



## **AFRIKAGRUPPERNA'S GENDER EQUALITY POLICY**

*Revised and approved March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

This policy describes how Afrikagrupperna views gender equality and what gender equality work we will pursue in southern Africa and in Sweden.

### **Background**

Gender equality issues have been on Afrikagrupperna's agenda since the formation of the organisation. The orientation of the gender related work has however changed over time and can in many ways be said to have followed international trends. Afrikagrupperna's gender equality policy was first adopted in 2005. This was at the beginning of the methodology project 2005-2008. When developing gender equality policies it is crucial to anchor the policy among the organisation's members, elected representatives and staff. The process of developing the policy was used for discussion and collaboration with both Swedish and African partners with regard to Afrikagrupperna's gender equality work.

The importance of gender equality is well established within the organisation today. Afrikagrupperna aims to truly mainstream gender equality. However, the work can never be considered done or gender equality established. It is an on going process that needs constant monitoring.

### **Why gender equality is an important issue for Afrikagrupperna**

Afrikagrupperna regards working for gender equality as a crucial part of creating a more just world. Throughout the world women and men live under different conditions of life, and the unequal distribution of power between them represents one of the great injustices. Gender equality is a central development issue in two main senses: it is a fundamental rights issue, and it leads to better results development-wise. In this way it is both a goal in itself and a method, and it is of concern to both women and men. Development cannot take place if half the population is excluded. Therefore gender equality efforts need to be integrated and pushed for in all development work.

No poverty reduction work is realistic without a gender equality perspective. Development efforts that take into account women's, men's, girls' and boys' different needs, roles and priorities are more effective and efficient. It is important to stress that all people have equal rights to education, decent work etc in their own right, regardless of gender or possible "side-effects" of empowering women. In addition there is an increased awareness that one of the most important measures to work with HIV is to focus on women's reproductive rights, strengthen their control over their sexuality and to work with men's attitudes on power and sexuality.

Equality is about equal rights and conditions for people irrespective of gender or sexual orientation. Injustices based on gender are incompatible with the conviction that all people have equal value. Despite this, women's and LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexual) people's human

rights are still being violated to a great extent. The situation worsens when unequal gender power relationships are combined with poverty, HIV and repressive laws. These are all problems that hinder millions of women and LGBTI people from exercising their rights.

Gender equality is about distribution of power, and as such, should be of equal concern to both men and women. It is important to be aware that one is part of unequal societal structures and be ready to analyze and change one's own behaviour, even privately.

## **How Afrikagrupperna works with gender equality**

The long term plan of Afrikagrupperna from 2012 to 2019 states that two of the tasks are:

- To support partners and activities in southern Africa working for gender equality and giving it a perspective in relation to development of society.
- To highlight gender equality, including SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights), as a fundamental right and important development factor in all contexts in which we work.

In order to realize the gender policy's true intentions adequate resources must be allocated. Time, money and provisions for increasing knowledge of gender equality issues among all staff, elected representatives and members, needs to be addressed. Resource persons with professional experience of gender equality issues can help decision makers and staff with how to go about the work.

- **Mainstreaming**

Gender equality work must be implemented on many levels to be effective and credible. We will accordingly carry out well thought-out gender equality work within our own organisation and with our partners in developmental, awareness-raising and advocacy activities.

As a way of institutionalising and mainstreaming gender equality in Afrikagrupperna's work, gender needs to be analyzed and fully incorporated in all internal documents, plans and reports, work instructions etc. The goals for our work will clearly strive for gender equality and through indicators Afrikagrupperna intends to make provisions for proper monitoring and evaluation of to what extent gender equality has improved or worsened. As part of Afrikagrupperna's work with gender equality we will ensure that all strategies and policies include a gender analysis.

- **Cooperation with partner organisations**

Afrikagrupperna's relationship to its partners is characterized by close cooperation and mutual respect. As part of our activities we will together with our partners work to find strategies for how gender equality will be strengthened within both our organisations and use the opportunity to exchange experiences.

We focus on gender equality in all work and want to avoid a hetero normative approach. Instead, we should assume that within Afrikagrupperna, the partner organisations and their target groups there are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexual people.

Afrikagrupperna will initiate contact with or support women's organisations and organisations that work with gender equality; this includes organisations that work with male involvement in gender equality work from a rights based perspective. Throughout these partnerships, Afrikagrupperna stands to gain an additional perspective on our own work, as well as a better understanding of the work carried out in various countries.

We will encourage our partners to be aware of, and work with, gender equality issues in their activities as well as support those efforts that already exist. Among other things our partners will be encouraged to strive for an equal gender division in the management structures. We should also make use of best

practices of gender equality work and avoid repeating mistakes through promoting exchange and contact between different development projects in and between those countries we work in.

Development cooperation, both ongoing and potential, will include a gender analysis of both partner organisation and adjoining activities. If there are significant weaknesses in this area we will discuss how gender equality can be improved and draw up a plan for how that should be done.

- Risk analysis

Afrikagrupperna should analyse the importance of gender equality for the cooperation activities and how these are affected by existing power structures. An intersectional approach should be adopted since sex, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, functionality as well as other factors affect sustainability, implementation and power structures. The relevance of the factors varies with different circumstances.

- Information and advocacy

Afrikagrupperna will seek toward making women and men, girls and boys, visible in awareness-raising activities and encourage our partners to do the same. We will in text and photography avoid stereotype images that contribute to the established understanding of masculine and feminine. This can for example involve considering which issues women and men are allowed to speak out on and to promote experts for both sexes.

Information about women's situation and about projects that targets to improve gender equality will be showcased. It is vital to use the knowledge that already exists within the projects and our partners in our information work.

Access to good information is essential in order to identify areas of concern, as well as the best practices. Accordingly, Afrikagrupperna will work to ensure statistics that are disaggregated by sex and/or preferred gender.

Afrikagrupperna will also work to include a third gender or a gender-neutral pronoun in our documents where suitable.

Afrikagrupperna will work in networks and in partnerships for gender equality, in Sweden and where possible in other countries, in order to achieve better results together.

An Action plan, clearly stating the policy's practical implications on project activities, distribution of roles and responsibilities, is to be made available at all offices of Afrikagrupperna.

- Gender equality in the work place

When appointing staff, the organization shall strive to be a workplace marked by diversity.

Training in gender equality will be provided to all development workers about how to enter the field. Trained staff will subsequently be better equipped to facilitate our partner organizations' gender equality activities, as well as function as links between the field and Afrikagrupperna in Sweden.

## **Responsibility for and follow-up of the policy**

The Board of Afrikagrupperna decides on the policy. The policy is founded in the long term plan, and gives guidelines for the programme work and operational plan. The policy will be reviewed annually by the board.

Gender equality is essentially going to constitute a component of all future project documentation. Documents should not only include an analysis of gender distribution among the implementing partners, but also analyze the gender distribution of the target group of the project. Reports should, as far as

possible, clearly show what the consequences are for both women and men. In project descriptions up for evaluation it will be emphasised that it is important to make an evaluation based on gender analysis. Experience and knowledge of gender equality should be seen as a merit when contracting consultants.

Gender analysis does not need to be complicated. Above all gender analysis is about asking relevant questions about power, the division of labour, decision making as well as access to and control of resources. Afrikagrupperna will also work to develop tools and methods in order to mainstream gender equality.

