



Rwanda NGOs Forum on AIDS and Health Promotion (RNGOF on AIDS & HP)

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Gender Policy

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1. Introduction

Rwanda NGO Forum on HIV/AIDS and Health Promotion (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS &HP) is an umbrella/network of local, national NGOs committed directly or indirectly to fighting against HIV/AIDS in Rwanda. It was created in 1999 and gathers more than 100 national NGOs members whose activities in fighting against HIV/AIDS and the promotion of health in Rwanda are coordinated, monitored and evaluated. The Forum is a network of National NGOs decentralized up to district level. It is also a member of the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) at National level, the Eastern Africa National Network on AIDS Service Organization (EANNASO) at the regional Level, African Council on AIDS Service Organization (AFRICASO) and International Council on AIDS Service Organization (ICASO) at international level.

2. Rationale for the Policy: RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP's Commitments to Gender Equality

Gender inequalities intensify poverty, perpetuate it from one generation to the next and weaken women's and girls' ability to overcome it. Inequalities prevent women and girls from taking up opportunities which will make them less vulnerable to poverty in situations of crisis. For poverty reduction to be achieved, the constraints that women and girls face must be eliminated. These constraints include lack of mobility, low self-esteem, lack of access to and control over resources, lack of access to basic social services, to training and capacity development opportunities, to information and technology, as well as to decision-making in the state, the judiciary, development and private sector organizations, and in communities and households.

RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP is committed to supporting the achievement of gender equality at home, in the region and throughout the world. The rights of women and girls are an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Constitution of Rwanda, which includes the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, guarantees the right to equality in the law and equal benefit of the law without discrimination on a number of grounds including sex. Under this plan, all RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP's departments are also required to implement gender analysis.

The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are matters of human rights and conditions for social justice and should not be seen in isolation as a women's issue. They are the only way to build a sustainable, just, and developed society. Empowerment of women and gender equality

are prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental security among all peoples.

3. Goals and Objectives

3.1. Goals

The goal of RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP's gender equality policy is to support the achievement of equality between women and men to ensure sustainable development.

3.2. Objectives

The objectives of the policy are:

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

4. Principles

4.1. Gender Equity

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality.

4.2. Gender Equality

Gender equality means that women and men enjoy the same status. Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results. Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play.

RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP's policy on gender equality is rooted in the following principles:

- i. **Gender equality must be considered as an integral part of all RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP policies, programs and projects.** Addressing gender equality as a cross-cutting goal requires that

women's views, interests and needs shape the development agenda as much as men's, and that the development agenda support progress toward more equal relations between women and men.

- ii. **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.
- iii. **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.
- iv. **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.
- v. **Promoting the equal participation of women as agents of change 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.
- vi. **Gender equality can only be achieved through partnership between women and men.** When choices for both women and men are enlarged, all society benefits from it. 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, behaviour, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, in the Community, and in national, donor and international institutions.
- vii. **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. Linking gender equality with RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP's priorities

5.1. RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP overarching policy and programming priorities

This is done through:

- i. **Basic Human Needs:** to support efforts to provide primary health care, basic education, family planning, nutrition... etc.
- ii. **Human Rights and Good Governance:** to increase respect for human rights, including children's rights, to promote better governance through equal justice delivery; and to strengthen both civil society and the security of the individual.
- iii. **Women in Development:** to support the full participation of women as equal partners in the sustainable development of our society.

5.2. Links with gender equality

Women and men have different needs arising from their socially constructed roles and responsibilities. Women tend to be responsible for meeting their own and their family's basic human needs. However, they face specific constraints in gaining access to services which meet their basic human needs, given their lack of access to ana control and ownership over resources, and their lack of decision-making power. Girls, in particular, face constraints in terms of their opportunities and life choices.

These specific constraints must be taken into account in order to ensure that the basic human needs of the entire community are met, and that basic human needs programming contributes to poverty reduction.

The human rights of women and girls are an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. By both promoting and supporting processes towards the eradication of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex, **RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP can help, through service delivery to its member organizations especially those who work with key population, shape a new human rights practice that protects all human beings.** Furthermore, there is increased capacity of institutions such as the judiciary and the police to implement policies and programs that address domestic violence.

5.3. Examples of results that contribute to the achievement of gender equality

Some of the examples which show that impact are the increased access to and control over primary health care services for women and girls. Increased understanding of gender differences in determinants and consequences of diseases such as malaria, HIV, AIDS and respiratory diseases. Increased access to a broad range of reproductive health care services for women and men.

Moreover, there is an adoption and implementation of national policies and plans on gender equality. **Elimination of discriminatory practices against female workers** (Particularly to **Female Sex Workers**), especially in relation to establish fair national labour codes (e.g., health and safety codes and regulations, right to organize, freedom from sexual harassment). Hence, to increase recognition of violence against women as a social problem, and greater commitment from government, civil society and citizens to eliminate it. Therefore, to increase participation of women and organizations advocating gender equality in the development of national strategies for sustainable development.

6. Strategies and activities to support the achievement of gender equality

As strategies and activities to support the achievements of gender equality, it first starts by promoting gender equality through the choice of its staff composition, it makes sure that women and girls are very much encouraged to apply when advertising of any of its available opportunities.

Furthermore, in its activities, RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP makes sure that there is equal attendance and equal opportunities given to the participants. And for that purpose. it makes sure that female and men are equally invited and part of its field activities.

7. Performance assessment

A performance measurement framework including indicators against which to assess the implementation or the gender equality policy will be developed by RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP employees.

The framework will address issues such as:

- i. The collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex, as well as by age and socio-economic groups...
- ii. Analysis of information on constraints to the achievement of gender equality, and on progress in the reduction of gender inequalities and the promotion of gender equality;
- iii. Quantitative and qualitative information and analysis;
- iv. Non-project activities such as policy dialogue on gender equality;
- v. RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP's institutional capacity for delivering V. gender equality results; and
- vi. Availability and use of resources, both financial and human, in support of gender equality.

7.1. Accountability

Accountability for the implementation of this policy rests within the hands of each employee of RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP's and implementing partners.

8. Good practices to promote gender equality

The twenty years of experience within RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP have taught us several lessons that are relevant to supporting gender equality throughout RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP programming initiatives. Gender equality is more apt to be achieved if the following conditions exist:

8.1. At the RNGOF ON HIV/AIDS & HP Level

- i. Senior management and all employees are committed to gender equality;
- ii. There are sufficient resources and knowledgeable personnel, along with an enabling a favourable environment to promote gender equality;
- iii. There are accountability frameworks which ensure that the gender equality policy is implemented;
- iv. Gender equality is treated as an objective in and of itself.

8.2. In the Planning Process

- i. Gender equality is recognized as relevant to every aspect of cooperation with our member organizations;
- ii. 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,
- iii. 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;
- iv. Means are identified to ensure there is broad participation of women and men as decision-makers in the planning process;
- v. Clear, measurable, and achievable gender equality results are developed in the earliest phases of the process;
- vi. 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 socio-economic groups....);
- vii. Specific strategy and budget is provided to support the achievement of gender equality results;
- viii. Member organizations are selected on the basis of their commitment and capacity to promote gender equality;

8.3. During Implementation

- i. External support is sought from women's organizations, key female and male decision-makers, leaders and allies;
- ii. The objective of gender equality is not lost in rhetoric or in preoccupation with agency processes;
- iii. There is flexibility and openness to respond to new and innovative methods, and opportunities for supporting gender equality that present themselves during implementation; and
- iv. There is broad participation of women in the implementation.

8.4. Performance Measurement

- i. Gender equality results are expressed, measured and reported on using qualitative and quantitative indicators;
- ii. Data, disaggregated by sex, as well as by age and socio-economic groups, is collected
- iii. Information on progress in reducing gender inequalities is collected and analysed as an integral part of performance measurement;
- iv. A long-term perspective is taken (i.e., social change takes time); and
- v. 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.

1. **Reviewed By: Nooliet KABANYANA**, Executive Secretary RNGOF On HIV/AIDS & HP:

Date: 4 January 2016

Signature: _____

2. **Approved By: Felicite RWEMALIKA**, Chairperson Board of Directors RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP:

Date: 4" January 2016

Signature: _____