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# Creating a Gender Equality Policy

*How it can help your organization and how to do it*



# Foreword

This guide is part of a three-part series of tools designed to help companies be more gender inclusive.

The series includes practical guides for how to do:

- A Gender Equality Policy (this guide)
- A Gender Training (to be published in Q4 2021)
- A Gender Analysis (to be published in Q4 2021)

Each guide explains **why** a company may be interested in taking the initiative, **how** to go about it, and handy **templates** to put into practice.

The **WIN Program** is a five-year initiative implemented by **TechnoServe** and financed by the **Embassy of Sweden in Mozambique**. Our objective is to economically empower women in Mozambique by enabling their participation in the economy. To do this, we support the private and public sector to trial and implement sustainable changes in the way that they approach women as potential customers, suppliers and business partners.

Our tools and guides are applicable beyond Mozambique and we are happy to discuss their implementation in other contexts.

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# Summary

A gender equality policy is a simple document that lays out a company's commitment to managing its operations in a gender sensitive and inclusive way.

The policy should lay out the business' values in relation to gender equality, provide tangible actions that the company will take and metrics to measure success.

A gender equality policy has many benefits to business, from increased workforce performance, to diversifying supplier base, and ultimately increasing sales and shareholder value.

However, a policy is only effective when it is owned and lived by the organization. This document sets out steps to help business management gather ideas for its gender policy, and consolidate these into a succinct and clear document to be shared with employees.

At the end of this document, there is a template for the gender policy, including sample clauses.

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## Gender equality policy: What is it?

A gender equality policy is a written commitment by company management to promoting equal opportunities for women and men in its workforce and operations.

It should be written in straight-forward language that is easy to understand.

### A gender equality policy sets out:



A company's values relating to gender diversity and inclusion



Recognition of how women and men are differentially impacted by the company as workers, suppliers, clients and partners



Tangible actions to create a more gender inclusive business



Metrics for gender equality that the company wants to achieve



## Gender policy benefits



### Attract and retain a diverse workforce

#### Positive impacts:

- access the very best talent in the market by overcoming potential gender biases in recruitment;
- bring new ideas to your business by ensuring men and women are both represented;
- avoid “blind spots” that can occur when management all think and act the same way.



### Reach more diverse suppliers and business partners

#### Positive impacts:

- access a broader range of suppliers by overcoming potential biases in procurement;
- increase company resilience (not depending on narrow supplier base);
- attract diverse business partners and distributors, who can in turn help you to reach a more diverse client base.



### Increase brand legitimacy with share-holders and government

#### Positive impacts:

- demonstrating action for gender equality is recognized positively by governments, giving the business a greater voice when negotiating on policy matters;
- shareholders and investors attribute extra value to firms with a positive social impact.



### Increase sales to a larger, more diverse client base

#### Positive impacts:

- more visible gender diversity within the organization demonstrates to all clients that you stand to serve them;
- committing to understanding clients by gender can help position products and services to meet the needs of both male and female segments.

## Examples of gender policy benefits



The companies ranked most admired in the Fortune 500 have twice as many women in their senior leadership

Weber-Shadwick, 2016

Companies with more women on their boards were found to outperform their rivals with a 66% higher return on invested capital and 53% higher return on equity

Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2011

A study of over 20,000 companies in 91 countries found a positive correlation between having women in senior corporate roles and profitability

M. Noland, T. Moran and B. Kotschwar, 2016

By committing to diversity as a strategic imperative, companies align their own organisation more closely with an increasingly heterogeneous customer base.

This enables them to forge stronger bonds with customers in two respects: reaching key purchasing decision makers and taking a customer perspective

Hunt, V., Layton, D. and Prince, S., 2015



# How do you do a gender policy?



## Step 01

### Tips for choosing a gender policy lead

## Appoint

Appoint a **gender equality policy** lead to guide the gender policy development

Senior management identifies a woman or man with:

- Decision-making authority
- Good communication skills
- Interest in gender equity
- Time and resources to support the policy; development process

The gender equality policy lead commits to:

- Fostering an inclusive and participatory process
- Leading each step of the gender policy development process
- Communicating gender policy development progress to staff
- Coordinating with leadership to validate and implement policy

- Present the opportunity using inclusive and gender neutral language. Both men and women within an organization may be interested in promoting gender equity and inclusion.
- Invite people to apply and/or interview for the opportunity
- Selection to be based on:
  - ▶ interest in and/or some experience in gender equity and inclusion
  - ▶ strong communication skills (verbal and written)
  - ▶ level of seniority allowing them to easily communicate / work with senior management
- Instead of a single lead, some organizations may decide to appoint a small working group to guide the process


 Step  
02


 Tips for leading  
Focus Group  
Discussions

## Engage

### Use participatory methods to:

- Reflect on how a gender equality policy aligns with the company's existing values and culture
- Ensure the policy reflects everyone's needs
- Increase policy buy-in

### Apply one or more of the following methods:

- **Short survey** with all staff to identify key gender-related challenges and opportunities
- **Focus group discussions** with selected staff to “dig deeper” on key gender-related challenges and opportunities
- **Key informant interviews** with leadership to understand will and resources to promote gender equality

Questions should focus on organizational **commitments, capacity and culture** to promote gender equality through:

- Staff recruitment and retention
- Employee benefits
- Partners and procurement
- Customer acquisition

\* Refer to the Gender Equality Tool

Consider power dynamics when forming groups e.g., separate men and women and/or managers and junior staff . This will facilitate greater openness when answering questions.

Introduce the concept of gender equality as *creating equal opportunities for men and women to achieve their potential through the company's activities.*

Ask open-ended questions, such as:

- How would you describe our company's values? How do they impact on gender equality?
- Does the company make a clear commitment to gender equality?
- Are there ways the company can better ensure it fulfils its commitments to gender equality?
- What additional resources, skills, or knowledge are needed to effectively promote gender equality?

Take good notes! Keep notes confidential.


 Step  
03


 Tips for  
writing the  
policy

## Draft

- Use the “**Developing a gender equality policy tool**” to help guide the writing process
- **Share draft** gender equality policy - together with findings from the engagement process - with senior management
- Hold session with senior management to **discuss** feedback, questions, and/or concerns
- **Revise** based on feedback
- Get **final approval** from senior leadership - request senior leaders to approve or write an endorsement of the policy. This can be attached to the policy and/or shared with all staff.

Include:

- Vision for promoting gender equality
- Recognition that gender equality is a journey
- Priority gender equality commitments within the company, partnerships /, procurement, and client engagement
- Who is responsible for implementing the policy
- Key Performance Indicators  
\* Refer to Step 5 for more guidance on KPIs

Writing style

- Use simple and concise language
- The level of detail will depend on organizational culture



Step  
**04**



Tips for  
**Action  
Planning**

## Share

**Disseminate** the gender policy to all staff via email, intranet, and/or print.

**Hold a town hall to:**

- **Share gender policy** contents and commitments
- Collectively discuss **shared responsibilities** for policy implementation.

**During the town hall:**

- Thank everyone for their input on the policy
- Invite senior leadership to introduce the policy
- Review content of policy
- Facilitate individual and team reflections on roles and responsibilities to implement the gender policy

**After the town hall:**

- Ask teams / departments to share their Gender Equality Action Plans defining concrete actions linked to each commitment, person(s) responsible, and timeline

During the town hall organize staff into teams. / departments

First individually and next in teams staff can reflect on:

- Concrete actions they can personally take to implement the policy
- Actions that the team / department commits to taking to align with the policy

Ask teams to take notes

Lastly, in plenary ask each group to share reflections and ideas for concrete actions their teams can take to implement the gender policy.



Step  
**05**



Tips on **Key  
Performance  
Indicators (KPIs)**

## Review

- Form a group responsible for reviewing progress against the Gender Policy Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Prepare and share a memo on progress
- Hold a town hall to review progress against KPIs
- Facilitate dialogue on :
  - ▶ In which areas have we done well or made the most progress? Why were we successful?
  - ▶ In what areas have we not done as well. Why?
    - ▷ What do we need to start doing or stop doing to improve in these areas?
    - ▷ What are some concrete steps we can take to achieve our goals?
- Update action plan to address performance gaps; adjust KPI targets as needed
- Share updated action plan with all staff

- Help you focus on priority areas to advance gender equality
- Review progress over time

How to develop KPIs:

- Be specific about what is being measured
- Link to commitments in gender policy
- Set realistic targets within a specified time period

Example KPIs:

- At least 40% representation of women in senior management in the next five years
- Doubling of the number of female suppliers by next year

# Gender equality policy - clause selection tool



## Organizational commitment

The organization commits towards equal opportunities for men and women throughout its operations

The organization has a zero tolerance stance towards discrimination on the basis of sex

The organization has a zero tolerance stance towards sexual harassment

Mechanisms for anonymously reporting cases of sexual discrimination and sexual harassment

Mechanisms for resolving cases of sexual discrimination and sexual harassment

Expectation that everyone in the organization embodies this commitment



### Going further

- Requirement that each staff takes training in gender equality, sexual harassment and sexual discrimination, when they join the company and on an annual basis thereafter





## Internal staff - recruitment

Having an overall target number of women in the organization - and reporting on progress

Having a target number of women at senior management level - and reporting on progress

Selecting and advancing staff based on merit alone

Using recruitment channels that are accessible to women and men

Maintain an HR database and periodically conduct disaggregated analysis of candidates and staff by gender



### Going further

- Ensuring that recruitment decisions are taken by women and men (e.g. interview panels consist of both women and men)
- Removing candidate names, gender, and background from CVs before conducting the initial scan - to remove unconscious bias
- Selecting a minimum number of female candidates for short-list



## Internal staff - retention

Conducting performance evaluations and pay rises fairly and transparently

Guaranteeing equal pay for equal work, for instance, using salary bands for job grades / titles, rather than basic pay on previous salary (and perpetuating existing inequalities)

Providing safe spaces for women and men (including bathrooms)

Commitment to merit-based access to training opportunities

Commitment to providing gender and/or unconscious bias training to staff



## Internal staff - maternity

Industry-competitive maternity leave



### Going further

- Equal parental leave for both sexes
  - ▶ Providing equal parental leave for both sexes is ideal, so that managers do not discriminate when recruiting women of child-bearing age. It also demonstrates a belief that both women and men have a role to play at home as well as at work



## Partners and procurement

Actively seeking candidates of both sexes to act as suppliers, partners and distributors

Transparent evaluation of sourcing decisions, based on merit

Conducting gender analysis of operating model as relates to partners (e.g. are there requirements to becoming a distributor or supplier which inadvertently reduce the number of women candidates? Are these requirements specifically necessary or can they be removed / replaced?)



### Going further

- Asking suppliers to demonstrate evidence of their own gender policy and/or to sign up to key principles of the company
- Maintain a supplier / partner database(s) and periodically conduct disaggregated analysis by gender



## Customer acquisition, marketing and route to market

Conducting gender analysis of customer offering (e.g. how does the existence of company's products / services affect gender relations?)

Reducing barriers that could affect the ability of customers of both genders to access company's products / services

Promoting positive gender roles through company's marketing, communications and advertising materials



### Going further

- Maintain a customer database and periodically conduct disaggregated analysis by gender



## General operations

Selecting a gender champion for each department to lead activities that promote gender equality

Gender champions form part of a wider gender equality working group that meets periodically to establish action plan, share successes and disseminate information to the rest of the organization



## Policy and progress

Gender-sensitive articulation of company policies

Regularly reviewing progress of company against gender commitments (e.g. through internal / external surveys)

## FAQs



Is a gender policy just about women?

No! A gender policy is about a business, working in its sphere of operations, trying to remove barriers that people face due to their gender.



Can I incorporate my gender policy into a broader policy around diversity, including race, age, and other such things?

Absolutely! This can be very effective, especially for businesses trying to tackle multiple forms of potential discrimination within their operations.



Isn't a gender policy mostly about getting a gender-balanced workforce and management team?

This is one effective strategy to make your company more gender inclusive, but you can also extend the policy to cover other areas of your operations including how you impact your clients, suppliers and business partners.



But do I have to have a really comprehensive gender policy if I don't want to?

Of course not! Sometimes keeping it simple and focused can work well as it becomes more memorable for people and more operational. Choose what works best for your company, and keep it realistic. You can always add more later.



Should the gender policy be spearheaded by women?

Not only! Women's voices are of course critical in the design of the policy, but it can be a very effective strategy to have a man as the policy champion, in order to engage other men around the policy.



## Resources for implementation of a gender training / gender analysis / gender policy

Gender Diversity Journey : Company Good Practices/ International Labour Office, Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP). Geneva: ILO, 2017

[accessible via this link](#)

Gender Diversity in the Workplace Increases Sales, Customers and Investment – and Here's the Evidence. – Online: Every Woman – Advancing Women in Business, 2019

[accessible via this link](#)

Why Diversity Matters. Hunt, V., Layton, D. and Prince, S. McKinsey & Company, 2015

[accessible via this link](#)

Press Release: Weber Shandwick Research Finds Companies with Strong Reputations Have Twice as Many Women in Senior Management. Weber-Shadwick, 2016

[accessible via this link](#)

Women on Boards. Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2011.

[accessible via this link](#)

## Success story

### ENGIE Energy Access Mozambique

ENGIE Energy Access Mozambique (formerly Fenix International Mozambique), a solar home systems and financial inclusion company, sought WIN's support to update its operations and policies with a gender lens.

Most of its staff work remotely in the field, so safeguarding against sexual harassment was an important aspect of the gender policy for the company to focus on.

With WIN's support, ENGIE Energy Access Mozambique revised its sexual harassment policy clauses, making them more specific to the Mozambican context, especially for protecting its field teams. It rolled out the policy through a series of workshops involving all staff.

This helped to normalize conversations around sexual harassment and encourage people to take action – so that the policy wouldn't just sit on the shelf.





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