

# Gender Policy

Rural Educational Activities  
for Development (READ)



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## Preface

This document establishes the Gender policy for READ. It demonstrates READ's concern about gender equality at the work place, and commitment for mainstreaming gender for the institutional development

It describes the Gender policy where it creates and maintains an environment where both men and women could get equal opportunity to work. It describes and provides a framework for effectively integrated gender concerns into the organisational agenda and policy domain. It also provides an environment to promote equal representation and participation of women in decision making at the programmatic and administrative levels. In order for the policy and procedure to be effective employees are aware of this document that is to be provided to them in the preferred language. The rules and regulations are applicable to everyone who is engaged to work in READ's programmes.

The policy and amendments should be notified to the staff, be read and understood, translated in the preferred language as necessary.

### **READ's Vision and Mission**

READ's vision is to create a peaceful, just and an equal society where *Adivasis, Dalits* and marginalized communities are empowered to live a life of dignity and quality.

READ strives to fulfil its mission by empowering the marginalized communities, capacitating them to recognize and access their rights, building peoples collectives at local and larger levels, strengthening local leadership & local governance institutions for enabling participatory development, pro people policies and realization of rights, entitlements and justice working together with community leadership, likeminded organizations and relevant stakeholders.

### **Analysis**

READ's analysis of the existing situation of discrimination in the society provides the basis for identifying the poor and marginalised, especially Girls and women. It believes that the Gender discrimination necessitates focusing on changing women's roles and status, as agents and leaders of change, one of READ's core values is therefore to mainstream gender justice and equality through analysis of an action on the surrounding social realities. This core value is integral to READ's vision and informs the organisation's interventions into its own police, systems, structures, programme priorities and plans.

### **Gender Policy Framework:**

Gender mainstreaming in the institutional development of READ has become an explicit Governing Board Policy which is driven by READ's long standing concern about gender equality at the workplace. Over the time it was realised that READ should have its Gender policy formally written approved and publicized so that it not only gives direction for the organisation in practice, but also holds the organisation accountable. It also comes from the understanding that, inequality between men and women is deep rooted and it is manifested in discrimination against women in different forms. To whatever extent, one might be sensitive; it needs conscious and continuous efforts to

achieve a balanced environment both at organisation level and also in work with the partners at field level. Framing a Gender policy is commitment towards those efforts. The overall effort is to provide an enabling environment for women within the organisation, various partners and the communities with whom we are working and strengthen the gender sensitivity among all.

## **Formation of (CASH)**

Recognizing these events and adhering to its commitment to gender justice, READ also formed a Committee against Sexual Harassment in December 2019. The decision to form CASH was also in response to the Supreme Court guidelines passed in the year 2001, which mandated such a committee to be formed by all Indian organisations. It eventually evolved into the Committee on Gender Awareness and mainstreaming in READ. The committee has well defined Term of Reference which act as guidelines to its functioning.

## **ELEMENTS OF GENDER POLICY:**

### **What we mean to Gender**

READ understands that gender refers to the attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the socio-cultural relationships between women and men. These attributes opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation process. They are context specific and changeable. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in activities undertaken, access to and control over resources as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, which also takes into consideration factors such as class, race, economic status, ethnic group and age. READ adopts gender perspective, which means focusing on both women and men and their relationships with each other and resources. In addition, it means working with a global perspective that allows for and appreciates regional diversity. The organisation aims at mainstreaming gender by creating an enabling working environment that in turn attracts and helps to retain gender sensitive staff. Since READ is working to strengthen natural resources management practice to secure livelihoods of deprived communities it means achieving a better analysis of patterns of use knowledge and skills regarding conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. Only with a gender perspective a complete picture of human relationships and ecosystems can be built up. The gender policy is an integral part of all its organisational policies, programmes and projects and involves building a culture that understands the issues and policies, which respect diversity and gender related concerns. A mere statement of policy and objectives does not ensure the concerns relating to addressing the gender towards achieving the below objectives, clear indications need to be defined to evaluate and assess the organisation commitment towards gender equality on a period basis.

### **Objectives of Gender Policy**

- To explicitly state the organisational commitment towards gender
- To provide a direction towards building gender related agenda
- To provide a framework for effectively integrating gender concerns into the organisational agenda and policy domain

- To create equal opportunities and a conducive environment for women and men at work place
- To promote equal representation and participation of women in decision making at programmatic and administrative levels.

**Strategies:**

READ's commitment to gender-justice and equality works can be defined at two levels i.e.

1. Institutional
2. Programmatic

**1. INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL**

**A. Staff Policies**

All staff policies, service rules and regulations of the organisation shall be gender sensitive. Periodic reviews of the same would be done through a gender lens to ensure that gender sensitivity is maintained. These policies would be in line with the government provisions.

**B. Staff compositions/representation**

- Recruiting adequate women staff and ensuring the balance also at senior levels with an objective of achieving a numerical gender balance in all posts at all levels.
- Ensuring equal opportunities among male and female staff for personal growth in promotion, benefits, training and working condition.
- Ensuring equitable representation and participation of men and women in the core group, Board of trustees and in various functional committees of the organisation.

**C. Workplace**

- Providing a safe and secure workplace for women staff, free from sexual harassment with a Gender Complaints committee to look into specific concerns
- Providing an enabling and friendly working environment where both men and women enjoy and actively participate in work. This includes providing flexible working hours and allowing working from home, wherever possible.
- Extending work related concessions and relaxations for women staff depending upon the situations and requirements, e.g. providing secure transport facilities when they work late hours, giving relaxation over travel time for the next day for those in the field, ensuring security measures along with minimum basic facilities for women staff traveling in the field.
- Reviewing the organisational structure, functioning, problems in relation to gender imbalances among staff and the work environment time to time and taking definite steps to address the same.
- Strategic orientation to staff in the field based programme and advocacy initiative towards increasing women's access control and ownership over the natural resources.

**Placing Gender in existing committees:**

A women employee who has put in 3 months of service after confirmation shall be entitled for 6 months of Maternity leave on full pay and under probation she will be eligible for leave without pay for the same length of period

Men employees when their spouses have children shall be entitled for 15 days of leave either immediately after child birth or fifteen days before child birth and fifteen days after child birth for primary parenting and child nurturing.

In case of miscarriage/abortion, women staff can avail 2 weeks of Maternity Leave with full pay and spouses are entitled for one week of leave

Making efforts to develop infrastructure, for childcare facilities in the office premises in order to ensure that, the parents can bring their children in circumstances in which the child cannot be taken, by any outsiders.

**D. Performance Reviews**

All performance review forms of individuals by self or supervisors/peers/subordinates will have indicators to assess gender sensitivity in the overall performance. READ will be committed to creating and promoting a gender sensitive work environment within the organisation towards achieving this goal, it would organise regular workshops/seminars and exposure to a variety of other input. All READ organised events/programmes both internal and external will have a gender component and address gender specific needs of the participants.

**E. Sexual Harassment**

READ will also address complaints relating to sexual harassment made by the staff members, guests, and participants to workshops etc. The organisation shall be responsible to set up structures and put a complaint box where staff members may feel free to seek redressal of their complaints.

**F. Documentation of Processes and Disseminations:**

READ will also ensure a detailed documentation of all the processes related to the activities on the issue of gender within the organisation, these will be accessible to all those who wish to use the same to promote and strengthen gender equality within their work spheres.

**2. PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL**

**A. In the field**

- Furthering deliberate and intense efforts to promote participation of women and their collective in various aspects of natural resources management
- Facilitating participation and even representation of women in various institutional structures created for the management of natural resources like committees, users groups etc.
- Analysis of gender disaggregated roles, work patterns and make special efforts to reduce the work load of women
- Extending constant orientation of field-level partners on gender perspectives in NRM as part of long-term gender goals like formal recognition of women’s rights over resources like land, assets etc.
- Ensuring equal wages to equal work for both men and women in the works as part of the programme, where READ is directly or indirectly involved either as an anchor of the program or as a facilitating support services provider

- Making, special efforts to constantly identify vulnerable women and provide them the necessary support and guidance.
- Sensitizing the men and mobilizing their support towards gender balances
- Building, awareness and sensitivity by processing information and publishing communication material in diverse media to appeal different strata of people in our functional domain.

**B. Staff capacity building**

- Facilitating staff capacity building processes and training to enhance perspective and conceptual clarity on Gender issues. It will be an important component of the induction programme.
- Ensuring that all trainings (internal and external) facilitated by the organisation are gender-sensitive
  - a) Training content/methodology/mode of facilitation
  - b) Logistics part-time/location of venue/crèche facilities/other logistics/first-aid kit
- Conducting gender training for both men and women and ensuring participation of women in all the field level meetings and trainings

**C. Staff benefits**

- Following all statutory requirements related to maternity and paternity leaves
- Ensuring that staff access to and use of information technology is gender equitable
- Arrangements should be made for recording, all information and open access for reviewing the performance of tasks mentioned at organisational level regularly in different forums from staff meetings to annual meetings

**Networking**

READ would proactively make several efforts in promoting gender concerns in the work with partners. It involves extending support to partners in organising training programme, conducting gender studies, preparing resources material, providing documentation support etc.

Sharing Gender reports with members and partners organisations and also facilitating similar process with the organisation to promote gender sensitivity.

Associating with networks and organisations working on this agenda, supporting and expressing solidarity with partners at field level is essential in taking up issues of discrimination or harassment against women.

**The basic principles to be followed in mainstreaming gender will be**

- The establishment of adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring of progress within the institution, as well as during the programmes, the identification of issues and problems within the organisation should focus on the gender difference and disparities wherever they exists.

**Note:** this is a policy statement, which outlines READ’s sensitivity towards

- Gender and its operational framework to address the related concerns, the exact operational procedures would have to be worked out in details for all the above outlined statements in a consultative process, internally involving all the staff with possible external facilitation support

Date:

Place :

Approved by

Secretary

READ, Berahampur