**Gender Policy**

**Introduction**

Blossom recognises that power relations between genders and ages are unequal and that we must challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality to achieve social justice. Through this policy, Blossom commits to ensuring that gender equality is fully incorporated in all our work both as a universal human right and an end in itself, as well as a means to overcome poverty and social injustice more effectively. Our mission states that through women empowerment & gender equality, Blossom seeks to ensure that communities are self-sufficient in improving their health, environmental, economic and social needs. We aim to achieve this by working in partnership with local and global actors. Working with others, Blossom aims to promote the equal realisation of dignity and human rights for all genders and ages, and the elimination of poverty and injustice.

Blossom recognises that gender is not binary and that terms and definitions related to gender and sexuality are diverse and continue to evolve. To facilitate ease of reading within this policy we occasionally refer to ‘all genders and ages. This demonstrates our recognition of and ability to work with adults and children and individuals of all sexual orientations, gender identities and/or gender expressions. We recognise that rigid gender norms limit people of all genders and sexual orientations by creating and reinforcing assumptions and systems of privilege (sometimes codified in-laws and policies), about their recognition in society and the range of roles and opportunities open to them. These not only limit individuals who identify as girls, boys, women and men, as well as identities beyond the binary, but also individuals whose sexual orientations do not conform with dominant norms and expectations of heterosexuality. While rigid gender norms can limit all of us, Blossom also recognises that gender norms and hierarchies are constructed by people and systemically privilege some groups over others. Throughout this policy when reference is made to all genders and ages this includes; (cisgender and transgender) women and girls, men and boys, as well as people who identify beyond the binary, and people of all sexual orientations.

**Purpose**

This Blossom gender policy represents our commitment to take a cohesive and coordinated approach to gender equality. The policy defines Blossom’s explicit intention to support gender equality and the principles expressed in international agreements. The policy includescore principles and commitments against which all parts of Blossom will be held accountable. These are consistent with other organisational and programmatic standards.

***The purpose of the policy is to:***

* Define and communicate clear commitments and consistent messages within Blossom and with others
* Continue to strengthen efforts to promote gender equality in our organisation, increasing Blossom’s integrity and credibility amongst donors, partners and allies as a key member of the gender equality space, in both programming and advocacy
* Establish commitments for our programming and within our organisation
* Enable us to work with others, building on each other strengths, experience and lessons learned

**Principles and Goals**

Gender equality is an explicit internationally recognized human right and Blossom seeks to promote the equal realisation of dignity and human rights and the elimination of poverty and injustice for all genders and ages. Blossom recognises that issues of gender inequality intersect with other forms of oppression based on unequal power relations, such as ableism, racism, caste and ethnic discrimination, ageism, sexual orientation and homophobia, religious discrimination, and classism, among others. Blossom works with marginalized women and their allies to address structural barriers to the realisation of women’s rights and gender equality; social justice, peace, wellbeing and a life free from violence.

*Principles*

The achievement of gender equality requires that:

* Gender equality and equity are central to Blossom’s being and doing;
* The empowerment of women and girls is recognised as fundamental to our mission;
* Every individual understands and demonstrates attitudes and behaviours that promote gender equality and equity;
* Adequate resources are allocated to gender work;
* All work is continuously monitored against gender indicators;
* And the cross-cutting nature of gender concerns is recognised (gender equality is both everyone’s responsibility and an area that warrants specialised attention and resources).

*Goals*

The gender policy aims to ensure gender equality and women’s empowerment are central to Blossom’s:

* Programmes at all levels;
* Organisational culture and behaviours;
* Public image;
* Finance and resource allocation.

**The following pages lay out the specific objectives and strategies for programmes, organisational development, public image and finance and resource allocation.**

**Programmes**

*Objective*:

All programmes empower women and promote women’s rights as human rights.

*Strategies*:

* Apply gender analysis, establish systems and ensure that gender equity forms an essential element at all stages of policy and programme work, including planning, implementation, impact assessment and development of measurable gender indicators.
* Develop the capacity of programme staff to carry out gender analysis.
* Develop gender-sensitive approaches and methods of work that are empowering, building on lessons learnt from monitoring, evaluation and feedback.
* Ensure programme staff take responsibility for promoting gender equality.
* Monitor and evaluate, report on all programmes against specific gender goals, and develop and employ good practice guidelines and indicators.
* Promote the creation of structures and opportunities for women’s participation in decision-making at all levels.
* Ensure that women's and girls’ voices are heard in mainstream development processes.
* Undertake capacity building (e.g. resource allocation, training, information, networking) to strengthen women’s organisations and groups, and organisations working towards gender equality.
* Promote, support and participate in the women’s movement to advocate for the implementation of national and international instruments for women’s rights.
* Include a gender equality perspective in all campaigns and influencing work.
* Support women and girls to secure their economic, social, political, civil and cultural rights.
* Promote women’s and girls’ independent access to and control over land, employment, services and institutions, including their ability to exercise rights over their bodies and find protection against violence.
* Develop, promote and use creative ways of engaging men and boys (and not only women and girls) as agents of change in the pursuit of gender equality, when in line with programming and/or organizational objectives.
* Support partners who are aligned to our gender principles, so that their programmatic interventions are gender-equitable, and work to inform and influence those who are not, with the option of breaking the alignment in cases where positive change fails to occur.
* Identify potential programming risks throughout the program/project cycle and take steps to do no harm and mitigate unintended consequences of backlash and gender-based violence, regardless of sectoral focus.
* Ensure evaluations and reviews do no harm, are participatory and assess progress towards gender equality outcomes. Ensure that they document best practices and challenges, and create mechanisms for cross-learning within communities, within Blossom and with partners.
* Form partnerships with women’s rights and/or LGBTIQ organisations and movements to collaborate in the achievement of shared goals and elevate the voice of marginalised people
* Engage key stakeholders in the struggle for gender equality including other civil society, government, private sector, public and private donors.

**Organisation Development**

*Objective:*

Gender equality and equity are central to Blossom’s being and doing. Blossom will be committed to creating and promoting a gender-sensitive work environment within the organization and its various branches and field offices.

*Strategies:*

* Ensure that specialised gender functions are in place and adequately resourced.
* Recognise knowledge related to gender concerns and gender-related analysis as one of the core areas of capacity for staff and build capabilities throughout the agency.
* Build a common understanding around gender through induction and training.
* Ensure that all training across the organisation is gender-sensitive.
* Make all HR systems and policies gender-sensitive and responsive, and integrate gender indicators into staff objectives, annual operating plans, accountabilities and performance management systems.
* Ensure all job descriptions reflect Blossom’s commitment to gender equality.
* Periodic reviews of the organisational policies and regulations will be done through a gender lens to ensure that gender sensitivity is maintained.
* Blossom will have gender-sensitive recruitment and retention policy, allowing positive discrimination and affirmative action, where preference will be given to women candidates in appointments.
* All interviews for staff recruitment in the organization will have women represented on the interview panel.
* Report on gender and diversity balance in staffing and governance structures along with average pay levels.
* Develop targeted strategies for redressing any evidence of gender imbalances and inequality and promoting equal gender participation, including: **– affirmative action; –** career development opportunities including development posts, training and internal promotion; – family-friendly and flexible working policies to allow staff to fulfil caring responsibilities (including job-sharing, maternity, paternity and parental leave, and policies on childcare provision and/or subsidies for staff); **– sexual harassment policies**; – safe and secure transport and accommodation when travelling, particularly for women staff; and – equal pay for work of equal value.
* Take all measures to prevent and respond to all forms of sexual harassment and violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse of children and vulnerable adults, promote staff awareness and training and establish effective systems for reporting, monitoring, investigation and redressal.
* Use information technology to facilitate home working, flexible working hours and virtual working to strike a balance between home responsibilities and work.
* Ensure that staff access to and use of information technology is gender equitable.
* Ensure detailed documentation of all the processes related to the activities on the issue of gender within the organization. These will be accessible to all those who wish to use the same to promote and strengthen gender equality within their work spheres.
* Ensure the establishment of adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress within the institution as well as programmatically.

**Public Image**

*Objective:*

* The external presentation of Blossom should promote a balanced view of the issues surrounding gender equality and equity.

*Strategies:*

* Gender analysis will be central to the development of all marketing, fundraising, sponsorship and campaigns work and gender concerns will be incorporated into activities wherever possible.
* All Blossom organized events, both internal and external, will have a gender component and address the gender-specific needs of the participants.
* Design fundraising proposals and appeals to fulfil Blossom’s strategic goals and objectives on gender equality and equity.
* Inform donors about Blossom’s gender goals and objectives and give positive examples of Blossom’s gender work.
* Regularly report to programme participants, donors and the public on progress on, and positive examples of, Blossom’s gender work.
* Blossom will actively encourage the recruitment of new supporters and partners who are gender-sensitive.
* Ensure all materials, including external marketing, fundraising, advocacy and communications respect and uphold Blossom’s commitment to social justice and gender equality and equity including being respectful; using inclusive and positive language and images; avoiding stereotypes with particular attention to those based on gender and ethnicity; challenging gender stereotypes, and recognising diversity.
* Gender-sensitive language and images will be used in all internal and external communications.
* Whenever possible, women’s and girls’ voices will be heard in the first person.
* Ensure that women and men are proportionately represented during press briefings and other public relations activities.

**Finance and Resource Allocation**

*Objective:*

Adequate resources are allocated to gender work across the organisation.

*Strategies:*

* Commit a high level of support and resources to gender work and functions.
* Include a gender dimension in all finance guidelines, instructions and policies.
* Develop and refine tools and methods for assessing and reporting on gender-related investments at every level of the organisation.
* Maintain and update annually qualitative and quantitative information on gender-related expenditure.
* Systematically negotiate with donors for adequate funding to meet Blossom’s gender commitments, both programmatically and within the organisation.