GENDER EQUITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Version control & review

Version	Date	Distribution
1.0	September 2020	Board members; Committee members; Partner Organizations, website link
2.0	July 2022	Board members; Committee members; Partner Organizations, website link

1. Background

Diversity acknowledges that each individual is unique. Diversity can arise from any number of factors, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, veteran status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs or other ideologies, mental or physical ability. Partners in Aid (PIA) is committed to treating all people equally and with respect. We aim to ensure that opportunities, rights and respect are afforded to PIA members, volunteers, project partners and project beneficiaries equitably, regardless of gender, age, ability, marital status, race, religion or sexual orientation.

In many countries, there exist different forms of gender-based discrimination and unequal distribution of power between women and men, girls and boys, along with exclusion based on multiple other factors such as race, class, ethnicity, language and religion. In the projects and programs it supports abroad, PIA seeks to eliminate any form of direct or indirect discrimination that may lead to some potential project beneficiaries having inequitable access to, or being excluded from, decision-making and/or project outcomes.

PIA also recognises that identities such as age, ethnicity, social caste and gender can intersect, compounding lack of equity in decision-making and allocation of resources. Accordingly, it also seeks to reduce the risk of some project outcomes creating additional burdens or further exclusion of participants who happen to hold particular intersecting roles, especially those associated with gender, disability and other marginalising groups.

2. Definitions

Gender Equity: 'The process of being fair to man and women [and boys and girls] To ensure fairness, measures must often be put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field'[1] 'This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities.'[2] The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically under- served and under-represented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of opportunities to all groups.[3] This requires striving to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent the full participation of either gender in any given context.

Gender Equality: 'Gender equality means that the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of people will not depend on whether they were born male or female.'[4]

Gender Identity: Gender identity refers to how an individual feels about their own gender. The gender-related identity, appearance or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person's designated sex at birth.

LGBTIQ+: This is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning about sexual orientation and/or gender identity. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Sexual orientation (and gender identity) is a spectrum of identities, characteristics and behaviours.

Disability: Includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities. It also includes physical disfigurement and the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms, such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Inclusion: Inclusion involves bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities and decision/policy making in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to opportunities and resources.[5]

3. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out PIA's policies and procedures that are designed to ensure that principles of equity, diversity, equality and inclusiveness underpin its approach to all of its decisions and activities.

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[1] UNESCO 2003. Guide Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework. uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/gender-equity .

[2] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESDOC), cited in Armstrong, K. What Exactly is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion? https://community.naceweb.org/blogs/karen-armstrong1/2019/06/25/what-exactly-is-diversity-equity-and-inclusion

[3] *loc cit*

[4] *loc cit*

[5] Armstrong, K. *What Exactly is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?* https://community.naceweb.org/blogs/karen-armstrong1/2019/06/25/what-exactly-is-diversity-equity-and-inclusion

4. Scope

This commitment to gender equity and diversity inclusiveness extends to all persons of concern to PIA and applies to all operations in all areas of the organisation's work.

5. Guidelines

5.1. Gender Equity and Diversity within Partners in Aid

5.1.1. Every effort will be made to ensure that the PIA Board and Committee membership is diverse in terms of background, experience and self-identity. PIA welcomes diversity to its governance structures, therefore ensuring variety and directness in its decision-making process. In its appointment of members of the governing bodies, PIA will not discriminate in any way against people because of their political or religious beliefs, provided these are compatible with its vision and mission.

5.1.2. All PIA policies and practices will take age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, caste, education, sexual orientation, political and religious beliefs, disability and skillset into account wherever relevant.

5.1.3. PIA will ensure that all external marketing, fundraising, advocacy and communications, including health promotion materials, respect and uphold our commitment to social justice, empowering diversification and equality including being respectful, using inclusive and positive language and images and avoiding stereotypes, with particular attention to stereotypes based on gender and race.

5.1.4. PIA acknowledges the significance of access and equality for people with a disability on our committees and Board, our volunteers and our beneficiaries.

5.1.5. PIA will apply resources (financial, equipment and human) that support and enable diversity and inclusion in the operations/governance of the organisation, where reasonably possible.

5.1.6. PIA respects every individual's right to privacy and confidentiality when seeking personal information. All information will be treated in a respectful, professional and confidential manner, in accordance with Partners in Aid Privacy Policy.

5.1.8. PIA acknowledges and respects that in Victoria it is against the law to discriminate against a person if they require:
    a. an assistance aid,
    b. specialised equipment including a palliative or therapeutic devices,
    c. an assistant – e. g., an interpreter or a reader, or
    d. an assistance dog or other animal.

5.2 Gender Equity and Diversity in Projects Supported by Partners in Aid

5.2.1. PIA follows a dual approach to gender in its operations, supporting both community-based projects which encourage gender mainstreaming, and gender-specific projects with a primary or explicit focus on facilitating gender equity and equality. This is especially true of initiatives that seek, *inter alia,* to build the capacities of those marginalised due to gender identity.

5.2.2. To be supported by PIA, all project proposals need to incorporate gender analysis, including analysis of gender barriers and, where possible, data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant diversity factors.

5.2.3. PIA activities include the voices of marginalised groups. In our planning and decision-making, we incorporate the experience and the business intel of the marginalised who are impacted or who are beneficiaries of our work. We are committed to disability inclusion in all operational areas of the organisation as expressed by the PIA Strategic Plan and operational and business plans. PIA endorses that all adults and children with disabilities have the same and equal rights.

5.2.4. In acknowledging that the rights of persons with disabilities can be hindered by societal attitudes or environmental barriers, we promote the removal of these barriers and work together to achieve this in our partnerships with other NGOs and agencies.,

5.2.5. By way of the project proposal format and collection of business intel, we include specific questions relating to consultation that has taken place with women, marginalised individuals and people with disabilities. They require information on whether there might be any barriers to their benefiting from project outcomes in the same way as do other participants in the targeted area. It also asks about any unintended additional difficulties or increase in the burdens associated with local gender-based roles that might arise for women as a result of project outcomes or that would prevent women benefiting along with men. These issues will receive serious consideration in project assessment and, if not appropriately addressed, may result in the proposed project not being supported by PIA.

5.2.6. Partner Organizations will be encouraged to make every effort to ensure that women and marginalised groups are involved in project decision-making at all stages of the project cycle.

5.2.7. Wherever possible, data collected for purposes of project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation will be disaggregated by age, gender and other diversity considerations where contextually appropriate.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

7. Relevant Partners in Aid Policy Documents

Partners in Aid Privacy Policy Partners in Aid Fundraising Policy
Partners in Aid Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct
Partners in Aid Volunteer Policy
Partners in Aid Communications and Transparency Policy
Partners in Aid Social Med Policy

8. References

ACFID. Gender Equality: The Building Blocks of an Effective, Just Aid Program. Gender-Equality-The-building-blocks-for-an-effective-aid-program.pdf (acfid.asn.au)

Armstrong, K. What Exactly is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion? https://community.naceweb.org/blogs/karen-armstrong1/2019/06/25/what-exactly-is-diversity- equity-and-inclusion (Last viewed 27/09/2020).

Pipeline. Voices for Equity. https://www.pipelineequity.com/voices-for-equity/gender-equity-vs-gender-equality/ (Last viewed 27/09/2020).

Plan International Global Policy on Gender Equality and Inclusion. https://plan-international.org/publications/policy-gender-equality-inclusion (Last viewed 25 September 2020).