



GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

This Gender Equality Policy is the result of the collective work of members of the Organization Amis de l'Afrique Francophone-Benin (AMAF-BENIN) wishing to consolidate their commitment to empowering women and girls and transforming relationships of gender and power in all the initiatives we carry out. Our commitment is to uphold the rights of all women, all men, all girls, all boys and all people with different abilities genders and identities, both within our Organization only in the communities we work with. Gender equality within our Organization, our activities/projects or programs and with our partnerships, is a fundamental element of our mission to promote well-being and eradicate poverty, as well as for the conservation of nature. The intervention of our AMAF-BENIN Organization with communities must be based on practical measures to achieve gender equality. The intervention of our Organization AMAF-BENIN with communities must be based on practical measures to achieve gender equality.

BASIC PRINCIPLE

Our Amis de l'Afrique Francophone Organization (AMAF-BENIN) has the vision of a just society or world without poverty, a world where women, men, girls, boys and people of all identities and capacities are empowered, participate in decision-making processes, have access to sufficient food and clean water and can achieve this with dignity. We can only realize this vision if we put women's rights and gender equality at the heart of everything we do.

AMAF-BENIN believes that gender equality is an intrinsic human right and an end in itself. Addressing gender inequality in all aspects of our activities is essential to improve living conditions for all, combat poverty and social injustice and achieve sustainable results from our activities and projects in all sectors in which we intervene.

Gender inequality is a major cause and contributing factor to poverty. It shapes the dynamics of well-being at the household and community level: women, girls and other marginalized people are significantly disadvantaged in their access to and control over resources, from production to consumption. Women and girls are over-represented among people facing precariousness and poverty, because they are often deprived of their fundamental rights, such as the right to land ownership, access to decent work, and education and health services. If women/girls and other marginalized people had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase the yields of their farms and food insecurity would be significantly reduced. Furthermore, closing this gap would put more resources in the hands of women and strengthen their voice and power within the home and society; to improve their living conditions and enable them to provide education and health services for their children.

We must therefore consider gender equality as an essential strategy to ensure well-being and eradicate poverty in all our priority sectors and initiatives, including the prevention of gender-based violence in all our activities, building resilience, improving basic social services and social protection, mitigating the effects of climate change and creating and sharing knowledge.

Gender inequality and exclusion vary in their expressions, but in every locality where we operate, we witness different forms of gender discrimination, stereotyping, unequal distribution of power and resources between women, men, girls, boys and people of diverse gender identities as well as exclusion based on multiple factors. These factors include attributes such as race, class, religion, ethnicity, ability, language, sexual orientation and gender identity. Gender inequality exacerbates the negative consequences of all other forms of exclusion. Our commitment to gender equality will be strengthened by understanding how these aspects of discrimination intersect, and using this learning to inform our activities and projects, and our advocacy.

We will work to dismantle patriarchal power structures, promote feminist leadership and approaches, and share power as an essential condition for gender equality.

OBJECTIVE :

This policy establishes a framework for our AMAF-BENIN Organization to promote gender equality and adopt a gender transformative approach throughout our policies, culture, governance structure, operational processes and our projects at all levels.

The objective of this policy is to :

- Ensure better understanding, greater consistency and a common language for the implementation of gender equality principles, commitments and practices across the Organization ;

- Move towards the implementation of local strategies adapted to the context in order to challenge and change the norms, attitudes and behaviors of gender discrimination towards those who advocate gender equality;
- Allow us to promote gender equality through strengthening our team, drawing on our expertise and experience in gender matters ;
- Establish an accountability framework to assess our progress on gender equality.

Implementing this policy will require dynamic leadership, resources and the transformation of our traditional power structures, institutional cultures and behaviors as well as our technical expertise. In accordance with the Strategic Plan of our AMAF-BENIN Organization, we are committed to working towards gender transformation and ensuring its measurement. We recognize that gender transformation requires consistent and persistent long-term commitment.

SCOPE :

This policy is aimed at the entire AMAF-BENIN team. It applies nationally to all of our Organization's long-term development activities and projects, including our awareness-raising activities, our technical training and support projects and our advocacy. It is valid for all Structures of our AMAF-BENIN Organization, including for management staff and members of the Board of Directors, as well as for all our partners.

PRINCIPLES :

This policy is aligned with our general fundamental principles and the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan which commits us to a gender transformative approach to combat discrimination and poverty. It is also aligned with international human rights law and the global Sustainable Development Goals.

The following gender equality principles sustainably guide our work:

- 1- Gender equality is a prerequisite for the eradication of poverty and constitutes the foundation of an effective solidarity response and sustainable development.
- 2- All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their capabilities, have access to education, decent work, resources and make life choices without being limited by gender stereotypes, rigorous interpretations of gender roles and identities or even through discrimination.
- 3- The integration of gender transformative approaches to achieve gender equality is a responsibility shared by all staff and members in all Structures of the AMAF-BENIN Organization.
- 4- In order to achieve gender equality, we must examine the root causes of gender inequality and adopt a transformative approach in addition to addressing practical needs. This requires empowering people, transforming gender and power relations, and putting in place gender-equitable structures and systems. This approach includes questioning patriarchal structures, norms, privileges and power.

5- Addressing sex or gender inequality is a prerequisite for preventing gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. We will mitigate all forms of gender-based violence and backlash and adopt a survivor-centered approach.

6- Sex or gender equality benefits all people, regardless of gender. We will work with men, boys and duty bearers as partners and allies to achieve sex or gender equality.

7- Gender inequality is exacerbated by other intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination based on age, disabilities, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes. All activities, policies, activities and projects/programs have intersectional gender impacts. We will deepen our understanding of these impacts to ensure that our Organization and our activities and projects do not cause harm.

8- Our AMAF-BENIN Organization considers that women, girls and people of diverse gender identities are disproportionately affected by gender inequalities.

9- Specific measures and resources must be implemented to reduce gender disparities and promote gender equality. We recognize that people have different needs and distinct power based on their gender, and we will identify and respond to these differences to achieve results and reap the same benefits through a dual approach (targeted actions and integration of a gender perspective).

10- AMAF-BENIN believes that community-based approaches, collaboration and long-term partnerships are essential to empower women and girls, transform gender relations and build gender equitable systems.

COMMITMENTS :

AMAF-BENIN's approach to gender equality is dynamic and contextual. Therefore, we make the following commitments:

COMMITMENT 1

LEARN AND UNDERSTAND:

We will demonstrate an understanding of gender inequality, gender power relations and gender-based violence prevention within our Organization, our activities and projects and our partnerships.

This includes :

- Conduct, analyze and understand gender and power analysis and the risk of gender-based violence in our internal data and organizational structures, policies and practices.
- Conduct, analyze and understand gender and power analysis and the risk of gender-based violence in all our solidarity and long-term development activities and projects as a basis for design and action.
- Design and implement a learning program based on research, action and gender transformative social partnerships that demonstrates the relationship between poverty and sex or gender inequality.

COMMITMENT 2

IMPLEMENT :

We will counter gender inequality and gender-based violence in our Organization and within our projects by implementing gender transformative approaches.

This includes :

- Adopt and implement a gender transformative approach guided by our commitments to gender equality in all of our long-term solidarity and development activities and projects to address the challenges of eradicating poverty and nature conservation.
- Adopt and implement a gender transformative approach in the systems, approaches and culture of our Organization.
We will collect data, analyze it and take steps to integrate gender equitable policies, procedures and culture into our work. This approach includes all internal methods and practices relating to human resources, finances, security, logistics and communications.
- Develop and exercise gender equitable leadership, power sharing and a feminist transformative approach to strengthen systematic change throughout our organization and our activities and projects/programs.
- Create opportunities and partnerships that actively question and challenge discriminatory gender norms, unequal power dynamics and structures that serve to reinforce sex or gender inequalities in all aspects of our work.

COMMITMENT 3

MEASURE AND LEARN :

We will support, monitor and evaluate our progress towards gender equality in all of our activities and projects: from our approaches and project results, to our organizational structure, our systems, our culture and our engagement with our partners.

This includes :

- Implement agreed Organization-wide gender equality standards against which to measure our progress in achieving our Gender Equality Policy and related strategic commitments.
- Our members will provide support, develop and advance gender equality action plans, in order to respect our standards and achieve our gender equality objectives.
- Invest in evidence generation and research conducted at the community level to document learning and share knowledge and strategies to empower women and girls, change gender relations and integrate structures and gender equitable systems.

- Strengthen our capacities and measure the effectiveness of gender transformative activities and projects and organizational change.

COMMITMENT 4

ACCOUNTABILITY :

We will hold ourselves accountable for achieving our strategic intent to mainstream gender transformative approaches and achieve gender equality results in our Organization and in our activities and projects/programs.

This includes :

- Mobilize and allocate the human, technical and financial resources that our partners, networks and projects/programs need to meet political commitments.
- Holding ourselves accountable to local communities at all times, we collaborate with men, women, boys, girls and people of diverse identities, genders and abilities.
- Report our progress and lessons learned to our donors, authorities at various levels, local communities, staff and partners.
- AMAF-BENIN leadership will be responsible for all aspects of integrating this policy into all aspects of our activities aimed at improving living conditions, strengthening resilience and mobilizing and sharing knowledge.

Together, our action will strive to create long-term impact by promoting structural changes in the behaviors, inequalities, social norms and culture that generate poverty.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles	Responsibilities
All executive management staff and members of the Board of Directors of the AMAF-BENIN Organization	Responsible for understanding and implementing this Policy as it relates to their daily tasks. Staff and Board members are expected to promote gender equality in all aspects of their activities and behaviors.
Executive management	Responsible for managing resources, implementing activities and projects and reporting on policy implementation within the Organization, ensuring management of the office at the national level, strengthening the capacity of the staff ; and the involvement of local communities and partners in the implementation of activities and projects.
Regional or departmental management	Responsible for promoting and implementing the policy by integrating it into strategies and action plans at all levels; the allocation of adequate resources to strengthen the capacity

	of staff and partners for implementation; and ensuring that all staff are aware of the implications for their daily activities
Gender and Communication Manager (Gender Unit)	Responsible for formulating strategic and technical advice for policy implementation, including: tool development; the training proposal to support the implementation of the policy; and the formulation of advice and guidance on monitoring, evaluation and proposed actions to operationalize policy commitments
Gender equality working group / Community of practice	Responsible for: contributing to the design and monitoring of gender action plans; the design and implementation of initiatives to promote and support the deployment of the policy; facilitating dialogue and sharing of information across the network regarding the policy and its implementation; feedback and consultation from the International Gender Unit.
AMAF-BENIN governance bodies (Board of Directors)	Responsible for strategic leadership and accountability for all aspects of the Gender Equality Policy, including governance, organizational culture, annual reporting, budget and resource mobilization, evaluation and management risks, and strategic direction of programs. They are also responsible for reporting on progress made in terms of gender equality and monitoring it with regard to the indicators selected during the development of the Strategic Plan and with regard to the Minimum Gender Standards, as well as the key indicators of progress towards a gender transformative approach.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING:

To ensure accountability, a reporting, review and monitoring protocol, coordinated by the gender manager, will be put in place and resourced to track progress and achievements.

Regular reports on the progress and implementation of this policy will be communicated to the Board of Directors of the AMAF-BENIN Organization and to partners. This task will include an annual review of the implementation, compliance and qualification of minimum gender standards across all activities and projects of the AMAF-BENIN Organization. Gender indicators linked to the Strategic Plan (2023-2027) will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.

Ultimately, the success of this gender equality policy will be measured by the transformative change felt in the lives of women, men, girls and boys, as well as people of diverse gender identities affected by the activities of AMAF-BENIN.

2. DEFINITIONS OF SOME EXPRESSIONS USED:

Gender: A social construct derived from cultural, political, and social practices that defines the roles of women, girls, men, and boys and people of diverse gender identities, as well as social definitions of what it means to be masculine and feminine. Gender roles are taught, learned and absorbed and vary between cultures and even within the same culture. Gender often defines the duties and responsibilities expected of women, girls, men, boys and gender diverse people at any given time in their lives and establishes some of the barriers these people may face or the opportunities and privileges they can benefit from throughout their lives. Gender, like age, sexual orientation and gender identity, determines the power women, girls, men and boys have and their ability to access and control resources.

Gender equality: Equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes between people of different genders. It includes the redistribution of resources and responsibilities between men, women and people of diverse gender identities, as well as transforming the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality to achieve substantive equality. It involves recognizing the diversity and disadvantage of everyone to ensure equal outcomes for all, and therefore often requires women-specific programs and policies to end existing inequalities.

Gender equality does not mean that gender differences are erased, but that people's rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on their gender.

Gender inequality: Unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunities and values among men, women, boys, girls and people of diverse and different gender identities, due to dominant gender norms and structures.

Gender-based violence: Violence that is exercised against a person because of their gender. It describes violence rooted in power inequalities and gender-based discrimination. Although people of all genders can be victims of gender-based violence, the term is most often used to describe violence against women and girls, as the majority of cases of gender-based violence are perpetrated by men against women.

Gender stereotypes : Rigid and simplistic assumptions and generalizations about the abilities, attributes, skills, behaviors, preferences and roles that people should have or demonstrate, based on their assigned or perceived gender. Like other aspects of gender, stereotypes are assimilated and internalized, so that they are often considered natural, innate and true; people who don't exactly fit the stereotype are seen as exceptions or outliers. Stereotypes can be positive or negative. Negative stereotypes lead to unfair treatment, sexism, discrimination and exclusion.

Diverse gender identities : Term for people whose gender expression differs from societal gender expectations. Gender expression refers to the set of outward characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as masculine or feminine, such as dress, appearance, mannerisms, modes of expression, and social interactions, often based on race and class. Social or cultural norms can vary widely and certain characteristics that may be accepted as masculine, feminine, or neutral in one culture may not be valued the same way in another.

Gender norms or gender equality: Gender norms are the accepted attributes and characteristics of male and female gender identity at a given time in a specific society or community. They are the norms and expectations to which gender identity generally conforms, within a category that defines a particular society, culture and community at a given time. Gender norms are conceptions of how women, men, girls and boys should be and act.

Internalized early in life, gender norms can establish a life cycle of socialization and gender

stereotyping. In many contexts, this differentiation leads to a hierarchy between genders and sexualities, which in turn results in unequal access to power, opportunities and resources.

Feminist approach: A feminist approach involves devoting ourselves both to an outcome (the advancement of the rights of men, women, boys, girls and people of all genders and identities), but also to a path forward (our ways of working, program design and implementation, policy and campaigning, and the values that underpin our decisions as staff or managers).

Empowerment: Empowerment is about women, men, girls and boys taking control of their lives: they set their own agenda, learn skills (including life skills), develop self-confidence, resolve problems and become independent.

The phenomenon of empowerment enables women, men, girls, boys and communities to strengthen their capacities to challenge existing inequalities and act for change.

Intersectional approach : An approach to programs and policies that considers all aspects of diverse people's experiences of oppression and discrimination, as well as the systems that produce and perpetuate that oppression, to understand how these forces intersect and create deep-rooted barriers to equality and justice, and then develop programs and policies that dismantle this discrimination.

Patriarchy: Refers to a traditional form of societal organization that is the cause of gender inequality and has the following characteristics: male/masculine attributes and roles are given more importance and value than male attributes and roles and the roles of women/feminine; ownership, decision-making and control of resources in most areas of life are considered the preserve of men; and various forms of oppression of women in private and public spheres. This perception is based on stereotypes (such as the belief that women are naturally better at caring for children and men at leading) and underpins many types of gender discrimination.

Gender transformative approach: Gender transformative approaches, policies and programs seek to explicitly address and change harmful gender relations in order to promote equality and achieve program objectives:

1. Examine power differences, intersect inequalities and gender roles, norms and dynamics;
2. Recognize and strengthen positive intersectional gender norms that promote equality and an environment conducive to change;
3. Promote the relative position of women, girls and marginalized groups (rather than simply improving their condition);
4. Transform the underlying social, legal and economic structures, policies and norms that perpetuate gender inequalities.

According to a gender transformative approach, it is impossible to achieve gender equality without explicitly challenging power and privilege (patriarchy), and a feminist and rights-based approach is necessary to achieve lasting progress.

Here is our policy for:

Gender equality.

Against gender-based violence.

People of all identities.

Against discrimination

Eradicate poverty and ensure the well-being of all.