

15 APF Gender Policy



Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions Forum Council Meeting Paper

Title:	APF Gender Policy
Summary of issue:	A draft APF Gender Policy is submitted for Forum Councillor consideration.
Recommendation:	That Forum Councillors: • Note the briefing paper; and • Adopt the APF Gender Policy.
Relevant considerations:	As set out in the APF Strategic Plan for 2011-2015.
Submission prepared by:	Director
Forum Councillor or officer responsible:	Chairperson

15.1 Introduction

At the 15th Annual Meeting of the APF in 2010, the APF secretariat recommended that the Forum Council adopt the recommendations on gender analysis in APF programming of the 2010 *Review of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions* (the Joint Donor Review). Forum Councillors approved the recommendation and incorporated this task in the APF Strategic Plan.

In implementing this task the APF secretariat has:

- Reviewed relevant international aid and capacity development 'best practice' on gender integration, mainstreaming and diversity for guidance;
- Conducted a review of peer practice for 'human rights' specific agencies;
- Reviewed current APF practice to identify relevant commitments; and
- Drafted an APF Gender Policy for submission back to the Forum Council for consideration and approval at the 16th Annual Meeting of the APF in September 2011.

15.2 Background

Women make up just over half of all people in the Asia Pacific region, but continue to suffer a disproportionate amount of discrimination and barriers to equal participation in society. They also face many examples of serious human rights abuses, such as domestic violence and trafficking. Addressing the unequal status of women is one of the primary responsibilities of NHRIs.

Considering gender in programming has been an issue for development agencies — NGO, bilateral and multilateral — since the México Women's Conference in the mid 1970s, when the first women and development approaches were agreed to. Over the last decades international, national and local development agencies, organizations, and institutions have begun to operationalize the gender impact of their work to redress inequities and inequalities which arise as a result of unequal gender roles and relations.

The process of operationalizing gender is generally referred to as *gender mainstreaming*. A number of international agreements frame the APF's ongoing response to gender mainstreaming. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action provides a comprehensive framework to guide rights-based action for gender equality.

Despite virtually universal commitment, implementation of gender equality policies has proved challenging. A 2005 review¹ of nine OECD bilateral donors found very significant 'policy evaporation' in the progression from commitment to

¹ Mirijam van Reisen with Maxi Ussar (2005), Accountability Upside Down: Gender equality in a partnership for poverty eradication, Eurostep and Social Watch.

implementation and resourcing. There were similar stories about key challenges (e.g. a lack of appreciation that all activities have a gender dimension) and what makes a difference (involvement of gender expertise in planning and design, specific responsibilities for gender, mandatory requirements, incentive-based approaches and good management practice). As a result most development assistance organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, have not yet successfully institutionalised approaches for addressing gender issues in their work.

The manifest difficulty experienced by a wide sweep of organisations in implementing gender equity policy commitments sets the context for the development of an APF gender policy. What follows is an attempt to identify a practical approach based on peer practices that have been demonstrated to deliver gender equity outcomes.

15.3 The need for an APF Gender Policy

The APF has undertaken a range of specific advocacy and training activities relating to gender. This has included, for example:

- The APF Regional Workshop on Women and International Human Rights, held in Fiji in May 2000, which brought together APF member institutions, NGOs, CEDAW members and the OHCHR;
- The APF campaign for NHRI participation rights in the UN Commission on the Status of Women;
- The APF-UNFPA project on Reproductive Rights;
- The Advisory Council of Jurists work on trafficking and sexual orientation and gender identity; and
- The APF blended training program on women's rights.

These APF activities and our response to women's rights and gender identity do not, by themselves, transparently demonstrate that gender mainstreaming is an approach taken to **all** APF activities. There is other evidence that this is in fact occurring, for instance gender balance is routinely flagged as an issue in structuring training courses and in the attendance of participants. However, as identified by the Joint Donor Review, to transparently ensure that this objective is being pursued across all APF activities a number of additional mechanisms are required.²

² Dwyer makes the following comment: "The APF does apply a gender analysis in programme planning, delivery and evaluation. Members indicate that the APF has been influential in improving their capacity to deal with gender related issues and offer examples of this. However, APF documentation does not sufficiently highlight that a gender focus is applied" [Dwyer, J. *Review of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions*, 2010, p.7]

15.4 Review of Peer Practice

As the most established regional organisation of NHRIs, the APF has little directly applicable peer practice to draw upon from the other regional coordinating committees in Africa, the Americas and Europe and nor at the international level with the ICC. At the national level many NHRIs do not have an explicit gender policy, focusing instead on gender campaigns.

However, the wider community of development international development agencies have been pursuing formal gender mainstreaming programs for some time, demonstrating pockets of success. Some donor agencies also provide guidance on what they regard as best practice in gender mainstreaming.

The APF review of peer practice focused on identifying well-established gender mainstreaming mechanisms that, if implemented together, would constitute model practice for the APF in delivering gender equality outcomes. The following organisations have been identified as providing practical examples of best practice:

- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Gender Equality Strategy;
- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) gender equality frameworks;
- International Labour Organisation (ILO) Participatory Gender Audit; and
- World Health Organisation (WHO) Directing Council Resolution.

In reviewing the above four organisations approach to gender mainstreaming it is clear that the primary objective behind gender mainstreaming is designing and implementing projects, programmes and policies that:

- Do not reinforce existing gender inequalities between women and men;
- Attempt to redress existing gender inequalities between women and men; and
- Attempt to redefine gender, women and men's gender roles and relations.³

The degree of integration of gender in any given project, programme or policy can be conceptualized as a continuum, as show in figure 1 below.

The APF's history of advancing women's rights, reproductive rights and protecting and promoting gender diversity indicate that the APF is substantially progressed along this continuum. These programs recognise gender as central to fully achieving positive capacity outcomes for APF members. While many of its activities are demonstrably gender positive, there remains scope to evolve this commitment fully, firstly by transparently ensuring that this objective is being pursued across all APF activities and secondly by seeking opportunities to advance APF practices to a point where they are consistently gender transformative.

³ Annotated Bibliography on Gender Mainstreaming and Analysis Resources for Health Programmers, Pan-American Health Organization Gender and Health Unit, 2003

Figure 1: Continuum of Gender Approaches in Projects⁴



Gender negative	Gender neutral	Gender aware	Gender positive	Gender transformative
Gender inequalities are reinforced to achieve desired capacity outcome	Gender is not considered relevant to capacity outcome	Gender is a means to reach capacity goals set by professionals	Gender is central to fully achieving positive capacity outcomes	Gender is central to promoting gender equity and achieving positive capacity outcomes
Uses gender norms, roles and stereotypes that reinforce gender inequalities	Gender norms, roles or relations not affected (worsened or improved)	Addressing gender roles, norms, and access to resources in so far as needed to reach project goals	Changing gender roles, norms and access to resources a key component of achieving project goal	Transforming unequal gender relations to promote shared power, control of resources, decision-making and support for women's empowerment

In practice, gender mainstreaming means identifying gaps in gender equality through the use of gender-disaggregated data; developing strategies to close those gaps; putting resources and expertise into implementing strategies for gender equality; and monitoring implementation.⁵ An effective program of gender mainstreaming requires:

- Explicit gender policies and implementation frameworks;
- Capacities for systematic gender analysis in planning and programming; and
- Tracking and accountability system with specific performance indicators and measures of progress.

A number of practical mechanisms that would enable the APF to evolve a comprehensive, transparent and transformative gender mainstreaming program can be identified from peer best practice. If these best practice elements were implemented they would constitute model practice for the APF in delivering gender equality outcomes. These elements are:

- Organisational **gender objectives** aligned with strategic goals (ILO, UNDP);

⁴ Adapted from Eckman, A. (2002)

⁵ UNDP Gender mainstreaming fact sheet

- A **gender mainstreaming scorecard** driving organisational planning and reporting (UNDP);
- A **council resolution** that serves as a strong, concrete gender mainstreaming policy commitment (WHO);
- **Gender equality frameworks** to integrate gender analysis into programs and projects (CIDA); and
- A senior management **gender focal point** to establish accountability (UNDP).

The following sections describe how these elements might be applied by the APF, indicating where existing APF practice already partially puts these elements into practice.

15.5 APF Gender Objectives

Developing gender objectives aligned to the APF's five strategic objectives promotes viewing all APF activities through a 'gender lens' without distorting the broad range of issues faced by the APF. For instance, the following draft APF gender objectives would commit the APF to work across each of its five strategic objectives on initiatives that help members to achieve gender equality:

- Enhance members' institutional capacity **to deliver gender equality**;
- Enhance members' communication, cooperation and engagement **on gender issues**;
- Promote **gender equality** through compliance with the Paris Principles;
- Engage with regional and international **gender related** human rights mechanisms; and
- Effectively and efficiently manage the APF **to ensure gender equality**.

Because these draft APF gender objectives are closely aligned with the existing suite of APF Strategic Objectives, their pursuit through program and project management would be fully integrated, as would gender performance measurement. This would help to ensure that gender issues are mainstreamed and not managed as 'stand-alone' objectives.

These gender objectives also provide a framework for the existing APF programs responding to women's rights and gender identity. For instance, the program of advocacy on NHRI participation at CSW clearly delivers under the fourth gender objective and the APF-UNFPA project on reproductive rights delivers against the first. By allocating existing gender initiatives to these goals it is possible to create a draft gender equity plan highlighting areas of existing strength and to identify areas that may require additional planning.

15.6 APF Gender Mainstreaming Scorecard

The APF undertakes a rigorous approach to evaluating its progress in achieving its strategic objectives. Based on the information provided by its members and other key stakeholders, the APF Annual Report presents an assessment of its

performance over the last 12 months against the organisation's strategic objectives. A half yearly performance review also provides an ongoing view of its performance using a streamlined approach to evaluating its progress to assist the APF in fine-tuning its activities during the course of the year. This annual and half yearly reporting is based on a framework of indicators measuring the outputs and outcomes delivered by the APF in pursuit of its strategic objectives.

Some of the metrics used in the APF Measurement and Reporting Framework lend themselves to gender disaggregation, potentially providing information on progress in achieving APF gender objectives. For instance, training quality and relevance metrics could be gender disaggregated. However, many of the metrics represent institutional positions and are less amenable to gender analysis. Notwithstanding this there is potential to develop specific quantitative measures of gender mainstreaming performance from members, particularly about the gender make up of their workforce profile and the resourcing of specialist gender functions.

An important task for the Gender Focal Point will be to identify measures of gender mainstreaming performance, where reliable data is available, and to integrate these into the APF Measurement and Reporting Framework to provide an evidence basis for future gender planning. An improvement in the measurement of gender equity outcomes should be anticipated as projects and programs apply a gender analysis in accordance with the APF Gender Policy.

15.7 APF Forum Council Resolution as Gender Policy

In establishing the scope of a gender policy commitment the APF is faced with two options:

- it can pursue a narrow scope governing the activities conducted on behalf of the Forum Council by the secretariat; or
- it can opt for a broad scope encompassing the activities of its member institutions.

The narrow scope allows very clear but limited policy commitments to be made, largely concerning the integration of a gender perspective into program design. To a significant extent this governance function can be relegated to a process document, such as the draft APF Gender Mainstreaming Practice Note, supplemented by a commitment to a suite of gender objectives, such as those drafted above.

To arrive at a broadly scoped APF Gender Policy a consensus position across the APF membership on a range of culturally and politically sensitive issues needs to be achieved. In this the World Health Assembly resolution WHA60.2 serves as an example of how a multilateral commitment on gender can be phrased to be relatively concrete and practical. The resolution has two aspects, firstly a policy aspect addressing the member States of WHO and secondly an operational aspect addressing the WHO organisation.

A draft APF Forum Council Resolution on Gender Policy is attached as Annex 6. As the membership of the APF is constituted of independent NHRIs (and not States) a slightly different approach to that taken by the WHA is warranted. In Annex 6:

- The policy commitment is expressed as a gender advocacy platform common to all APF members.
- Operational commitments apply to both member NHRIs and the secretariat.
- A third aspect provides a governance framework for use by the APF secretariat in consolidating planning and reporting.

15.8 APF Gender Focal Point

Identifying the role of a Gender Focal Point in the APF Secretariat is intended to provide leadership and to ensure the coordination and communication of different elements of gender mainstreaming practice. The gender focal point advocates for greater attention to gender perspectives, providing the necessary rationales and advice on approaches to support gender mainstreaming. Assigning the role to a senior manager facilitates the effectiveness of this function.

The role of gender focal point is not fulltime; persons appointed as gender focal points normally have other areas of responsibility. The work of a gender focal point is to support gender mainstreaming by advocating, advising and supporting professional staff and monitoring and reporting on progress. Dissemination of information and competence development is also part of the work of the gender focal points. A summary of functions for the Gender Focal Point is given in the text box.⁶

The APF Secretariat Deputy Director has led the existing APF gender initiatives over many years. She maintains a network of gender equity advocates amongst APF members and secretariat staff and effectively functions as a 'de facto' APF gender focal point. By formalising this role, the APF signals the seriousness of its organisational commitment and facilitates the

Functions of the APF Gender Focal Point

- Act as adviser on gender mainstreaming to the Forum Council Chair
- Policy, strategy and action plan on gender mainstreaming
- Analysis, knowledge development and information activities
- Support to gender mainstreaming in the secretariat
- Support to members' gender mainstreaming
- Regular monitoring and reporting on gender mainstreaming
- Representation, collaboration and resource base development.

⁶ Adapted from Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women Job description for a Gender Focal Point within the United Nations Secretariat.

integration of gender equity activities with mainstream deliverables.

15.9 Recommendation

That Forum Councillors:

- Note the briefing paper; and
 - Adopt the APF Gender Policy as set out in Annex 6.
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Annex 6: APF Gender Policy

The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions will:

1. Promote effective cooperation and collaboration between the APF, national human rights institutions and national and regional human rights NGOs on issues relating to the rights of women;
2. Promote improved recognition of the rights of women within national institutions, both through appropriate structures and effective mechanisms and through relevant training programs for staff and members;
3. Assess and address gender differences and inequalities in their institutions and operations;
4. Define common indicators of gender equity outcomes and regularly monitor and report on these;
5. Support and sustain incorporation of a gender perspective into the mainstream of APF activities;
6. Give priority to the use of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in publications and information systems in order to ensure that they reflect awareness of gender equality as a determinant of human rights;
7. Ensure that programmatic and thematic evaluations indicate the extent to which gender issues have been incorporated;
8. Identify, and promulgate information about, good practices on measuring the impact of integrating gender into human rights policies, including the development of indicators and information systems that disaggregate data by sex.

The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions adopts the following gender objectives for integration in the APF's strategic planning and performance reporting:

9. Enhance members' institutional capacity to deliver gender equality;
10. Enhance members' communication, cooperation and engagement on gender issues;
11. Promote gender equality through compliance with the Paris Principles;
12. Engage with regional and international gender related human rights mechanisms; and
13. Effectively and efficiently manage the APF to ensure gender equality.

In accordance with APF's Gender Policy, all APF program and project management should include the following steps to ensure the integration of gender equity considerations at different stages of program / project cycle.

- ☐ **Gender analysis of the external environment** and local factors supporting or inhibiting efforts for gender equity during planning, i.e. existing conditions for gender equity in the local context (member NHRI policies, strategies, recommendations from previous institutional and organisational assessments, relevant social and gender analysis – both by others and by the member)
- ☐ **Development of gender equity monitoring and evaluation strategy** leading to program gender equity results reporting, with indicators coordinated with APF Gender Scorecard. Some baseline data (sex-disaggregated) should be collected at the beginning of the project cycle. Final report to include best practices on gender mainstreaming acquired during implementation as well as socio-cultural obstacles encountered and the mechanisms used for mitigation and resolution of issues.

The APF Gender Policy was **adopted** by the Forum Council at the APF's 16th Annual Meeting.