

Shramajivi Mahila Samity

Gender policy



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SMS GENDER POLICY

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Constitution of India guarantees EQUALITY to both women and men. This however remains as 'de jure' equality which requires to be translated into 'substantive' equality through affirmative action. It is recognized that inequalities in gender relations is the norm. The caste-class-patriarchal nature of society privileges men over women, leading to exploitation and oppression of women. Women are also victimized through violence. Shramajivi Mahila Samity (SMS) is making a conscious effort to address gender inequality within the General Body or Governing body members, Staffs, volunteers or member of any committee of SMS or its network partners, who has a direct or indirect, engage with the organization will be considered an interested person for the purposes of this Policy.

SMS clearly articulates it both in its vision and mission statements the importance of Gender Equality and the focus on Gender Mainstreaming. It recognizes Gender as a cross cutting issue that is integral to the different areas of SMS' thrust such as women rights, rights of ST/SC, rights of minorities, rights of children, the physically challenged, the aged, and their livelihood along with their participation in governance.

To SMS, Gender Equality is integral to its commitment to Rights and hence is seen as an important aspect of the Rights based approach in the context of an all-pervasive systemic gender discrimination and gender inequality. Gender based discrimination is the most widespread form of systemic discrimination, and gender inequalities pervade all families, societies and organisations. Commitment to rights and gender equality are cross-cutting objectives, filters through all programmes.

It is clearly established in human rights norms that women and men are entitled, on an equal and equitable basis, to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. Women's rights are human rights and not special privileges. SMS underscores this, and therefore aims at promoting these rights in the organisation and through its partners working amongst the poor, marginalized women and men through means that address and remove the barriers to women's and men's full enjoyment of their rights.

SMS recognizes that gender relations and inequalities are due to unequal power relations which are major causes of poverty and gender discrimination. It further recognizes that women are not a homogenous group and therefore the discrimination and oppression meted out to them differs based on their social classification in terms of caste, class and religion. Women and girls do not enjoy the same status, power or access to and control over resources as men and boys. This is a violation of their rights. To realize SMS' vision for Gender Justice, it must work to ensure that everyone has equal opportunity to express, use their potential, irrespective of sex, age, caste, class, religion, HIV status or disability.

SMS' work at various levels has provided ample experience to introduce the gender perspective in its work. This experience has led SMS to acknowledge that women's empowerment and recognition of women's rights are critical for sustainable development. SMS's efforts and commitment is to provide the space and opportunity to channelize the energy, effort and resources into processes to create resilient communities that values women, men, girls and boys equally. While SMS highlights the need for women to have their

space and time, it underlines the need to engage and involve men and boys in their efforts to improve the status of women and girls.

The aspiration for SMS to be recognized as an organization that values gender as a core component of all its work begins with the staff, in programmes, with partners and beyond. Therefore, to facilitate and translate SMS' core values of Gender Equality and Gender Justice, acknowledging that these have to be seen and addressed differently among the socially excluded groups, a policy frame with action is developed for this.

SMS' vision

Shramajivi Mahila Samity works with a vision to develop a balanced and just society which may provide equal opportunity for both men and women. SMS believes that Gender Justice is the cornerstone of such relations.

SMS MISSION

In its mission to achieve our vision, SMS has partnerships with large number of grass root base organization focusing on women rights, gender equity, food security & sustainable livelihoods them self-reliant by virtue of education, economics independence and social awareness and ensure them a life of dignity, self esteem and morality.

Further, SMS associates itself with regional, national initiatives that share its vision. SMS works through its network to lend voice to their demand, strengthen their knowledge base, build their capacities to advocate and influence policy change and ensure effective implementation of strategies among the marginalized communities to claim their rights.

GOAL OF SMS GENDER POLICY

- **The goal of SMS Gender Policy is to uphold and promote Gender Equality and Gender Justice as its core values by creating gender sensitive workplace within SMS and through its practices vide articulation and enunciation (gender sensitive language), policies, programmes and partnerships and by advocating gender sensitive use and portrayal in media and all communication materials using gender sensitive language.**

OBJECTIVES OF SMS GENDER POLICY

- To promote gender equality and gender justice in the organization through gender mainstreaming and positive discrimination towards women colleagues
- To enable gender sensitive work environment within SMS
- To facilitate the development of women leadership in the organization

- To ensure gender sensitive policies, programmes and partnerships
- To encourage SMS network partners to promote gender equality within their organizations and at the community
- To advocate for gender mainstreaming and gender sensitive policy framework
- To review the relevance of the policy so that it is a dynamic Gender Policy

SMS INITIATIVES

1. Institutional level

- The majority of members in the Board of Trustees shall be women.
- All Committees in SMS shall consist of minimum 50% women
- SMS staff head Office and in all project office & field office shall have minimum of 50% women at all levels (Administration, Programmes and Management (to work diligently in achieving this).
- SMS shall undertake special efforts to induct women from socially excluded sections in its Board, staff and in all its Committees.
- The recruitment panel for all interviews will have adequate representation of women
- A gender sensitive recruitment policy where preference would be given to women candidates in appointments, with care to ensure that women are represented from all categories.
- Newly recruited candidates in their induction are introduced to the Gender Policy and SMS values to uphold Gender Equality.
- Human Resource policies shall be gender sensitive (specific gender related points are included in the document).
- All programmes related policies shall be gender sensitive in an explicit manner (goal, objectives, activities, strategies, indicators and budget).
- Sexual Harassment Complaints Committee (SHCC) to address Sexual Harassment at workplace shall be headed by a woman and with Focal Persons at all Resource Centres.
- All publications, reports, posters, IEC materials shall reflect norms of Gender Equality.
- Each staff of SMS irrespective of their level shall uphold the gender values (planning, appraisal, monitoring, reporting, resource materials, data base, etc.) and in their interactions show respect for each other.
- Each programme staff shall facilitate for promotion and functioning of SHCC by the partners.
- SMS staff shall always be committed to take appropriate action and address when women's rights are violated.

- All performance review of staff by self or supervisors/community worker/ Coordinator will have indicators to assess gender sensitivity in the overall performance.
- SMS shall organize periodic gender sensitization for all SMS staff (management, programme and support) at all levels and this is factored into their performance appraisal.
- SMS shall disseminate information related to gender policies, IEC materials and organize debates and discourses from time to time.
- SMS shall provide opportunities for women to enhance and equip themselves for upward mobility and for specialization in work related areas of interest.
- The Senior Management and G.B of SMS shall uphold and ensure that gender values are practiced.
- SMS shall introduce policies in line with National Legal framework that addresses the felt needs of women especially with reference to health, child-care, etc.
- SMS shall identify issues and concerns within the organization to focus on gender differences and disparities wherever they exist and address them appropriately
- SMS shall conduct periodic reviews of all the policies and programmes through a gender lens, to ensure that they are gender sensitive and implemented accordingly.
- SMS shall review the gender policy annually and undertake corrective measures and share the same in G.B meeting.
- SMS shall allocate adequate resources (to execute all above points) to enable setting up of measures/mechanisms and its application appropriately.

2. Partnership and Programmes Level

- SMS' core values of Gender Equality and Gender Justice shall get explicitly reflected into the partnership agreement so that SMS can facilitate in strengthening this component within network partner organizations at all levels.
- SMS shall work towards identifying partners with a minimum of at least 50% of women headed organizations in all programmes of SMS.
- SMS shall allocate adequate budget in all its programmes to address the needs of women stakeholders through at least 50% of budget allocated for such efforts, and adequate funding support to women headed organizations.
- SMS shall ensure priority and budget allocation for women specific programmes addressing gender based violence.
- SMS shall facilitate in such a manner that all the partners demonstrate the core values of Gender Equality and Gender Justice in their organization level or terminate partnerships after a fair trial if the organization is nonresponsive.
- SMS shall have, in an explicit manner, the gender related concerns in the mechanisms related to appraisal, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.
- Each programme shall ensure the outreach to more than 50% of women and address their gender needs.
- Gender analysis shall be an important criterion for approving all the projects and programmes of SMS.

- All SMS programmes shall concentrate on addressing practical needs and strategic needs of women.

OPERATIONAL GUIDE: Translating Gender Policy Into Action

Outlined below are strategies and measures to operationalize the Gender Policy to achieve Gender Equality and Gender Justice and create a Gender Sensitive workplace at SMS.

- In the staff recruitment, preference shall be given to women candidates.
- Vacancies arising due to female staff leaving shall be replaced preferably by recruiting another female staff.
- Women staff will take steps to ensure personal safety. Also male colleagues travelling together will also ensure personal security of women colleagues.
- When staff members of the same sex are travelling together as a team, then availing a shared accommodation shall be considered. This option may be reconsidered based on valid grounds and seniority.
- The security of women staff shall be given priority while approving the place of stay at different locations.
- The accommodation/stay *shall be preferred by staff where* there is no accommodation or security is a concern. The arrangement should not exceed cost of accommodation).
- If a reasonably safer option is available for the staff to stay with relatives/friends at their own cost, such stay shall be encouraged. In such cases, the local conveyance (auto fare) shall be reimbursed.
- Women staff members (after confirmation) shall be entitled for 3 months (90 days) of Maternity Leave with full pay for up to two children. Staff under probation shall be eligible for leave for 3 months without pay.
- Men staff members (after confirmation) shall be entitled for two weeks Paternity Leave with full pay and those under probation shall be eligible for two weeks Paternity Leave without pay.
- In case of miscarriage/abortion, woman staff (after confirmation) shall avail two weeks of leave with full pay after producing the doctor's certificate.
- SMS shall promote different work arrangements for women colleagues based on genuine reason.
- The support to the accompaniment in the case of children below five years of age would be considered for children under lactation and if the tour is for more than a day. In such cases, the office would consider expenses up to 50% of per diem for the accompaniment, actual expenses of lodging and one way travel expenses.
- Accompaniment for children (*especially girl children*) below five years shall be considered if there is no one to take care of the child at home. In such cases, office shall bear the expenses towards boarding, one-way actual travel expenses and 50% of per diem towards food and related expenses.

- The women staff shall claim auto charges or the office shall provide dropping facility to their respective homes when they are required to be in the office beyond 7.00 pm.
- SMS shall provide transportation or allow claiming auto charges by staff if they attend any workshops organized by SMS beyond Tarnaka boundaries.
- A separate toilet for women shall always be ensured in the office premises.

This Policy is approved in Governing Body Meeting by all the members.