

COEL: Gender Policy

Background of COEL:

After proving to be a formidable program in skill development; post the successful completion of its piloting phase, concurrent expansions and the replication of its Apprenticeship Model by other sectors, it is perceivable that grip of COEL has the scope of increasing its range of area of coverage. For its beneficiaries, COEL has created opportunities for awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expanding the range of choices, increasing access to and control over resources. Furthermore, COEL is empowered to take action and transform the structures and institutions, which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality.

COEL's goal is poverty reduction through creating Skilled Manpower linked to the industry. And under this broad head its vision is to become a worldwide reputed centre of excellence in order to serve as a one stop skills solution centre for Bangladesh Leather & Leather Goods Sector by providing all-out technical support for skills development, product designing, product development, production and other services. The project's target group is the poor, unskilled, unemployed and disadvantaged portion of the labor force. The project intends to recruit approximately 20,000 people as apprentices during the period from January 2012 to December 2016, and among them, 65% will be women. COEL's strategy for ensuring and improving the sustainability of the project is independent revenue generation. The project has been designed to generate its own revenue through placing apprentices in different manufacturing firms.

This harmonized policy represents the first step of COEL in taking a cohesive and coordinated approach to gender. The policy is based on the contribution of COEL's top management members, one of its development partners- Swiss Development Corporation (SDC 2003) and national and industry gender policies.

The Rational of an Institutionalized Gender Policy:

- I. The systematic survey done by the third party, depicts the necessity of such policy from all the phases of survey components. In South Asia, the interaction of culture and social conditions has created sharp gender differences. In Bangladesh, discrimination against women is reflected through a variety of social factors, including disproportionate rates of literacy and employment.
- II. Given the contextual framework of gender issues in Bangladesh, it is not surprising that significant disparities between men and women related to access to education and skills training continue to persist. The scenario suggests that only through concerted efforts designed to identify degrees of disparity and to address discrimination towards women will bring significant changes in the sector.
- III. COEL felt the need of incorporating integrated approach within and outside the organization. Whilst there has been emphasis by COEL on promoting gender equality in all aspects of its work, evaluations point to clear gaps in promoting gender

equality. Internally, within SDC, many individual SDC project proposals, evaluations and reviews point to the importance of gender analysis and interventions to promote gender equality in order for us to make a significant impact on poverty and social injustice.

- IV. SDC's inquiry team focusing on women's empowerment is one of the most comprehensive organizational scans of how well COEL advances women's empowerment. The team process revealed a startling lack of organizational clarity on how gendered power shapes poverty, and how we should respond. One of the key recommendations that resulted from the SDC Gender Team is the need to clarify and commit to organizational policy framework, and then accountability systems to drive it.
- V. International humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law share a common goal in aiming to prevent and relieve suffering, and to protect and promote the rights and freedoms of women, girls, boys and men. As such, they complement and reinforce each other, thus providing a comprehensive framework to ensure equal rights of women, girls, boys and men.
- VI. International commitments upholding the human rights of women and detailed thematic implementation strategies have been ratified and signed by CI home and host governments. These include the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the commitments laid out in the Millennium Development Goals, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence. Thus, it is a must for institutions to implement an organized set of GEM policy in order to uphold these international commitments.

Gender Equality and the Ideals of COEL:

- I. Equal rights for both men and women in regards to wealth, opportunities, person, family, organization and state is central to development.
- II. In relation to gender equality, a balance is essential in every aspect of society. In order to achieve equality, a joint effort of men and women is instrumental. Thus, policies should not be made to establish the men as opponent; triumph would be in empowering the women with the full support and active participation of men in society and the economy.
- III. Special effort and emphasis must be given to gain the rights of women. Despite Bangladesh having gained great progress in this aspect, women are still being oppressed by a largely patriarchal domination; it is not possible to eradicate this social-economic attitude without especial effort. COEL pledges to actively take part in this effort with its activities.
- IV. Designated gender roles have been a part of our social construct for centuries, contributing greatly to the gender inequality now prevalent in the country. Given the present reality, it may not be possible to completely

eradicate inequality in the short run. However, it shall remain one of our goals at COEL to, wherever possible, minimize inequality in the present and eradicate it completely over the long term.

4. The Objectives of Institutionalization of Gender:

- To ensure the equality of men and women in every aspects of the organization.
- To create a suitable atmosphere and values for the women workers.
- To cast-off (reject) the biases of gender in the organizational level and activities.

5. The Policies and Strategies of Institutionalization of Gender:

a) For COEL:

- I. To increase awareness of men-women inequality and gender issues among all level workers of COEL.
- II. Address systemic and structural practices that create barriers to the realization of women's rights and gender equality.
- III. For the monitoring of consensus and skills on the gender issues inside COEL will appoint a 3 to 4 member team to always keep in touch with donor partners and the top management regarding COEL's progress towards GEM.
- IV. In the all activities of the organization, the issue of decreasing inequalities among men and women will be given preference, especially in undertaking and implementing the projects and recruitment of workers.
- V. Some restless endeavor should be taken to decrease the men-women inequality in the Decision-Making levels of the organization.
- VI. COEL will ensure adequate funding to realize its GEM goals and promote knowledge of women's rights, gender relations and the disadvantages of inequality.
- VII. Any gender based discrimination, in the hiring of mid to top level management, will be strictly prohibited within the institution.
- VIII. Human Resources policies and practices will adequately address gender equality. COEL members will track and report annually on gender balance in staffing and governance structures and implement specific strategies to balance male/female representation.
- IX. A safe atmosphere would be created for the woman workers of the organization, so that they can complete their activities perfectly and with dignity.
- X. COEL commits to carrying out frequent gender analysis
- XI. Any disgraceful activity and harsh word towards the women workers will be treated as a punishable offense.

- XII. In the publicity-oriented activities such as Theater, TV Program, and Publications, COEL will be careful in promoting the concept of Gender Equality to the public, so that the issue reflects properly.
- XIII. COEL will ensure the redemption of Government law of 180 days of Maternity leave and 15 days of Paternity leave in related circumstances.

b) For the Associating Organizations:

COEL will try to motivate those organizations to which it will help directly or indirectly, so that they become initiated for the gender equality. COEL will motivate the following issues to the associating organizations with importance.

- I. COEL will create synergies by combining the strengths, good practice and lessons learned to-date by SDC, ILO and other partner organizations who have existing policy-level documents.
- II. COEL executive and senior management staff will report regularly to beneficiaries, donors and the public on progress on gender equality in COEL's work through appropriate reporting channels.
- III. A gender focal point will audit compliance to the aforementioned GEM and implement strategies to manage potential risks and harms to both women and men.
- IV. Facilitate common accountability mechanisms for Partner Organizations- such as common 'meet or exceed' minimum standards
- V. The associating organizations against the fundamentalism and social superstitions should be warned and awakened.
- VI. COEL will work jointly with the leather sector, local, regional and national government bodies and development partners towards gender equality.
- VII. COEL will join, as well as arrange Gender workshops, seminars and conferences for COEL's management and invite partner organization to participate.

6. The Implementation Process of Gender Issues in Programs:

The policy is accompanied by proposed implementation arrangements, common standards and supporting definitions. More operational guidance and enforcement will be developed by the Gender expert, COEL in consultation with SDC. To ensure the policy is effectively applied and achieves expected results, each COEL Partners may further tailor implementation to their own organizational arrangements.

a) Planning:

To combine-up the issues of gender equality and balance in every program and activities.

b) Implementation:

Gender Expert will implement, monitor and evaluate this policy. Each COEL member is encouraged to devise a context-specific and realistic implementation plan / process, with appropriate investment of resources, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. COEL will incorporate gender and power analysis as a mandatory operational and/or design feature.

6.1. Audit and Assessment:

To assert the recommendations after a restless auditing and assessing whether the work has been properly combined in the planning of programs with the objectives of gender equality or not; whether it is being properly implemented or not, and how much result of the implementation has been achieved.

ANNEX-I

Definitions:

Gender is the socially and culturally constructed relationship between women and men. It does not describe their biological characteristics but the economic, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female. It is not a 'women only' issue but refers to relations between men and women and to how roles and responsibilities of girls and boys, women and men are socially determined. Gender relations are context specific and ever changing.

Gender Equality is about giving every individual, boy or girl, the same opportunities of access. Often mentioned in the education sector, the drive to put equal numbers of boys and girls into school is therefore referred to as achieving gender equity in education. Equity indicates distributions regarded as fair, even though equalities and inequalities may exist and persist. Equity approaches therefore can include programmes for advancement of women within which systematic privileging of women may apply. **Gender Equality** is a distribution-oriented concept referring to uniformity between men and women: every person has the same rights and gets exactly the same access and opportunities. Gender Equality is the overarching aim of Gender and Development. It is embedded in human rights and is central for good governance. Gender equality as a goal is a key for poverty alleviation and sustainable development. It does not simply mean having equal numbers of men and women in development activities or treating them exactly the same. It implies that rights, benefits, opportunities and life chances for both women and men become and remain equal.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to achieve gender equality. In development work it means that development actors incorporate and address gender perspectives and gender equality as part of their goals in the way they work, in policies and programmes, at all levels and stages of their actions and organizations.

ANNEX- II

Lessons and Recommendations

Whereas the foregoing indicate that COEL has made considerable progress and gained experience over the last few years in the area of gender, they also contain a number of valuable insights, which have a significant bearing on this policy and which have been incorporated in the policy response. These are:

- I. COEL's evaluation of its work in gender mainstreaming efforts in both resource and operational terms should be undertaken and its findings disseminated as it is an indispensable guide to future courses of action.

- II. Effective gender mainstreaming in COEL documents, requires visibility of these dimensions at all appropriate points.
- III. Future project design should take into account the financial implications of gender analysis.
- IV. Gender-sensitive monitoring and follow-up instruments should be put in place in order to allow accurate and systematic reporting which should reflect impact of COEL interventions on women and men.
- V. Successful gender mainstreaming will require that senior management provide active leadership in implementing the COEL's commitment to gender mainstreaming objectives.
- VI. A critical mass of staff who is gender aware and equipped with the requisite skills is an imperative for effective gender mainstreaming; and due to its inherent multi-sectoral nature, gender mainstreamed and women targeted projects will demand an inter-disciplinary approach that fosters the involvement of wide ranging expertise in project development and implementation.
- VII. COEL's mid management and even the trainees suggested of a Drop-Box; it could be helpful if any sort of harassment occurs, especially female feel uncomfortable to complain to the authorities in our country.