

## Appendix 3. Gender Equality Policy

(Next review by September 2027)

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Responsible person	CEO	Scheduled review date by	Sept 2027

### Introduction

Assisi Aid Projects is committed to promoting gender equality and diversity in all its developmental work.

The vision of Assisi Aid Projects (Assisi) is for women in the Asia-Pacific region to be able to create meaningful life-changing economic and social impact for themselves, and for the lives of their families and communities.

Gender equality is a human right and is a fundamental principle, required to enable poverty reduction and sustainable development. Gender equality is a concern for all genders, and for both young and old.

The majority of the world's poor are women and as such, in areas of poverty, gender equality is particularly pertinent for women, people identifying as women, and those assigned the traditional responsibilities and roles of women. In poverty-stricken environments women are often found to be unemployed, or in vulnerable situations and low-wage jobs. They often do not have equal access to education, skills training, financial resources, information, and social protection measures.

Women and girls in these environments are also often heavily burdened with the additional responsibilities associated with housekeeping, food preparation, and family/child-care. Furthermore, violence against women and girls is often pervasive.

In these environments, women are often under-represented in civic and political life, limiting their right to shape policies, laws and budgets.

Assisi's mission is to engage with our partners to create local enterprise opportunities for women, supporting them to be agents of their economic and social change.

Assisi's projects typically address four spheres of influence which negatively impact gender equality:

- **Tradition, culture and gender norms** shape the social rules and expectations of both

women and men and have a profound impact on progress towards equality. Discriminatory gender norms act as barriers to women and girls securing their fundamental rights, including their right to education, protection, health, expression and participation.

- Access to **markets and income** significantly impacts women's ability to access and control the resources they need for themselves and their families. Barriers to women's labour force participation and access to income are numerous, ranging from the time burden associated with child-rearing and other unpaid work that is predominantly done by women, low education levels and existing wage gaps between genders.
- **Personal voice and agency** are critical to achieving gender equality. Supporting the active, free and meaningful participation of women and girls in all spheres of life (social, political and economic) ensures their ability to define their own life-choices and pursue their own goals.

**Policy and governance** can result in widespread gender inequity when laws fail to equally protect and promote the rights of women and girls, fail to encourage women and girls to participate in public life, do not allocate a fair share of resources to women and girls, and fail to equitably include their perspectives in policy decision-making processes.

### **Purpose**

This policy outlines Assisi's approach to supporting gender equality and women's empowerment across all aspects of the organisation's operations in Australia and overseas.

### **Scope**

The policy applies to all Assisi's staff, members, Governing Body members (including both Committee of Management and subcommittee members), volunteers, interns, representatives, contractors, and visitors to project sites (hereinafter referred to as "personnel").

In addition, Assisi supports and actively encourages in-country partners to incorporate the principles of this policy into their workplace practices, and to implement relevant strategies that contribute to positive gender equality outcomes.

### **Gender Equality Statement**

Assisi Aid Projects (Assisi) believes that gender equality is essential for improving the wellbeing of all and necessary to achieve sustainable development.

Assisi believes that all people, (including women, girls, people identifying as women and girls, and non-binary) should live a life free from oppression and discrimination.

Assisi's projects strive to address gender and intersectional disadvantages and injustices experienced. In this way, Assisi's work aims to empower women, girls and people identifying as women and girls and improve socioeconomic and cultural structures that may otherwise serve as obstacles for women's socioeconomic well-being and political participation.

Assisi supports its partners to strengthen processes and practices that promote gender equality.

## Policy

Assisi focuses on enabling the social and economic empowerment of women, girls and those identifying as women or girls, to realise gender equality. To achieve this, Assisi acknowledges the importance of working with all people, including men and boys, to address gender norms that constrain the advancement and achievement of gender equality in communities. Assisi's policy and operations are informed by the following documents:

1. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (February 2016) # Currently under review.
2. Commonwealth Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012
3. • Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act (1984).
4. • United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW (1979) (ratified by the Australian Government in July 1983).
5. • NSW Anti-Discrimination Act (1977).

## Assisi's Approach

To achieve its strategic goals and promote gender equality, Assisi prioritises projects that focus on increasing the social and economic empowerment of women's, girls and others identifying as women or girls, working with value-aligned local partner organisations who are committed to:

- Adopting a twin track approach – Assisi's projects primarily adopt a targeted approach that are specifically designed to address gender inequalities, together with adopting a mainstream approach that integrates gender equality across all areas and sectors, including organisational policies, business systems and practices.
- Integrating gender equality in all Assisi's organisational policies and guidelines.
- Adopting a "do no harm" approach to ensure that projects and activities do not unintentionally perpetuate or reinforce gender inequalities.
- Recognising and supporting women's movements and organisations in Australia and in the countries in which projects are implemented.
- Engaging with men and boys in community projects to foster positive attitudes towards gender equality.

## Gender equality in Assisi's operations in Australia

Assisi will:

- Comply with all Australian Anti-discrimination and Equal Opportunity laws.
- Strive for equal representation of men and women on the Committee of Management and staff positions, at all levels.
- Create enabling work environments for women and men, including family-friendly working hours, the opportunity to work from home, and fair parental leave that supports both parents.

- Implement mechanisms that address harassment and discrimination that occurs on the basis of gender.
- Enable Assisi's staff and volunteers to increase their understanding of the gendered norms and practices in the countries where Assisi projects are located.
- Pay women and men an equal salary for equal work.
- Include Assisi's commitment to gender equality in partnership agreements.
- Seek opportunities to share knowledge and collaborate to promote equality, embrace diversity, understand intersectionality and strengthen participation and access to equal opportunities for those discriminated, neglected or marginalised.

### Gender equality in overseas programs supported by Assisi

Assisi's mission is to support women as agents for economic and social resilience in their communities through strengthening women's skills, knowledge and confidence, supporting women's collectives, and addressing systematic barriers to gender equality.

Assisi achieves its mission through working with local partners in the Asia-Pacific, to implement development programs. Assisi is committed to supporting our local partners in strengthening gender equality processes and developing their capacity to plan and deliver effective programs, which support gender equality.

Assisi commits to the following:

- Programming – in practice
  - Ensure project work is informed by a context specific gender analysis that examines the differences in the lives of women, men, and non-binary people, including those that lead to socioeconomic inequalities for women. This understanding will inform project designs.
  - Prioritise projects that focus on increasing the social and economic empowerment of women, girls and those identifying as women and girls, alongside advancing transformational change in institutional and social norms impacting gender equality.
  - Involve participants in program-related decision-making at all stages to ensure programming responds to development priorities as defined by women and ensure that women are the primary agents in addressing their own development priorities.
  - Respect women's desires and challenges, such as workloads or schedules, and ensure programs do not require more work or involvement than participants are able and willing to provide.
  - Promote equal participation of women and men in program and project level committees and decision-making processes.
  - Encourage and foster advocacy for gender equality and women's empowerment by men and boys wherever appropriate.

- Incorporate social protection risk management strategies, with mitigation measures focused on ‘do no harm’ principles that prevent gender-based violence against project participants.
- Consider and address risks relating to the security of participants and gender-based violence, incorporating mitigation measures in project design which focus on ‘do no harm’ principles.
- In-country partners -
  - Work with value-aligned local organisations.
  - Ensure partners mainstream gender equality practices, and appropriate training, in their policies and strategies, including equal opportunity employment for women and men, creating a safe and comfortable working environment, and complying with local laws.
  - Support partners to develop their understanding and practice of gender equality if identified as a knowledge or skills gap.
- Monitoring and evaluation -
  - Ensure that program monitoring and evaluations integrate gender considerations and regularly review the effectiveness of each project in strengthening gender equality.
  - Track and report progress against a set of key performance indicators as outlined in Assisi Aid Projects’ Strategy 2022- 2027.

## **Responsibilities**

As outlined in the Policy Overview, there are roles and responsibilities that apply to all policies. There are no other specific responsibilities that apply to this policy.

## **Related Documents**

ACFID – Code of Conduct

Assisi – Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Procedures, Human Resources section

Assisi - Good Practice Manual (GPM)

Assisi – Program Guidelines

Assisi – PSEAH Policy

Assisi – Strategy 2022 - 2027