA will attempt to build the capacity of Projects whose Project design is considered inadequate in its pursuits of gender inequality and female empowerment. Inadequate Project design could be exhibited through a Partner's formal application submission and related tools, including the International Project Application, the Project Risk Management Framework and the Vulnerability Context Analysis (see Section 5.0). Inadequacies could also be revealed through informal discussion between ERFA and Project Partners.

6.2 Quarterly acquittal forms

Each 3 months with the submission of their quarterly acquittal forms Partners are required to indicate whether staff training in cross-cutting policies took place. This includes training in female empowerment and gender equality by qualified personnel. ERFA requests that Partners share their training material with us, to ensure that GEFE training reflects the current research of sustainable development and to review any cultural biases in content.

7.0 Project evaluation

6.1 End-of-year evaluation form

The final acquittal form Partners submit at the end of the funding cycle serves the purpose of accounting for the outcomes of their Project. ERFA evaluates the success of a Project in part by comparing the endline results presented in a Partner's end-of-year evaluation form and the baseline goals presented in their initial Project application.

ERFA asks Partners to specify the number of beneficiaries that their Project served, separated by demographic categories of gender and disability. ERFA assessors compare the number of actual girl, boy, women and men beneficiaries served by a Project against the beneficiary projections proposed in their International Project Application Form.

ERFA asks Partners to respond to the following questions:

- Did you apply a gender lens to your work?
- How did you account for gender differences in the design and execution of your project? Please also detail any challenges you experienced?
- What percentage of this project/program's beneficiaries identified as women or girls?
- What method/s did you use to assess what percentage of your project/program's beneficiaries identified as women or girls?

ERFA also asks Partners to indicate the number of their Staff separated by categories of male, female and non-binary.