

GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

Comhlámh recognises that promoting gender equality is a critical component of the organisation's commitment to diversity. This Gender Policy seeks to clarify the organisation's expectations and guidelines to assist staff in their efforts to advance gender equality. The policy is marked by two fundamental principles:

- That all people, by virtue of their shared humanity, carry inherently equal dignity and rights. Therefore, Comhlámh should always affirm and uphold the equal rights, opportunities and status of men, women, and children. That each person has a unique identity and combination of aspirations and abilities. Therefore, Comhlámh must strive to understand how the particular conditions of each individual or social group shapes its ability to achieve equal fulfilment and create tailored opportunities for each to thrive.

This policy is compatible and linked with the Equal Opportunities Policy as outlined in this handbook.

To translate this Policy into action, gender equality is integrated across our work and organisation. We recognise that leadership, resources, and technical capacity are necessary, and will collectively ensure these requirements are met. To enhance programme quality and to affirm our commitment to uphold the dignity and rights of all, Comhlámh's goal will be to promote gender equality through programming and organisational culture.

Gender Equality

- GENDER is a term that describes certain attitudes, roles and responsibilities assigned through a social process to males and females and can often result in different opportunities and behaviours for a person depending on gender. Gender is determined by societal norms; varies within and between societies; influenced by cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors; dynamic, not static.
- Gender equality means that all persons, regardless of their gender, enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy the same level of respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices.
- Gender equality does not mean that women and men, or girls and boys are the same. Women and men, girls and boys, and individuals with other gender identities have different but related needs and priorities, face different constraints, and enjoy different opportunities. Their relative positions in society are based on standards that, while not fixed, tend to advantage men and boys and disadvantage women and girls.
- A gender equality approach is about understanding these relative differences and intersecting identities, appreciating that they are not rigid and can be changed. It is important to keep these differences and intersecting identities in mind when designing

strategies, policies, programmes, and services. Ultimately, promoting gender equality means transforming the power relations between women and men, girls and boys and individuals with different gender identities in order to create a more just society for all.

- One part of a strategy to achieve gender equality is Gender Equity - the deliberate process of being fair in order to produce equal and measurable outcomes. It is defined as the condition of justice in relations among women and men, leading to a condition in which all gender identities enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and status.

Gender Concepts

- **GENDER ANALYSIS:** the study of how gender identities shape individual choices and opportunities in relation to material resources, social, political, and economic activity within a given community or group. Gender analysis is a process that also includes determining what strategies, institutional changes and related resources are required or available for resolving a given problem and decreasing the disadvantage.
- **GENDER BASED EMPOWERMENT:** Empowerment is a strategy to increase people's agency over their own lives, and their capacity to influence the relationships and social and political conditions that affect them. Lack of power is one of the main barriers that prevent particularly girls and young women from realising their rights. This can be overcome by a holistic and sustainable strategy of empowerment, involving girls, boys, and young people in changing gender norms to the benefit of all. Gender-based empowerment focuses on promoting simultaneous change in norms, attitudes, and behaviours; social and economic resources and safety nets; as well as policy frameworks and budgets. It is a core strategy of any effective work promoting gender equality and inclusion. While empowering girls and young women is key in promoting their rights, it is also essential to engage boys and young men as partners and co-beneficiaries in the realisation of gender equality. Gender norms and stereotypes often privilege boys and young men; however, their behaviours and decision-making are also constrained and shaped by rigid social and cultural expectations. Men and boys can play an important role in overcoming gender inequality and discrimination both as power holders and as beneficiaries of change.
- **GENDER IDENTITY:** Gender identity refers to how an individual feels about their own gender. Individuals may identify as male, female or as something else and their gender identity may or may not be the same as the sex that they were assigned at birth. Everyone has a gender identity and expresses their gender in a unique and personal way.
- **INTERSECTIONALITY/INTERSECTING IDENTITIES:** People do not fall neatly into single social groups. Each individual can have many identities that impact on how they interact with and are viewed by society. Unpacking these intersecting identities is key to understanding discrimination and exclusion because a person's experience of exclusion is often greater than the sum of all parts. For example, to understand the experience of a girl from a minority ethnic group, we must invest in understanding how these two identities interact, frequently reinforcing each other in creating greater barriers to her rights and perpetuating even greater experiences of discrimination.

- **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** Sexual orientation is a continuum that refers to each person's capacity for profound emotional, affection and sexual attraction to, and/or intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.
- **SOCIAL NORMS:** Social norms are a pervasive feature of all our lives. Norms are shared beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour in a group of people, including women, girls, men, and boys. Social norms are like informal rules, which also influence (and are influenced by) formal rules such as laws and regulations. Norms shape expectations and attitudes and can sustain and prescribe gender inequality. Around the world, social norms on gender shape the unequal status of women and girls and the expectations of their role in society.
- **GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT (GAD)** is a term applied to the consideration of gender in the social structure and economic conditions of societies. GAD does not focus exclusively on women, but on the socio-economic-political relationships between males and females. A GAD approach is concerned with creating equal opportunities for both sexes. It also targets members of society who are disadvantaged and empowers them to take their development into their own hands.
- **GENDER SENSITIZATION** - is the process whereby individuals improve their ability to consider the impact of plans, policies, behaviour and attitudes on both females and males, and to be sympathetic to each group's social and physical needs.

Policy Statement

Comhlámh will:

- advance gender equality through our management of human resources and the organisational culture, and within the communities we collaborate with through our programming and our advocacy.
- challenge discrimination and human rights violations based on gender, including gender-based violence, and other forms of exclusion.
- foster an organisational culture that embraces our commitment to gender equality, while supporting staff to adopt good practice, positive attitudes and principles of gender equality embedded along the principles of human rights.
- monitor and evaluates all programme activities that measure the relative impact on women and men, boys, girls, and non-binary people on the relations between them.
- ensure that results-based management systems and processes facilitate the extraction of gender-disaggregated results data and their use to inform strategic planning and decision-making.
- by harnessing the full potential of all men, women and children, this commitment will improve our organisational effectiveness and the quality and impact of our programmes.

- foster a non-discriminatory environment where non-discriminatory working relationships and respect for diversity is encouraged, regardless of gender identity and/or sexual orientation.
- ensure that priority is given to fostering safe, gender sensitive work environments for all staff, with clear accountability mechanisms to prevent and protect against sexual and gender-based discrimination and harassment in the workplace, as per Code of Conduct and PDEA policies.
- work to ensure diverse and equitable representation in decision making and ensure meaningful and gender-sensitive participation for staff members at all levels.
- ensure benefits policy is equitable and responsive to the need to balance work, family, civic life, and the different gender roles of staff (e.g., responsibilities of pregnancy, parenting, and family care).
- when necessary, conduct a gender analysis as part of various programme interventions.