



# GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

*This version of the Gender policy is effective for implementation  
as of date of final approval*

# Gender Equality Policy



## 1. Introduction

Hope Alert Network for Development and Local Empowerment (HANDLE) is committed to the delivery of programs that ensure the measurable quality of work and lasting impact on the people served. HANDLE vision is to seek a world where no child knows poverty, vulnerable individuals are economically empowered and their spiritual lives improved. HANDLE puts gender equality in the center because we know that we cannot overcome poverty and equality until all people have equal rights and opportunities. We recognize that power relations between genders and ages are unequal and that we must challenge patriarchy and promote gender equality to achieve socio-economic empowerment, equality, rights and justice. Through this policy, HANDLE commits to ensuring that gender equality is fully incorporated into all our work both as a universal human right and an end in itself, as well as a means to overcome poverty and socio-economic empowerment more effectively. Working with others, HANDLE seeks to deliver programs that ensure the measurable quality of work and lasting impact on all people served irrespective of gender and age. This policy will be implemented in the context of local legal environments.

HANDLE recognizes that gender is not binary and that terms and definitions related to gender and sexuality are diverse and continue to evolve. To facilitate ease of reading within this policy we refer to 'all genders and ages' throughout. This demonstrates our recognition of and ability to work with adults and children and individuals of all sexual orientations, gender identities and/or gender expressions. We recognize that rigid gender norms limit people of all genders and sexual orientations by creating and reinforcing assumptions and systems of privilege (sometimes codified in laws and policies), about their recognition in society and the range of roles and opportunities open to them. These not only limit individuals who identify as girls, boys, women and men as well as identities beyond the binary, but also individuals whose sexual orientations do not conform with dominant norms and expectations of heterosexuality. While rigid gender norms can limit all of us, HANDLE also recognizes that gender norms and hierarchies are constructed by people and systemically privilege some groups over others. Throughout this policy when reference is made to all genders and ages this includes (cisgender and transgender) women and girls, men and boys as well as people who identify beyond the binary; and people of all sexual orientations.

## 2. Purpose

This policy represents the organization's<sup>1</sup> commitment to taking a cohesive and coordinated approach to gender equality. The policy defines HANDLE's explicit intention to support gender equality and the principles expressed in international agreements<sup>2</sup>. The policy includes three core principles and commitments against which all parts of HANDLE will be held accountable<sup>3</sup>. These are consistent with other organizational and programmatic standards<sup>3</sup>.

The purpose of the Policy is to:

- Define and communicate clear commitments and consistent messages within HANDLE and with others

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this policy the term Organization is used to denote every HANDLE entity including Members, Affiliates and Candidates in all its offices

<sup>2</sup> Relevant International Agreements include: [Convention on the Political Rights of Women \(1954\)](#); [Convention to the Consent of Marriage, Minimum Age of Marriage, and Registration of Marriages \(1964\)](#); [Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict \(1974\)](#); [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\) \(1979\)](#); [Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women \(1993\)](#); [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(PFA\) \(1995\)](#); [CEDAW's Optional Protocol](#); [Maputo Protocol – Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa \(2003\)](#); [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence \(Istanbul Convention\) \(2014\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> This Policy is complementary to the HANDLE's vision, mission, and core principles

- Continue to strengthen efforts to promote gender equality in our organization, increasing HANDLE's integrity and credibility amongst donors, partners, and allies as a leader in the gender equality space, in both programming and advocacy
- Establish commitments for our development and humanitarian programming and our organization
- Enable us to work as a confederation and with others building on each other strengths, experiences and lessons learned

### 3. Core Principles

HANDLE is a rights-based organization. Gender equality is an explicit internationally recognized human right and HANDLE seeks to promote the equal realization of dignity and human rights and the elimination of poverty and injustice for all genders and ages. Our commitments are founded and based on the Human Rights Framework and agreed on principles<sup>4</sup>, such as equality and non-discrimination. They are based on international law and regional standards, in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as relevant soft laws and the global ambitions set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

HANDLE recognizes that issues of gender inequality intersect with other forms of oppression based on religious discrimination, unequal power relations, such as ableism, racism, and ethnic discrimination, ageism, sexual orientation among others.

HANDLE works with marginalized groups such as youth and women and their allies to address structural barriers to the realization of women's rights and gender equality; social justice, peace, well-being, and a life free from violence.

*The achievement of gender equality requires that:*

- gender equality and equity are central to HANDLE's being and doing;
- the empowerment of women and girls is recognized as fundamental to our mission;
- every individual understands and demonstrates attitudes and behaviours that promote gender equality and equity;
- adequate resources are allocated to gender work;
- all work is continuously monitored against gender indicators;
- and the cross-cutting nature of gender concerns is recognized (gender equality is both everyone's responsibility and an area that warrants specialized attention and resources).

### 4. Policy Implementation Commitments

In order to enact these principles, HANDLE shall focus on implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and reporting the following and will be prioritized as part of her responsibility for transparency and accountability.

- 1) Systematically negotiate with donors for adequate funding to meet the HANDLE gender commitments (specifically addressing measures for "do no harm"/gender-based violence prevention measures, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), and organizational gender equity and diversity (GED)).
- 2) Incorporate participatory gender and power analysis<sup>5</sup> and data disaggregated by sex, age, and other relevant diversity factors<sup>6</sup> to inform actions across the programme/project cycle.
- 3) Articulate how programming works across all three domains of the Gender Equality Framework, and apply and learn from the Gender Marker at every stage of the project or programme cycle to improve our gender transformative potential.
- 4) Ensure evaluations and reviews do no harm, are participatory, and assess progress towards gender equality outcomes. Ensure that they document best practices and challenges, and create mechanisms for cross-learning within communities, within HANDLE, and with partners.
- 5) Recruit and retain staff with a commitment to gender equality; build staff and partner capacity and skills in gender equality and diversity, and ensure all annual operating plans, job descriptions and performance plans

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<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Principles include: Universality and Inalienability, Indivisibility, Participation and Inclusion, Accountability and Rule of Law, Transparency, and Equality and Non-Discrimination

<sup>5</sup> There are a variety of tools that can be used to do gender and power analysis; they are not necessarily separate processes; however, any situational analysis must include an analysis of gender and power. In humanitarian settings a rapid gender analysis is required.

<sup>6</sup> These may include: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and identity, age, class, caste, religion, physical and mental ability

reflect HANDLE's commitment to gender equality.

- 6) Engage men and boys<sup>7</sup> in support of gender equality and women's empowerment when in line with programming and/or organizational objectives.
- 7) Identify potential programming risks throughout the program/project cycle and take steps to do no harm and mitigate unintended consequences of backlash and gender-based violence, regardless of sectoral focus, especially in fragile and conflict contexts<sup>14</sup>.
- 8) Take all measures to prevent and respond to all forms of sexual harassment and violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse of children and vulnerable adults, promote staff awareness and training, and effective systems for reporting and monitoring.
- 9) Form partnerships with women's rights organizations, agencies and movements to collaborate in the achievement of shared goals and elevate the voice of marginalized people; and engage key stakeholders in the struggle for gender equality including other civil society, government, private sector, and public and private donors.
- 10) Ensure all our human resources policies and practices are developed with a gender lens. Report on gender and diversity balance in staffing and governance structures along with average pay levels. Implement targeted strategies to redress any evidence of gender inequality in gender and diversity balance and pay levels.
- 11) Ensure external marketing, fundraising, advocacy and communications respect and uphold our commitment to social justice and gender equality including being respectful, using inclusive and positive language and images and avoiding stereotypes with particular attention to those based on gender and ethnicity.
- 12) Regularly report to programme participants, donors and the public on progress on gender equality in HANDLE's work.

## 5. Policy Application

This policy applies across HANDLE's development and humanitarian programming; to our organization and to all HANDLE Employees and Related-Personnel<sup>8,19</sup>.

## 6. Responsibilities

**All HANDLE Employees and Related Personnel.** It is the responsibility of all HANDLE Employees and Related Personnel to uphold the Core Principles and Commitments of this policy.

### **Senior Managers, Supervisors and Human Resource Managers.**

- Senior Managers, Supervisors, and Human Resource Managers must ensure that all HANDLE Employees and Related Personnel understand and comply with this policy.
- Human Resource Managers are also responsible for robust recruitment, induction, and training as per Commitments 5 and 10 above, whilst Senior Managers and Supervisors are responsible for performance management to ensure the implementation of the policy.

### **HANDLE Members, Affiliates and Candidates**

- HANDLE Members, Affiliates and Candidates will ensure this policy is implemented, monitored, and reported against time.
- HANDLE Members, Affiliates and Candidates are responsible for defining work plans and procedures to uphold and operationalize this policy. HANDLE Lead Members will provide the necessary support to all forms of HANDLE engagement within or in all its offices and premises.

## 7. Associated Policies

This policy is complementary to the set of standards of behaviour that all HANDLE employees are required to adhere to in the HANDLE Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics and any further codes or related policies defined by HANDLE Members, Affiliates, Candidates, and Offices.

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<sup>7</sup> Engaging Men and Boys, HANDLE Role Model Men (RMM) approach

<sup>8</sup> The term "HANDLE Employees and Related Personnel" includes all employees of any HANDLE office, as well as Board members, volunteers, interns, and consultants, including both individual and corporate contractors. Any organisation that has affiliated with or entered into partnership agreements of any form with HANDLE will be subject to due diligence processes to ensure relevant policy alignment"

This Policy is also a response to HANDLE's accountability to the communities it works with and is, therefore, to be operationalized as part of the broader HANDLE Accountability Framework.

Approved by.   
**BOD CHAIRPERSON**

  
**HANDLE SOUTH SUDAN**  
SENIOR MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR  
Programme Department  
★ OFFICIAL ★