



Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy

Policy & Procedure Owner	Board of Directors	
Approved By	Board of Directors	
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Introduction

Edmund Rice Foundation (Australia)'s (ERFA) Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy is grounded in the United Nations Development Programme's [5th Global Goal for Sustainable Development](#) - *Gender Equality: to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. The 5th Global Goal has 9 targets:

1. To end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
2. 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
3. To eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
4. To recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work
5. To ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making
6. To ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights
7. To undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, property ownership and financial services
8. To promote empowerment of women through technology
9. 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.

ERFA's Gender Equality & Female Empowerment Policy is also informed by:

- The [ACFID Code of Conduct Commitment 2.3](#): *We promote gender equality and equity*
- The [DFAT's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy](#)

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.

Rationale

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

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.

According to the Global Goals, 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.

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.

Definitions

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.

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.

Gender Integration

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

Policy Commitments

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

Gender Equality & Female Empowerment and Development Education

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 realization 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.

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.