

Human Development and Community Services (HDCCS) – Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Policy

1. Background & Guiding Principles:

HDCCS is a faith-based, Nepali Christian non-profit organization that was established in 1991 to serve the poor and marginalized communities by bringing access to basic services such as healthcare, infrastructure and education. Rooted in Christian identity, HDCCS embodies and aims to show an outward display of Christian virtues such as love, compassion, service, honesty and righteousness throughout its projects and programs.

HDCCS recognizes that gender justice, gender equality, disability and social inclusion is a pursuit for social justice, allowing equal access to rights, resources and opportunities regardless of race, caste, social status, abilities and gender. Hence, we are committed to providing a secure and enabling work environment for our employees, a place of work that is gender, disability and socially sensitive and recognizes the role of men and women as equal players, agents and leaders of change in their families, communities and society.

As per our Christian beliefs and values, HDCCS core convictions are:

- 1.1 That all human beings are made in the image of God, made male and female for the mutual flourishing of one another and not limited by their higher or lower position, nor varying abilities and must be treated with the same dignity and respect.
- 1.2 That the bible describes the creation of, and harmony between, the sexes as the pinnacle of God's good creation, and that gender injustice is therefore one of the fundamental characteristics of the fall of humanity.
- 1.3 That Jesus Christ is the one perfect example of counter-cultural life lived in a patriarchal society. Therefore, HDCCS should challenge the cultural patriarchy and promote gender equality and social inclusion.
- 1.4 That the lived reality of patriarchy in many parts of the world limits, stifles, threatens and ultimately damages the lives of women.
- 1.5 That one expression of the Kingdom of God being made real in the lives of people will be a redemption of gender and social relationships.

2. Policy Objectives:

- 2.1 To advocate the cause of the right to gender equality and social inclusion and the right to a dignified livelihood regardless of gender and varying social status and human abilities.
- 2.2 To foster a social, physical and psychological environment that will enable employees to work productively.
- 2.3 To strive for gender equality and social inclusion at both institutional and programmatic level.

3. Scope:

This policy is applicable towards all HDCCS staff, volunteers (local and expatriate), development participants, stakeholders, interns, and visitors. This policy will be implemented by HDCCS at two levels: institutional and programmatic.

3.1 Institutional Level

- a) **Staff Policies:** All staff policies, rules and regulations shall be gender sensitive, foster and promote gender equality, disability and social inclusion and will be reviewed periodically. To foster an environment conducive to promoting gender justice, gender equality, disability and social inclusion, the gender equality, disability and social inclusion directives will be stated in HDACS Code of Conduct.
- b) **Recruitment:** HDACS will seek gender balance in staffing. Women candidates will be encouraged to apply for all vacancies including management and leadership positions, both at the field level and head office levels. There will be a minimum of at least one female representative in recruitment and interview panels.
- c) **Performance reviews:** Gender sensitivity and disability and social inclusivity will be one of the performance indicators for assessing employees.
- d) **Leadership:** To promote and assess inclusion of gender equality, disability and social inclusion in each project, leadership teams and senior managers will prepare and use a gender equality, disability and social inclusion checklist.
- e) **Capacity building for gender justice, gender equality, disability and social inclusion sensitization:** The gender justice and social inclusion committee and gender justice, disability and social inclusion champions (see below selection and committee) will organize workshops, training programs and discussions for promoting and enabling a gender, disability and socially sensitive work culture. Also, regular training will be conducted on awareness and confidence building of field staff, with special focus on disabled and women staff. Post training, orientation and awareness, HDACS staff and personnel with support of gender justice and social inclusion champions will:
1. Advocate against cultural barriers and bad practices such as underage sexual activity, child marriages, and teen pregnancy.
 2. Advocate against discriminatory practices towards people with disability and lower socio-economic status, and on the basis of caste, religion or ethnicity.
 3. Advocate against abortion of girl child.
 4. Assist organizational policy development team and management to help address and have mechanisms in place to prevent gender based violence in the workplace.
 5. Assist organizational policy development team and management to help address and have mechanisms in place to prevent verbal or physical violence in the workplace against people with disability or a lower social standing.
- f) **Harassment:** This policy recognizes the HDACS PSEAH and Safeguarding policy as the medium to address any kind of abuse, exploitation, and harassment, particularly gender, disability, and discriminatory based. The gender justice and social inclusion committee will promote equal and fair treatment of all female staff in the organization, particularly in relation to verbal and (non-verbal) physical violence, harassment and ill-treatment.
- g) **Rights:** HDACS will follow stipulations in the Nepal Labor Act 2074 (2017) or the latest to provide rights and benefits to men and women under such law. Employment policy and all other HDACS policies will be reviewed and comply with Government stipulated provisions that benefit people especially those with a disability, women and girls. Necessary revision and amendments to policies will be made in accordance with Nepal law.
- h) **Facilities:**

1. **Breastfeeding rooms** – each HDCCS project and central offices (i.e. HQ, hospitals, schools, and community offices) must provide a breastfeeding room with adequate amenities such as changing table for babies, fridge for storing breastmilk, wash basin, curtains for privacy, and a comfortable seating area for easy breastfeeding etc. This provision will facilitate greater balance between breastfeeding and work and to ensure that the child’s right to breastfeeding is not hindered and thereby also promote gender equality.
2. **Pad changing rooms** – in order to exercise and facilitate gender equality and enable women to feel at ease in the workplace, each project and central offices must provide separate toilets for men and women and ensure that female toilets have a provision to change sanitary pads.
3. **Disability Friendly Environment** – HDCCS project and central offices (i.e. HQ, hospitals, schools, and community offices) will provide and incorporate disability friendly access and amenities to foster and promote disability and social inclusion.

3.2 Programmatic Level

- a) Gender justice, gender equality, disability and social inclusion promotion activities will be incorporated into all HDCCS programs and projects to advocate for gender equality, disability and social inclusion in all facets of Nepalese society.
- b) Building skills and capacities on gender, disability, and social perspectives to enable greater participation of all sections of the community in our programs and projects will be one of our objectives in carrying out the work of HDCCS.
- c) All programs and projects will promote equal participation of all stakeholders. To promote and assess inclusion of gender equality, disability and social inclusion in each project, managers will prepare and use a gender equality, disability and social inclusion checklist.
- d) GEDSI sensitive M&E system with indicators should be established across projects and programs to measure impact and maintain a learning and knowledge management on GEDSI.

3.3 Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion Champions Selection

Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion Champions are nominated and appointed by the senior management/leadership of HDCCS (i.e. Executive Director, IMT and senior level managers), and may also be nominated/ appointed by current champions. HDCCS should and will move on to appointing at least one Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion Champion in each project site. Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion Champions will facilitate and promote the implementation of this policy in guidance and leadership from the Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion Committee members.

3.4 Committee on Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion

The Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion Committee will comprise of at least three staff from HDCCS who adhere to this policy, comply with and advocate for national and human rights laws for gender justice, gender equality, gender sensitivity, disability and social inclusion in all facets of HDCCS work. The committee will promote, lead, and guide Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion Champions on the implementation of this policy. The committee will also report on a quarterly, bi-yearly and/or annually basis as appropriate to the Internal Management Team (IMT) of HDCCS on implementation status of this policy.

3.5 Applicability

This policy applies to all regular and contractual staff of HDCS. In case of a complaint as a result of an act by a third party, management will take the necessary preventive and reasonable action to support and assist the affected party. The committee will support the relevant management teams in HDCS projects and programs to handle any complaints and implementation of this policy.

3.6 Reporting

The Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion Champions will report on the implementation of this policy and any issues that arise in promoting gender justice and gender equality, disability, and social inclusion to the Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion Committee.

The Gender Justice, Disability and Social Inclusion Committee is responsible for reporting to the IMT of HDCS who then report back to the Executive Board regarding implementation, issues, and complaints. The Executive Board will report annually to the general members on implementation of this policy.

4. Definitions and Vocabulary

- **Disability** – is an evolving concept and results from the interaction between episodic and long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment, which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder a person’s full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others¹.
- **Gender** – in the context of this policy and for its implementation, HDCS being a faith-based organization holds the definition of gender as per its Christian values which identifies that we are either born male or female. However, on a larger context the definition may vary from culture to culture, depending on what is the norm in that culture and HDCS believes that all people are created equal and therefore promotes zero discrimination of any description.
- **Gender Equality** – women, men, girls and boys must enjoy equal rights, resources, opportunities and protections. Gender equality is the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play². Also refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities 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, recognizing the diversity of different groups 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 is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for - and indicator of - sustainable people-centered development³.
- **Gender Justice** – Is ending the inequalities between men and women. It is the right of all women and girls to be free from violence, oppression, and discrimination in all aspects of their lives. It is also the right for all women and girls to

¹ [Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for strengthening disability inclusive development in Australia's aid program](#)

² [Gender equality | UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean](#)

³ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>



enjoy equal access to rights, resources and opportunities. Gender Justice is also the approach and tool to realize women and girls rights in achieving gender equality.

- **Sexual Harassment** –unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- **Social Inclusion** – means the process of improving terms and participation within the organization’s activities, particularly for people who are female or disabled and or disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for their rights.