

GENDER POLICY

OF

THE SOCIETY FOR WELFARE, ANIMATION AND DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL SERVICE CENTRE,
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SWAD, the developmental wing of the Catholic Diocese of Berhampur, Odisha, India, since 1993, has been **walking with the poor** in eight districts of South Odisha.

SWAD **envisions** building a just, equitable peaceful, harmonious, inclusive and self-reliant society that is rooted in love. SWAD **mission** is to promote livelihood, education, health, gender equality, environmental justice, human rights and dignity of all-especially that of the poor and the marginalized such as Tribals, Dalits, Women and Children through the process of non-violent conflict transformation and participatory sustainable development.

SWAD is committed to gender equality

SWAD is aware of the inequality exists between men and women in Odisha its deep rootedness. To whatever extent, one might be sensitive; it needs conscious and continuous efforts to achieve a balanced environment both at organizational level and also in work with the partners at field level. SWAD Gender policy provides a framework for removing the inequality and attempts to eradicate gender discriminatory attitudes and structures within the organisation and its partner organizations and strengthens the **gender sensitivity among all**.

SWAD's Gender policy is rooted in the biblical vision of the wholesome human being, created in the image and likeness of God. It lays emphasis on internalising the spiritual values which ensure the dignity of the human person. It is built on a holistic spirituality that integrates all the dimensions of human existence and blends the material and spiritual dimensions of life.

Understanding Gender

There are biologically constructed differences between the male and the female sex. The female sex is physically endowed with the ability to conceive and bear children, nurture them and the male sex contributes to conceiving but cannot give birth. While this sex difference is biologically and anatomically constructed, gender differences are socio-culturally constructed. Gender is distinction in roles, activities, behavior, mental and emotional characteristics between females and males developed by a society. Gender refers to the behaviours, attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the socio-cultural relationships between and among women and men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships vary from one society to another and from one historical period to another. These differences are learned through socialization processes by men and women and have been constructed and reinforced by socio-cultural,

religious and economic institutions over time perpetuating discriminatory belief systems and attitudes. This leads to imbalanced positioning and inequalities among women and men. Gender is time and culture specific and changeable.

Gender is not synonym to women. Gender is not the same as sex, which refers to biological differences between men and women. Gender refers to power relationships between and among men and women. Therefore, gender issues are not the same as women's issues but are issues of women and men vis-à-vis each other. Both women and men suffer gender discrimination. Very often the focus is on women because of the unequal status they have in all spheres of society. Women have limited access to resources/assets and decision-making and thus are the worst victims of gender based discrimination and violence in a patriarchal society. The focus is also on men from the point of view of sensitising them. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, which cuts across castes, class, race, ethnicity and age divisions in society.

Gender scenario in the Country and in Odisha

The Indian Constitution provides specifically for gender equality, affirmative action, freedom and security of the person and socio-economic rights. The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by them. It has passed many laws to prevent violation of rights of women. However, the situation of gender inequality persists in both overt and covert forms in Odisha as seen in the following facts.

1. There are far fewer women than men in the Odisha. The sex ratio is 978 women per 1000 men (2011 census).
2. Literacy rate of women, in Odisha, is 64.36% as against 82.40% of men
3. Women's work is undervalued and unrecognized. They work for longer hours compared to men.
4. There are lesser women in the organized work force than men and there are more unemployed women than unemployed men.
5. Women are generally paid a lower wage than men for doing the same work.
6. Women are underrepresented in governance and decision-making positions. Even most of the elected women do not exercise their position but by their husband or some other men
7. The caste/class systems, cultural and traditional practices place women in lower status in all aspects.
8. Male preference leads to elimination of female foetus and female infanticide.
9. Denial of Rights / Entitlements to women is found quite common.
10. Atrocities against women, domestic violence, rape and dowry-related violence are other oppressive trends visible against women.

Human trafficking has increased due to globalization and lop-sided developmental models within the country

In most socio-cultural communities women's human rights are limited by religious, cultural and traditional practices that are based on patriarchal norms.

Women bear the brunt of the structural adjustment policies that led to globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation. They are burdened with the responsibility of meeting the essential needs of family in the face of increasing economic hardship and displacement from their lands and communities.

Women from vulnerable groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, tribal and Backward Castes face further discrimination based on their gender, caste and ethnicity.

Perspective of gender mainstreaming in SWAD

A gender perspective helps to integrate and consider women's and men's diverse roles, responsibilities and opportunities in developmental and political processes. Further it recognizes pluralities and diversities in our society and political realities of our country. SWAD understands and adopts a gender perspective that includes focusing on both women and men and their relationships with each other, their access to, control over and ownership of benefits and resources (movable, immovable). Mainstreaming gender implies that women and men have equal opportunities to realize their potential and human rights and enjoy equal status. Mainstreaming gender in SWAD means creation of working environment with gender sensitive structures, systems and staffing in place. It also implies that SWAD will encourage and facilitate local partners to develop grassroots involvement from a gender perspective and create structures that promote gender equity and equality.

It upholds the importance of developing specific interventions to meet the practical and strategic needs of women in order to ensure the empowerment of women as a step towards gender equality. It highlights the need to engage both women and men in the processes of gender sensitisation aiming at attitudinal change, the effect of which will be seen in the behavior and gender relations.

Gender Policy of SWAD is a way forward from working for women's development to Gender and Development.

Principles of SWAD Gender Policy

SWAD:

- Recognizes the innate power of human beings to bring about the transformation of unjust structures and practices, and promote development at personal and societal levels;
- Acknowledges the new world order created by globalization and its effects on developing nations, specially women, and seeks to address the imbalances;

- Understands gender equality as a cross cutting goal that needs to be integrated into all its policies, programmes and projects;
- Realizes that gender differences are socially and culturally constructed and reinforced by caste, class, ethnicity, language, age, region and religion and that restructuring gender relations to reclaim the dignity of girls and boys/men and women is essential;
- Believes that gender equality can be achieved through a partnership among and between men and women;
- Promotes women's empowerment (Social, economic and political) as being fundamental to achieving gender equality.

Strategic Goal

A society where men and women enjoy equal status, valuing the differences

Objectives

1. Possess institutional capacity in terms of know – how, attitudes, structure and resources to carry out gender mainstreaming in SWAD and facilitate the same process among the partners / collaborators.
2. Influence regional (in the context of SWAD Network) policies to include gender aspects and its implementation by advocacy and networking efforts.
3. Ensure that all structures, policies, procedures and practices at SWAD are gender sensitive and gender balanced.
4. Ensure that all programs implemented directly (capacity building) or facilitated or supported by SWAD mainstream gender at all the stages of analysis, planning, appraisal, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
5. Work towards ensuring that gender is mainstreamed in the structure, procedures, policies and practices at all levels – Village, Panchayat, Block and District.

Activities to achieve the objectives Objective 1

Possess institutional capacity in terms of know – how, attitudes, structure and resources to carry out gender mainstreaming in Caritas and among the partners / collaborators.

Activities for objective 1

- ✓ Workshops, discussion sessions to bring about shared / common understanding on gender and related concepts.
- ✓ Organize gender sensitization programs for SWAD staff, members of Governing Body and General Body
- ✓ Organize trainings for capacity enhancement to be able to practically implement gender mainstreaming mechanisms.
- ✓ Creation of a think tank including the gender specialists.

- ✓ Creation of a reference group within the organization.
- ✓ Ensure availability of a functional department on gender mainstreaming with adequate staff.
- ✓ Creation of database of policy developments, international conventions and other civil society organizations.
- ✓ Production/ Dissemination of literature on gender related issues among partners and others such as church bodies, seminaries and religious congregations, schools and colleges.

Objective 2

Influence regional policies on gender aspects and its implementation by advocacy and networking efforts.

Activities for objective 2

- ✓ Develop strategic alliances with net working partners, other advocacy groups and organizations, civil society, peoples' movements and district and state administration.

Objective 3

Ensure that all structures, policies, procedures and practices at SWAD are gender sensitive and gender balanced.

Activities for objective 3

Periodical review of structures, policies, procedures and practices from gender sensitivity and balance perspective and execute the decisions that are made with a view to:

- Providing equal opportunities for women with special focus at professional levels.
- Engaging women in all the decision-making bodies and providing for equal representation of women at all levels including Governing Body and General Body.
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- Ensuring access to grievance cell for gender justice.
- Ensuring gender perspective in the organization and the development programs.

Objective 4

Ensure that all programs implemented directly or supported by SWAD mainstream gender at the stages of analysis, planning appraisal, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

Activities for objective 4

- Ensure that each program / project is prepared after gender analysis as a part of overall situational analysis based on clear guidelines.

- **Focus on Gender Mainstreaming:** A process of integrating and incorporating gender concerns in policies, programs, projects and activities of SWAD, Govt. agencies and other civil society Organizations
- **Focus on Gender Planning:** A process of constructing programme and projects of the organization necessary for women to deliver empowerment and for development to take place.
- **Focus on Gender Analysis:** A way of looking, assessing and redressing gender biases in policies, programme design, management implementation and reviews. It is a look at the reality that takes into account the disparities and inequalities bet been men and women.
- **Focus on basic elements of Gender analysis:** A) Identify the needs and issues of women and men. B) Identify the opportunities, threats and constraints for women and men. C) Identify the capacity of the organization.
- Focus on the Gender planning steps: 1. Create Gender Objectives. 2. Propose a Gender Plan Matrix. 3. Call for Gender consultation and participation. 4. Define Gender Monitoring
- Develop guidelines for gender mainstreaming at all the levels of:
 - Program planning.
 - Review.
 - Monitoring and evaluation.
- Promotion of the programs that aim at:
 - Enhancing access to opportunities and resources.
 - Increasing women's control over assets/resources and decision-making.
 - Challenging the subordinate role of women in homes, communities and society.
- Accompany selected projects of the partners to demonstrate best practices on gender mainstreaming. Carry out Gender audits as a mandatory process.

Objective 5

Work towards ensuring that gender is mainstreamed in the structure, procedures, policies and practices at all level – Community/Village, Panchayat, Block and District

Activities for objective 5

- Organize gender sensitization programs for village, Panchayat, Block and District level leaders.
- Facilitate the development of gender policy and a plan of action at the grass root level.
- Facilitate the implementation and periodic review of the gender policy and the plan of action once drafted
- Focus on gender sensitive Development interventions that empower women and therefore work towards narrowing the gap between men and women in the family and the society.

- Use the bottom –up approach to raise women’s consciousness about inequality and challenge their present status in society.
- Work on practical gender needs to build a support base in order to address strategic needs.

SWAD’s Gender Policies are for promoting healthy staff equality. In the social sector, SWAD feels that any responsibility could be carried out by both male and female staff. There need not be any sort of discrimination based on sex in the organizational structure or for working system and SWAD believes that both men and women have equal share and responsibility for building up a just and healthy society.

Therefore, the following are the ***Gender Policy of SWAD*** that is strictly followed by SWAD.

Governing Body: Women representation in the Governing Body must be a minimum of 30%. It is mandatory to follow this formula.

General Body: Women representation must be at least 30 %.

Staff Structure: Each Project implemented by SWAD will have women members in the staff structure. Special care will be taken to involve more women as administrative staff in the project. Conducive atmosphere for women staff both at field and office level will be ensured namely:-

- Maternity leave
- Toilet facilities
- Women Capacity building
- Gender Desk
- Women as team leaders
- Existence of a staff grievance cell
- Hospitality at SWAD guest house
- Travel facility as per the availability of opportunities.
- Accompaniment as per the availability of opportunities
- **Maternity Leave**
A female member of SWAD staff may avail two months of maternity leave with full pay.

Women Capacity building

As an organization, SWAD has taken an oath to promote women leadership and cross the Gender gap. Without women empowerment it is impossible to create Gender balance in society. Therefore SWAD takes it as its duty to look into its own organization and establish gender equity. Gender mainstreaming is a collective focus of SWAD that crosscuts all of its interventions, programmes and projects.

Gender Desk: There is a Gender Desk at the Organization comprising of President, Secretary cum Director and four nominated members from among the staff who deal with any sort of gender discriminations reported from the field as well as from the office. The Gender Desk Can submit special requests to the organization for Gender mainstreaming. The Director nominates the members for a period of three years.

Staff Grievance Cell: There is a staff Grievance Cell at Organization level which deals with all disputes, controversies and harassment to any staff of the organization. The Cell consists of core executive team along with two elected members from staff.

Hospitality at the guest house of SWAD

The newly appointed female staffs get a certain period of time (8 days) for the initial adjustment and settlement of accommodation. **The female staffs from the project field also get a certain time in the organization**

Remedial Steps: Gender Desk can suggest for any remedial steps if they encounter any disparities in Gender. Compensatory measures could be adopted to involve more women in trainings and field activities.

Gender related net work/Alliances: SWAD will join hands with other Organizations to support the same cause. Regular or periodic contacts should be developed with them, and if possible membership also could be sought.

Harassment policy (Sexual & mental Harassment)

SWAD believes that the employees of SWAD are the primary means by which the goals and objectives of the organization will be met. To that end, the rights of all employees must be respected. All employees of the SWAD must understand its position on harassment. By definition, harassment is any unwanted attention or action prohibited by law by someone in the workplace that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment, including sexual harassment. The procedure for reporting and dealing with this very sensitive issue is as follows:

- If a person's behavior makes an employee uncomfortable, the employee should feel free to immediately advise the person that, in the employee's opinion, the behavior is inappropriate and that the employee would like it to be stopped.
- If the staff member is not comfortable discussing the issue with 'the person', or if the person fails to respect the staff member's request, the staff in concern should report the incident to his or her supervisor. If, for whatever reason, the staff does not feel that the supervisor is a suitable person to whom the incident could be reported, then the Executive Director or, if necessary, the President of the Governing Body or the Gender Desk may be contacted.

In all instances, a prompt, thorough and, fair investigation must take place, giving careful consideration to protect the rights, privacy and the dignity of all the people involved. SWAD must take those steps it feels necessary to resolve the problem, which may include verbal or written reprimand, suspension, termination or taking recourse to the police.

No retaliation of any kind is to occur because an employee has in good faith reported an incident of suspected harassment. The supervisor, or other person to whom the complaint was made, will work to establish mutually agreed upon safeguards against retaliation while attempting to mediate any sexual harassment complaint.

SWAD has specific committees as “Staff Grievance Cell” for handling cases related to sexual harassment of women staff working in the organization, thus makes sure that no sort of sexual harassment is taken place among the staff inside the campus and outside the campus. This Committee can always take the help of the Gender Desk or the Governing Body for that matter so that a healthy atmosphere prevails in the area.

Use of abusive language: Any such words that may hurt the feelings of women staff should be avoided by male staff. If such things happen then others should take remedial measures. Words and actions of male staff should not hurt the feelings of women staff and special care has to be taken towards this.

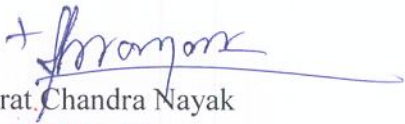
Any disputes: Any disputes regarding Gender Policy will be taken care by the Core Team of SWAD.

Policy Renewal

The Gender Policy of SWAD will be reviewed and re-visited in every three years.

Conclusion

The society in which we live today is suffering from various social evils such as ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, injustice, gender inequality, casteism, communalism, corruption and criminality. Gender inequality has been occurring traditionally and politically. This sort of increasing unequal social relations needs to be concentrated by SWSD to look in to and create a refined society, where justice and equality assured to all. In the male dominated society, suppression of women has always been justified as a common and natural thing, rectification of which is not taken seriously by the Indian thinkers and social activists. As a result, oppression of women is not finding a way towards elimination of the same.



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