

# GENDER POLICY

(Last updated January, 2024)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

At Stichting Health Action International (HAI), we are dedicated to advancing policies that enable all people to realise the human right to the highest attainable level of health. To make this a reality, our team and global network carry out research to inform evidence-based advocacy for equitable access to affordable medicines and healthcare. This includes equitable access to medicines and healthcare for every girl, boy, woman, man and those with other (non-binary) gender identities.

Inequality, overstretched health systems, climate change, the impact of conflict, the growth of new technologies and the irrational use of medicines are just some of the factors that threaten global health and well-being, with vulnerable and marginalised communities at particular risk of harm. Health Action International focuses on creating long-lasting change to government and industry policies and practices, rather than on temporary solutions. We pursue advocacy from the patient level right up to the highest levels of government, including through our 'Official Relations' status with the World Health Organization.

In our work, we appreciate that the realisation of the human right to the highest attainable level of health is not the same for everyone. Even though this particular document reflects our commitment to gender equality, we also understand that various dimensions, such as income, education, place of residence, age, ethnicity, race, religion and sexuality, either hamper or increase the full realisation of the right to health.

This Gender Policy defines HAI's specific commitments to gender equality within our organisational culture, as well as the work programmes that we implement and/or support.

## 2. PURPOSE & SCOPE

This Policy affirms our commitment to gender equality. In addition to outlining our commitments, this document also provides an overview of definitions and accountability mechanisms. It underscores our core values<sup>1</sup>, particularly those of social justice, transparency, empowerment and inclusion. Furthermore, it aims to function as a cross-cutting document to support colleagues and partners in a variety of programmes around the world. At the HAI office, it reinforces our thinking about gender in the workplace and equitable

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<sup>1</sup> <http://haiweb.org/about-us>.

access to healthcare. It therefore functions as a guiding document to ensure gender equality is fully incorporated in our daily work, and the rights of everyone, everywhere are promoted and protected.

### 3. RATIONALE

What does gender and gender equality mean to us? And why do we believe it should receive special attention in the form of a policy?

At HAI, we endorse the definition of gender as formulated by the World Health Organization:

*Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men—such as the norms, roles and relationships that exist between them. Gender expectations vary between cultures and can change over time. It is also important to recognise identities that do not fit into the binary male or female sex categories. Gender norms, relations and roles also impact the health outcomes of people with transgender or intersex identities<sup>2</sup>.*

Broadly speaking, a person's biological sex (male/female/intersex), contextualised by the socio-economic circumstances, defines gender norms, relations and roles. In principle, these gender norms do not need to impact on access to medicines, but in practice, they often do.

In the international setting in which HAI operates, it is therefore important to be conscious of the limitations and opportunities towards access to medicines within each context that we work, as well as the differing values and norms that are being upheld by colleagues, project partners, and the local people with whom, and for whom, we work.

HAI's Gender Policy ensures its organisational culture promotes:

- a) Gender equality (see Section 4, Commitments);
- b) Overall inclusivity of minority groups; and
- c) The clear denouncement of discriminatory practices, upheld and/or promoted by all stakeholders with which it collaborates.

This document ensures a common understanding of the definition of gender, how gender influences access to health (and medicines, in particular) and, in the following section, outlines the necessary practices to ensure gender equality.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs403/en/>.

## 4. COMMITMENTS

### a) Organisational Culture & Development

Diversity for HAI represents an opportunity to engage with the widest range of potential partners possible. It includes any community, as well as people of any gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion and faith, social background, or sexual orientation. This document ensures we will deliver on our commitment to equal opportunities and diversity in a growing network of non-governmental organisations, healthcare providers, health professionals, academics, media and individuals from across the world to whom we make the commitment to:

- reflect the diversity of its global network in its workforce (including its boards), as well as in its perspectives, policy positions, campaigns and outputs.
- give every employee the same opportunities, whatever their background, colour, race, religion or belief, ethnic or national origins, gender, marital/civil partnership status, sexuality, disability or age.
- create and sustain an inclusive and safe work environment, which provides equality of opportunities for everyone.
- put in place a comprehensive Gender Policy (this Policy) that will translate into practice at all levels.
- maintain a diverse and inclusive representation among members of the Supervisory Board and Management Board.

We have anchored these (and more) commitments in our mission, vision, and core values, to inspire our talented employees to make immense contributions to our mission and shape our culture. We adhere to these values so our partners and funders who wish to collaborate with us are confident in our ability to execute our work, and HAI is a rewarding place to work.

### HAI'S CORE VALUES

**Social Justice:** We believe that all people, regardless of their socio-economic status or geographic location, gender, sexual orientation, or ability, deserve equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities.

**Transparency:** We conduct our work in an honest, transparent and ethical manner.

**Integrity:** To safeguard our objectivity and integrity, we are resolutely independent of the pharmaceutical industry and protect ourselves from all other conflicts of interest.

**Evidence-based:** Our advocacy is always based on objective and current research.

**Empowerment:** We share information with and offer our research and advocacy expertise to other members of civil society so they, too, can improve access to medicines and rational medicine use.

**Perseverance:** We know that policy change takes time and never give up until the job is done.

**Inclusion:** We appreciate and respect diversity in all forms.

**Excellence:** We value and invest in our staff and network so they can achieve the high goals and objectives that we set.

The following HAI policies that are connected to this Gender Policy are:

### **Guide to Employee Entitlements and Conditions of Employment**

This internal document goes beyond legal requirements within The Netherlands to provide opportunities to staff members for personal and career choices. Examples include:

- Using sensitivity around male/female designation.
- Openness to various forms of relationships. (A long-term partner is viewed as the legal spouse, and the partner not giving birth is entitled to paid parental leave of four weeks.)
- Flexible working hours and working from home.
- Career development opportunities.
- Specific articles on office environment for parents and the promotion of breastfeeding.

### **Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy**

See: Guide to Employee Entitlements and Conditions of Employment, Annex 11 (p 44)

### **Diversity in the Workplace Statement**

See: Guide to Employee Entitlements and Conditions of Employment, Annex 12 (p 48)

### **Code of Business Conduct**

See: [www.haiweb.org/publication/business-conduct-guidelines](http://www.haiweb.org/publication/business-conduct-guidelines)

### **Maternity/Paternity Policy**

This internal document is linked to the Guide to Employee Entitlements and Conditions of Employment. It underscores HAI's drive for equal opportunities, be it at home or in the workplace. HAI's management appreciates and considers all staff members' personal needs.

### **b) Programmatic Work**

We appreciate, along with other social influences and determinants of health, that sex and gender greatly contribute to a person's ability to access medicines and health outcomes. However, where this contribution ends and other influences start is

often difficult to determine<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, HAI is committed to gender mainstreaming as an organisational strategy to bring a gender perspective not only to organisational aspects mentioned in Section A, above, but also to its programmatic work. By gender mainstreaming, we ensure that gender concerns are an important aspect of each stage of programme development, from designing and planning programmes to implementing, monitoring and evaluating them.

### **Programme Designing & Planning**

HAI's management is committed to promoting gender mainstreaming and has made resources and opportunities for capacity building available for staff members on the topic of gender.

HAI is committed to ensuring gender is part of any baseline/situational analysis undertaken at the start of each new programme. This analysis will include any gender-specific situations, challenges and opportunities and be connected to the programme development and monitoring and evaluation system. Based on this analysis, we design activities that match specific gender needs.

HAI is committed to ensuring that the assumptions and risk matrix of each programme is gender sensitive.

HAI is committed to developing gender-specific operational tools, such as a checklist, to ensure specific gender needs are mapped before programmes are developed.

### **Programme Implementation**

Ongoing projects will be reviewed and revised, when necessary, to ensure differing gender needs are tackled, and mechanisms are in place to promote women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels.

We are committed to ensuring that:

- our communications materials and documentation promote gender equality and are gender sensitive.
- HAI's staff and partners have an adequate understanding of gender and act in support of this Gender Policy.

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<sup>3</sup> Hawkes, Sarah et al. Gender and global health: evidence, policy, and inconvenient truths. *The Lancet*, Volume 381, Issue 9879, 1783–1787.

- working with others that promote gender equality and share our core values, and/or can further build our capacity in the field of gender.

We understand the importance of sex-disaggregated data to help us identify the burdens of disease and, thus, be able to target our in-country interventions and advocacy initiatives more effectively. Wherever possible and relevant, we are committed to collecting sex-disaggregated data in our research.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation**

We appreciate that without the evaluation of gender-specific outputs and outcomes, the gender aspect of accessing health care will likely receive less attention. We are therefore committed to undertaking the following actions:

- When developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks and manuals, as well as during project design itself, we will articulate gender issues and strategies.
- We will review our programme monitoring frameworks with a particular focus on the indicators and tools to ensure that the data we capture is gender sensitive (including sex-disaggregation), where relevant. We understand the importance of this data to help us identify the burdens of disease per sex and, thus, measure the level of effectiveness and efficiency of our in-country interventions and advocacy initiatives.
- We will ensure that gender is an important component in programme evaluation, analysis and key research we undertake. We are committed to incorporating this into contracts that we develop with third parties and will make a deliberate effort to work with consultants with experience in this field.
- We are committed to ensuring that planning, monitoring and evaluation staff, both within HAI and among our partners, understands gender and acts in support of this Policy.

## **5. ACCOUNTABILITY**

HAI management will safeguard the current high level of gender equality that exists within the organisation by ensuring that:

- ensuring that organisational policies and practices continue to address equality and inclusivity.
- assessing and enhancing the organisational capacity and due diligence towards the implementation of this gender policy.
- organising an annual reflection meeting to analyse the progress made towards the commitments outlined in this document.

HAI staff is responsible for upholding the policies adopted by HAI, including this Gender Policy. The Policy will be signed by all current and new staff members as part of their employment contract.