

GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

June 2022

INTRODUCTION

Opportunity International Australia's (Opportunity's) mission is to empower people living in poverty to transform their lives, their children's futures and their communities. Our vision is a world in which all people can achieve a life free from poverty, with dignity and purpose. Opportunity recognises the intersection of gender and poverty. Gender inequality undermines economic growth, human development, social inclusion and poverty reduction. To fulfil our mission and vision, we are committed to ensuring gender equity and gender equality, particularly regarding women's empowerment, in both the workplace and delivery of our programs. At Opportunity, we seek to mainstream gender concerns and promote the equal participation of women and men as essential for the effectiveness of our development activities and as fundamental to the attainment of human rights.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to guide Opportunity on the promotion of gender equity and gender equality within the delivery of programs.

This policy is guided by national and international standards, specifically the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment strategy, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all workers engaged by Opportunity, including employees, interns, volunteers, Directors, Board, contractors and Ambassadors, whether located in Australia or overseas.

BACKGROUND

Through our partnerships and programs, Opportunity operates in contexts where gender inequality persists. At a global level, women and girls are more likely to be living in poverty. They have less influence and decision-making power, greater vulnerability to violence and financial exclusion, and unequal access to education, health services, decent work and employment opportunities.

Gendered-based discrimination prevents women from accessing their fundamental human rights and fulfilling their full potential. This poses broader implications for the fulfillment of development objectives and for the people, families and communities that Opportunity seeks to serve.

For this reason, Opportunity is committed to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment within the workplace and through the delivery of Opportunity and its

implementing partners' programs. We believe individuals should have equal access to rights, responsibilities and opportunities regardless of their gender. To achieve this, Opportunity adopts both a mainstream and targeted approach to gender equality. This entails considering gender in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs more generally and through targeted projects that specifically address gender issues, such as gender-based violence.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Gender: "The characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other"¹. These characteristics can change over time and may vary between cultures.

Gender equity: "Fairness of treatment for men and women according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities"². Gender equity is the process required to achieve gender equality.

Gender equality: "The enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities and treatment by men and women and by boys and girls in all spheres of life"³.

GENDER EQUALITY AT OPPORTUNITY

Opportunity is committed to ensuring gender equality in the workplace and prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of a person's sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, intersex status, relationship status or status as a parent or carer. Please refer to Opportunity's Diversity and Gender Equality Policy for a comprehensive overview of how gender equality is addressed across the organisation.

GENDER EQUALITY IN PROGRAMS

Opportunity is committed to gender equity and gender equality within the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its programs. A primary focus of our work is to empower women through the provision of financial and non-financial services, such as access to microfinance loans, health care, gender-based violence prevention and financial literacy training. As a result, the majority of our beneficiaries are women, with women accounting for 95% of Opportunity's loan clients. Opportunity is committed to a 'do no harm' approach to gender equality by ensuring gender inequalities are not unintentionally perpetuated or reinforced in the delivery of our programs.

Opportunity promotes gender equality at the program level through the following measures:

¹ Ibid, 2022

² ILO, ABC of Women worker's rights and gender equality, 2007

³ Ibid, 2007

- Gender Equality Policy in place and communicated to employees through staff training
- Client data is collected in a format that can be disaggregated, including by sex, to allow specific monitoring and insights into the impact of our work on gender
- Gender-specific indicators may be used in project design, monitoring, and evaluation to monitor and measure outcomes and enhance program design with relation to gender equality and women's needs
- Women's rights and gender equality issues addressed by Opportunity's programs are promoted through Opportunity's communications with the public and key stakeholders.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Opportunity partners with organisations that share its commitment to promote gender equity and gender equality. Due to the greater economic exclusion of women, Opportunity partners with microfinance institutions that primarily target women as the beneficiaries of their financial services, with some implementing partners providing services exclusively to women. Beyond financial inclusion, Opportunity also partners with organisations that address other gender-based issues and dimensions of women's empowerment, such as the prevention of gender-based violence and human-trafficking, and access to healthcare. Opportunity supports our partners in the promotion of gender equity and gender equality through the following measures:

- Building the capacity of implementing partners to collect and analyse data on a quarterly basis that can be disaggregated by sex, providing partners with insights into the gender of their client base and the impact of their programs.
- Promoting the collection of gender specific data and analysis by gender in regular reports and client surveys,
- Supporting partners in the development and implementation of gender equality policies and processes,
- Promoting to partners the importance of addressing gender issues in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their programs and services. This includes enhancing the understanding of contextual analysis of gender barriers and opportunities to enable inclusion and promote gender equality,
- Relationship Agreements that require implementing partners to prioritise the needs and rights of local people and beneficiaries of their development activities, with specific reference to gender,
- Monitoring and assessing the progress of implementing partners on gender equality practices, such as those mentioned above.