

AUSTRALIAN DOCTORS FOR AFRICA	
Policy:	GENDER EQUALITY
	Date last approved: 05/2023
	Date of next review: 05/2026
Approved by: Board	

1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote gender equality as an integral aspect of all Australian Doctors for Africa (ADFA) programs. ADFA recognises that gender inequality is a major driver of poverty and marginalisation around the world, and that the different opportunities and expectations for women and men, girls and boys affect every dimension of life, including health. ADFA also recognises that gender inequality is a result of fundamental power imbalances in societies dominated by patriarchal culture.

Gender inequality exists in all of our program locations, including Ethiopia, Somaliland, Madagascar and Comoros. In some parts of those countries there are significant disparities between female and male outcomes, including life expectancy, access to health care and access to education (particularly beyond primary school). Women’s own health needs are often inadequately addressed in these countries, particularly in rural and poor communities. Investment in women’s and girls’ education and health yield some of the highest returns of all development investments, including reduced rates of maternal mortality, better educated and healthier children and increased household incomes.

This policy outlines how ADFA will address gender equality in its programs, organisation, and policies, such as the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all ADFA staff, board members, volunteers, consultants and partners.

2 DEFINITIONS

Gender: refers to the socially constructed roles, relationships, and behaviours considered to be appropriate to a particular gender determined by prevailing cultural norms. These roles are learned and change over time and vary according to social settings.

Gender Discrimination: is the negative treatment of an individual based on their gender and can include the rejection, exclusion or unequal treatment of a person based on their conforming or non-conforming to gender roles or stereotypes. This includes but is not limited to discrimination that is based on a person’s biological sex (ie. whether a person is female or male).

Gender Equality: is the ‘end goal’ and refers to equal opportunities and outcomes for women, men, gender-diverse and non-binary people. Gender equality does not mean that people of different gender identity have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they were born male or female.

Gender Equity: is the ‘means to the end’ and refers to the process to remove gender discrimination and structural inequalities that exist in access to resources, opportunities and services, and the promotion of equal rights. Gender equity recognises that women, gender-diverse and non-binary people are not in the same ‘starting position’ as men. This is because of historical, cultural and social disadvantages. Treating women, gender-diverse, non-binary people, and men equally might not actually be fair. In fact, it can create further disadvantage. Gender equity measures are often needed to level the playing field.

Gender Analysis: is a critical examination of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights/entitlements affect men, women, girls and boys, gender diverse and non-binary people in certain situation or contexts. Gender analysis examines the relationships between people and their access to and control of resources and the constraints they face relative to each other.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 Guiding Principles

- 1 ADFA will work toward gender equity among its staff, Board, groups of volunteer workers, and composition of medical teams.
- 2 ADFA will strive for gender equity in participation in decision-making at program level.
- 3 ADFA will ensure the environment in which ADFA operates reaches all segments of the affected population so that women, girls, gender diverse and non-binary people have safe and equal access to medical assistance through our programs.
- 4 All medical teams will have an understanding of and respect for the cultural and structural issues impacting gender equality in overseas programs.

3.2 Application

ADFA will ensure that its strategic plan, programs and policies reflect the organisation's understanding of and commitment to addressing gender inequality.

Over the next 2 years ADFA will work toward gender equity on its Board, its staff, and volunteers on medical assignments.

A gender analysis will be integrated into all project assessments, situational analyses, and project design to ensure that gender-based injustices and inequalities are not exacerbated by ADFA interventions, and that, where possible, greater equality and justice in gender relations are promoted.

Communication with new partners, including all memoranda of understanding, will state ADFA's position with respect to gender equality. New partners will receive a copy of this policy, and be encouraged to adopt a similar approach to gender equality if they do not already have a policy in this regard.

ADFA will design projects that enable both gender-specific projects and the mainstreaming of gender considerations. Our programs will specifically target female participation where this will support gender equality (eg. target female medical students and specialists within our scholarship programs, and the Ethiopian Female Orthopaedic Empowerment Project). Program design will identify obstacles that may limit female participation and decision-making, and incorporate strategies and targets to overcome these obstacles.

Volunteer medical teams will receive a pre-departure briefing before embarking on medical assignments, which will discuss the differences which people face in terms of accessing services, such as medical services, and how to reduce these barriers, particularly for women, girls, gender diverse and non-binary people.

All projects will disaggregate data by sex / identification in their reporting, and monitor and evaluate progress against gender equality targets.

4 REFERENCES

- Sex Discrimination Act (Cth) 1984
- ACFID Code of Conduct
- The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy, 2016

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979
- The Beijing Platform for Action, 1995
- The Sustainability Development Goals: Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

5 ASSOCIATED ADFA POLICIES/ DOCUMENTS

- ADFA Codes of Conduct
- ADFA Policy – Human Resource Management
- ADFA Policy – Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
- ADFA Project Management tools

Established: June 2010

Reviewed: June 2013; June 2016; May 2020, May 2023