1. GENDER POLICY

1.1. POLICY STATEMENT

To fulfil its mission and vision, The Union is committed to advancing gender equity within the organisation and in all its programmes.

The organisation recognises that in our societies, biased stereotypes and social norms prevent women and men from exercising their free choice and from taking full and equal advantage of opportunities for individual development, contribution and reward. The organisation is dedicated to enhancing gender equity within the institution through the management of human resources and the organisational culture, and within the communities served through programmes and projects.

1.2. PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES

The purpose of this policy is to support staff in their efforts to advance gender equity.

This policy is guided by the core values of the organisation in relation to gender equity, in particular the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). The following principles will form the basis of the organisation's efforts in the area of gender empowerment:

- All people, by virtue of their shared humanity, carry inherently equal dignity and rights. The organisation therefore always strives to affirm and uphold equal rights and opportunities of women and men.
- Each person, by virtue of his or her particular character and context, has a unique identity and combination of aspirations and abilities. Therefore, the organisation must therefore strive to understand how the particular conditions of each individual or social group shapes his/her ability to achieve equal fulfilment, and to create tailored opportunities for each to thrive.

1.3. DEFINITIONS

"**Gender**" refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships among and between women, men, girls and boys. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation processes. They are context- and time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a women or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural

context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age.
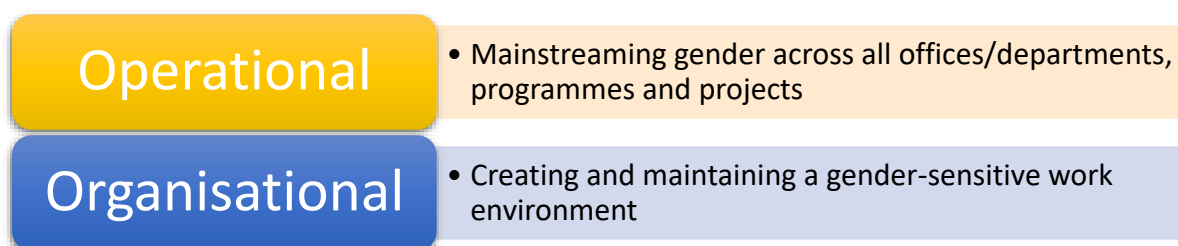
"**Gender equality**" refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration in recognition of the diversity of different populations of women and men. Gender equality is not a "women's issue" but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men are seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.

"**Gender equity**" means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women.

"**Gender mainstreaming**" is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and strategies of women and men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men can benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

1.4.   THE UNION'S TWO-FOLD APPROACH TO GENDER EQUITY

The organisation's Gender Policy follows a two-fold approach, operational and organisational:

Operational	• Mainstreaming gender across all offices/departments, programmes and projects
Organisational	• Creating and maintaining a gender-sensitive work environment

OPERATIONAL: Gender mainstreaming across all offices, programmes, and projects to ensure that:

A. The organisation shall systematically use gender analyses to design and implement department and office strategies, programmes and projects that maximise impact on gender equity;

B. When designing programme and project activities, the organisation shall target appropriate participants and strive to maintain balance of gender roles and responsibilities with a commitment to simultaneously advancing long-term strategic gender interests;

C. The organisation shall monitor and evaluate all programmes and projects that measure the relative impact on men, women, boys and girls.

ORGANISATIONAL: Creating and maintaining a gender-sensitive work environment to ensure that:

a) An equitable balance exists at all levels of the organisation;

b) All employment decisions related to recruitments, transfers, compensation and promotion are made without gender discrimination;

c) The organisation's 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, childrearing and family care);

d) An environment where non-discriminatory working relationships and respect for diversity in work and management styles is encouraged.

1.5. PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

The organisation recognises that progress in gender equity is made at different rates and by different means across its offices, programmes and projects. While we must respect the flexibility of this process, the organisation holds all staff accountable for achieving measurable progress toward conditions in which women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities. To achieve this goal, the organisation shall endeavour to implement this policy following both operational and organisational tracks:

Implementation of operational goals

The organisation shall incorporate gender equity into all operations through the application of gender awareness and analysis to the project circle, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation by:

1. Incorporating gender questions and perspectives into project design documents, guidelines, and monitoring and evaluation tools;
2. Analysing the roles, responsibilities, cultural constraints, stereotypes and relationships between men and women in programmes;

3. Examining the structures beyond the community that affect women and men's access to and control of resources, and power of decision-making, and how these structures might be influenced by the programme;

4. Developing the gender analysis tools and skills necessary to support project participants not only in order to meet immediate practical needs, but also to explore and advance strategic interests that may challenge socially defined roles which limit development potential;

5. Ensuring that technology, training and information are appropriate and accessible to both women and men;

6. Increasing the level of staff awareness through training on gender issues, gender sensitivity and analysis;

7. Building gender awareness as a criteria in partnership strategies and by supporting partners in developing and applying gender equity;

8. Continuing to expand the organisation's knowledge about and commitment to gender issues through research, documentation and sharing of lessons learned.

Implementation of organisational goals

The organisation shall implement activities that foster a work environment that supports and rewards the full contribution and productivity of both women and men. The activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Conducting gender analysis to identify and address barriers to equal representation in staffing patterns. Once data are analysed, specific goals shall be set to address staffing imbalances and modifying personnel and benefits policies if necessary;

2. Ensuring that career development opportunities are afforded to both women and men. This may include such activities as formal mentoring and coaching;

3. Ensuring that sufficient effort is made, where appropriate, that candidates of both genders are given equal consideration for available positions;

4. Developing and/or reviewing existing policies, procedures and systems to ensure that they support a gender-sensitive and family-friendly work environment;

5. Developing core competencies that address core values and gender awareness and equity. These competencies should be integrated into performance management systems and all management development models.