ICIMOD 30

ICIMOD Gender Equity Policy

2013

1. Rationale

ICIMOD's vision is *"men, women and children of the Hindu Kush Himalayas enjoy improved wellbeing in a healthy mountain environment",* supported by its mission *"to enable sustainable and resilient mountain development for improved and equitable livelihoods through knowledge and regional cooperation".* To achieve this mission, it is essential to ensure the full and meaningful participation of mountain women, men and children in development initiatives. **Gender Transformative Change** is a useful approach to help ICIMOD in accomplishing its purpose by promoting equitable development and research processes in the HKH and to ensure women and men equally benefit from it.

Experiences have shown that gender inequalities hinder the achievement of sustainable development and environments. This is why ensuring gender equality has been regularly asserted through many international and regional forums and policies for achieving development and sustainability goals.

ICIMOD acknowledges these commitments, and further commits itself to fulfill the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment by ensuring gender equity initiatives gain traction and lead to genuine transformative change. It also clearly recognizes that gender bias continues to be a challenge in many societies, including in the HKH region, compounded further by other cross-cutting social, cultural, political and economic inequalities, such as class, caste, marital status, age, ethnicity, etc. Therefore, taking into account the recommendations made by ICIMOD's Reviews (Quinquennial Report 2006, Mid-Term Review 2009), Strategic Frameworks (2007, revisited in 2012), Mid-term Action Plans (2003-2007 and 2013-2017) and the Gender Audit (2012), and building on the Gender Equity Policy of 2007, this document will set policy and be implemented in ICIMOD's overall development interventions, including within the organization and in collaboration with our partners, in order to promote people centered gender equitable sustainable mountain development.

2. Background

What has been done at ICIMOD?

Since 1995, ICIMOD has promoted gender equity in the mountain development through conducting awareness and trainings in the Regional Member Countries; by supporting networking of mountain women; by organizing two major global gatherings on gender and mountains, *Bhutan+10: Gender and Sustainable Mountain Development in a Changing World 2012 and Celebrating Mountain Women in 2002*; by publishing and disseminating knowledge on gender issues, and introducing several innovations such as the gender champions award, WGEM (women, gender, environment and mountain) network, women's leadership trainings, and gender auditing, etc. Gender issues and equity have been progressively integrated in ICIMOD's Programmes over time through the establishment of a Gender Unit in 2002, the Gender Resource Team in 2006 (GReaT, composed of

focal points from ICIMOD's programmes), a Gender and Governance Division in 2007, and a Gender Strategic Institutional Area in 2012 to give gender focused attention.

Progress has been made in recent years in terms of action-oriented research, enhanced knowledge, strengthened capacities and women's leadership skills, expanded gender networks, and institutional mechanisms for addressing gender issues. The Centre continues to be committed to gender transformative change and is working to achieve this through four pillars conceptualized in 2012: i) gender integrative and focused research, ii) gender positive organizational change, iii) capacity strengthening and women's leadership, and iv) impact through gender-inclusive policies and partnerships. However, the 2012 Gender Audit identified a number of weaknesses and challenges in terms of programmatic interventions and organizational change, which this policy addresses.

What are the challenges?

The nature and pace of global, economic, socio-cultural and environmental changes differentially impact on women's, men's and children's livelihoods and wellbeing. Increasingly, their adaptive capacities to these new changes depend on their access over resources, knowledge, services, and meaningful engagement with development and governance institutions. Resilient responses are also related to gender divisions of roles, property ownership that considerably limits or favors women's and men's ability to respond, and the ability of development organizations to value existing gendered knowledge, agency and experiences. Women and men must also be able to make and own their choices and exercise control over their assets. Experience has shown that they manage and cope with these new realities in different ways due to socially-constructed norms and relations of power. Therefore, it is important for ICIMOD to be aware of gender issues, to address them and to promote gender analysis and equity.

Gender issues in the HKH also present many challenges. Diversity of cultural contexts and national capacities often compel the use of different strategies to increase women's and men's access to and control political-economic, socio-cultural and natural resources, as well as equitable and meaningful participation in development initiatives, and decision and policy making. To address these challenges and to ensure a sustainable development through inter-disciplinary/trans-disciplinary approaches that will equally benefit men and women, this *Gender Equity Policy* lays out a long term goal to effectively contribute to addressing the practical and strategic needs of women, men and children in the HKH region. The 2007 Gender Equity Policy is revisited and strengthened to match with the Strategic Framework 2012 and Medium-Term Action Plan III (20013-2017). Special attention is given to strengthening gender focus and integration in programmatic work and organizational change to make ICIMOD a gender-responsive institution.

3. Goal and Objectives

The goal of ICIMOD's Gender Equity Policy is to **ensure gender equality and transformative change**

in sustainable and equitable mountain development in the HKH.

Objectives:

1   To ensure **equitable and meaningful participation** of both men and women at all levels of sustainable mountain development and policy-making.
2   To respect and uphold **equal rights, and equitable access to and control over resources and benefits** for women and men.
3   To strengthen the capacities and **empowerment of women**, including leaders, decision-makers and producers of knowledge.
4   To ensure **gender integrative and focused work** into all research and development activities of ICIMOD and its partners, and to make ICIMOD a **gender equitable and sensitive organization** that provides opportunities and benefits to all staff.

4. Key Elements of the Policy

i) Gender integration and focused programmatic work

ICIMOD will promote the documentation, production and sharing of gender focused analysis and integrative knowledge on gender issues in the HKH:

- **in programme development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge sharing:** integrating and focusing gender issues, analysis and experts in all phases of programme implementation, communications and partnership arrangements; monitoring gender indicators and contributing to gender positive impacts and transformative outcomes; ensuring adequate and gender balanced allocation of resources, expertise and budgets.

ii) Gender positive organizational change and institutional strengthening

ICIMOD will strengthen institutional capacities and positive organizational change with a focus on gender empowerment:

- **in the organizational culture:** ensuring equity in decision-making, recruitment, advancement/promotion, human resource development and trainings, and administrative and functional areas; ensuring a gender sensitive workplace and gender positive attitudes/behaviors; making accountable all staff in promoting gender equality that uphold positive change through performance evaluations; ensuring gender sensitive grievance processes for discrimination and sexual harassment claims; improving gender balance at all levels of staff, professionals and leadership positions.

iii) Capacity strengthening of gender issues and women's leadership

ICIMOD will strengthen capacity on gender issues, awareness, analysis and women's leadership:

- **in support of gender equality and mountain women's empowerment:** by developing approaches to support the empowerment of women in the HKH according to women's needs in each cultural context; and supporting partners and ICIMOD staff in strengthening women's leadership skills and in understanding of gender issues.

iv) Evidence based advocacy for gender equitable policies, institutions and partnerships

ICIMOD will **strengthen networks, partnerships and advocate policies** for gender equality that enhance wellbeing and sustainable development:

- **within the organization:** through the Gender Resource Team (GReaT) and the Gender Strategic Institutional Area.
- **at the regional level:** by raising awareness, supporting networks (WGEM) and strengthening capacities of partners and RMCs to address gender issues.
- **at the international level:** giving visibility to gender and mountain development issues in the HKH in international platforms, conventions, conferences and dialogues as a spokesperson.

5. Accountability

All staff have responsibility for making ICIMOD a gender sensitive and inclusive institution through the implementation of the Gender Equity Policy for genuine gender transformative change:

1. The Director General is responsible for:

- ensuring at the corporate level that all ICIMOD's policies, programmes and management structures are gender equitable
- providing the necessary financial and human resources and ensuring effective implementation of the Gender Equity Policy in ICIMOD's programming and within the organization
- ensuring a gender sensitive work place, inclusive organizational culture and inter-disciplinary integration that leads to gender equality

2. The Director of Programme Operations is responsible for:

- ensuring the implementation of the Gender Equity Policy by all managers, initiative coordinators, thematic leaders, unit heads, professional staff and members of staff
- advocating gender equality and balance in the organization and in ICIMOD's partnerships

- ensuring gender equity, analysis and budgeting in all ICIMOD's policies, programs and initiatives for gender equitable and positive programme outcomes

3. The Director of Administration and Finance *is responsible for:*

- promoting gender equity and fairness in the recruitment, development and management of human resources, and all functional administrative support and finance areas
- implementing policies that promote a gender sensitive workplace free of any form of discrimination, bias, sexual harassment and power abuse
- promoting trainings at the institutional level, through the HR and supporting the Gender strategic institutional area lead on devising institutional mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the competencies of all staff members about gender equity and sensitivity

4. The Senior Managers *are responsible for:*

- monitoring and evaluating gender positive outcomes, budgets and challenges of programmes and progress
- institutionalizing monitoring, evaluation mechanisms and gendered impact pathways for measuring gender positive progress and outcomes
- ensuring knowledge products, outreach, communications and networks are gender inclusive, sensitive and balanced

5. Theme Leaders and Chief Scientists *are responsible for::*

- ensuring that adequate gender expertise are allocated for high quality and rigorous gender integrative and focused programmatic work in research, analysis and publications
- ensuring that women and men staff have equal opportunities for professional promotions, development and resources

6. The Gender Strategic Institutional Area *is responsible for:*

- supporting and providing gender expertise to the Directors, Senior Management, Theme Leaders and Regional Programme Managers on the implementation of the gender equity policy and gender strategy in organizational change aspects of MTAPIII
- ensuring rigor and quality of gender analysis, knowledge products, communications, and publications, as well as contributing to strengthening gender awareness/sensitivity, women's empowerment and capacities of ICIMOD's staff, partners and RMCs
- being a spokesperson for the Centre on gender issues and equality, and initiating research of emerging issues

7. The Gender Resource Team (GReaT) is responsible for:

- serving as a programme-oriented gender exchange, learning and review group in the Centre
- advocating gender-positive and sensitive change and sharing experiences, best practices on gender issues, equity and inclusion in their respective teams and Regional Programmes
- supporting gender awareness, planning, monitoring and capacity of staff and partners on gender issues and supporting the Gender Strategic Institutional Area in special gender events and initiatives

8. Regional Program Managers and Initiative Coordinators are responsible for:

- integrating gender issues and analysis in regional programmes and initiatives and ensuring equitable participation of men and women in all activities of the programs including decision making processes
- ensuring adequate budgets, resources and capacity strengthening activities for gender positive work, outcomes and outputs

9. Professional, Support and All Staff are responsible for:

- strengthening their capacity to understand, address and champion gender issues in their work
- adopting approaches that promote gender equality in the workplace
- advocating gender equality in every occasion within and outside the organization that reflects ICIMOD's commitment and policy for gender transformative change

6. Institutionalization of Gender Strategy

Following the adoption of the Gender Equity Policy in 2013 by the Board of Governors, guidelines for gender transformative change will be developed and adopted. The development of a plan for gender transformative change has been elaborated in the Medium Terms Action Plan (2013-2017) and gender strategy in the Strategic Framework 2012.

The *Gender Resource Team* (GReaT), and the Gender Strategic Institutional Area will play the role of advisor, quality control, spokesperson, facilitator and vigil of the present policy.

Monitoring and evaluation work on gender across the institution and programmes will be carried out by the "Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit' in close coordination with Gender Strategic Institutional Area Lead.

Gender - refers to the socio-culturally and political-economically constructed roles and responsibilities ascribed to women and men that change over time, are context and historically specific and are inseparable from power relations. It also refers to a domain of characteristics that shape the value, status and access to resources of women and men within different societies.

Gender equality - is the measurable equal representation of women and men. Gender equality does not imply that women and men are the same, but that they have equal value and should be accorded equal treatment, opportunities and benefits.

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

Gender analysis - refers to the systematic examination of the multiple roles, relationships, social institutions, agency and processes between and among women and men in different cultures and societies, focusing on imbalances of power, wealth, workloads, ownership and access to resources.

Gender transformative change - goes beyond identifying and exploring the symptoms of gender equality, and addresses socially constructed norms, attitudes, and relations of power that underlie them. It is committed to rigorous gender analysis, organizational change, capacity and institutional strengthening, and ensuring gender positive impact through meaningful participation of women and men in leadership, policy and decision-making processes and institutions.