

POLICY PAPER

Gender Policy

NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice

Agreed by NETZ EC on 24.09.2022

1. Introduction

NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice (NETZ) has been working since 1989 together with its partners to support the self-determination of people for nutrition, education and human rights, especially women's rights. The organisation focuses on the promotion and protection of the rights of marginalised groups – i.e. people living in poverty, women, members of religious minorities and of indigenous peoples, elderly people, and people with disabilities – and the elimination of structural causes of poverty and injustice. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (Sustainable Development Goal 5) as well as the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination are core issues of NETZ.

On the basis of the a) United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, b) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, c) Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, d) Istanbul Convention, e) Sustainable Development Goals and f) VENRO Orientation Framework Gender in Development Cooperation, NETZ has introduced this policy to extend the attention on gender equality and on the prevention of any form of gender-based discrimination and violence in every area of the organisation, all projects and programmes. This policy aims to follow the principles and guidance of the above-mentioned conventions, declarations and frameworks.

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2. Background

Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieving peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to end the multiple forms of gender-based discrimination and violence and to secure equal access for women, girls and individuals with trans and non-binary gender identities to e.g. nutritious food, quality education and health services, economic resources and participation in political life. It is also essential to achieve equal opportunities independent from gender identity in access to employment and to positions of leadership and decision-making at all levels.

On the one hand, there have been improvements in Bangladesh and Germany and both countries ratified above mentioned UN conventions and implemented them into national law, e.g. to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. On the other hand, different forms of discrimination, abuse and violence can still be found in all sectors of society such as politics, education, family, work, business, social and cultural matters as well as legislation. Furthermore, especially women with disabilities as well as trans and non-binary persons are highly affected by different forms of discrimination and violence.

The most recent Violence Against Women Survey, conducted by the UN Population Fund and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, revealed that more than 70% of married women in Bangladesh have been abused physically, mentally, sexually or economically at some point in their lives by family members. A study conducted by BRAC shows that 94% of women traveling on public transport have been subjected to verbal, physical and other forms of sexual harassment. Still, women's participation in the labour force is very low in Bangladesh. Relatively few women occupy leadership positions in most economic sectors. Moreover, different forms of harassment, including both physical and verbal sexual harassment, against women in the workplace are very much prevailing.

In Germany, according to a survey by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, one in three women has experienced physical or sexualised violence in her life, every fourth woman experienced violence in a partnership. According to the Alternative Report of the German Istanbul Convention Alliance girls are three times more likely to be victims of sexual abuse than boys and this is mainly in a family context. In the employment market, only one out of three leadership positions are occupied by women and the gender pay gap remains high. According to FAIR SHARE of Women Leaders, women comprise more than 60% of the workforce of civil society organisations and private foundations in Germany, but less than 50% of leadership positions.

3. Declaration

NETZ respects and actively protects and promotes the human rights of women and girls, men and boys as well as all individuals of trans and non-binary gender identities. We do not tolerate any form of sexual harassment as well as gender-based violence and discrimination. We are fully committed to the gender-responsive safeguarding of all persons from all forms of violence and discrimination and we promote safe practices, approaches, interventions and environments in this regard.

We hereby declare that we follow the guidelines laid out within this policy. We take very seriously our responsibility and duty to ensure that we, as an organisation, and anyone who is active for us or represents us does not in any way harm, abuse or commit any other act of violence and discrimination against any individual on basis of their gender identity and/or place them at risk of the same. This policy directly applies to anyone directly or indirectly involved with NETZ. We ensure all who work with us understand and are supported in their meeting safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

We take positive action to prevent anyone who might be a risk to women, girls and individuals of trans and non-binary gender identities from becoming involved with us and take stringent measures against any staff, associate or visitor who perpetrates an act of violence against a person based on its gender. Partner organisations and their staff members as well as voluntary supporters, any service provider, contractor, evaluator and auditor recruited by NETZ are made aware of this policy. If NETZ gets to know about any form of abuse or maltreatment against an individual an investigation will be started and, in case of proof of debt, the cooperation with the violating party will be terminated immediately. In case partner organisations of NETZ have their own policies and guidelines to ensure gender equality and safeguarding of individuals, these should be followed at any time and will be complemented by this policy.

4. Roles and responsibilities

To ensure gender equality and human rights of individuals regardless of their gender identities and to create a low-risk-environment, the following guidelines are taken as obligatory.

- (1) All people directly involved with NETZ are aware of the protection of the human rights of all individuals regardless of their gender identities as outlined in the Gender Policy and Corporate Identity of NETZ. Partner organisations and their staff members as well as voluntary supporters, any service provider, contractor, evaluator and auditor recruited by NETZ are made aware of this policy including the “Code of Conduct on Prevention of Sexual Harassment” and confirm that they abide by it. The NETZ Gender Policy together with the NETZ Child Protection Policy is part of a comprehensive safeguarding system.
- (2) All actions conducted by NETZ are obliged to strengthen the rights of women and girls and individuals of historically discriminated gender identities regardless of their age, religion, ethnicity, social and economic background, language, physical and psychological ability, or sexual orientation. We actively address systemic and structural practices that create barriers to the realization of gender equality, including the prevention and response to gender-based violence and discrimination, sexual exploitation, and abuse.
- (3) NETZ is committed to continuously develop further an enabling environment in which women as well as individuals of trans and non-binary gender identities feel comfortable to

- work, full-time and voluntarily, and are free to express themselves. This also applies to any external events under the responsibility of NETZ.
- (4) NETZ appoints two staff members as Gender Focal Persons, i.e. one person in each office in Bangladesh and Germany, and ensures that they and their main tasks and responsibilities are known within the organisation.
 - (5) NETZ ensures that all staff members know, sign and follow the organisation's "Code of Conduct on Prevention of Sexual Harassment".
 - (6) NETZ reviews regularly the organisation's development to ensure gender equality on the basis of milestones set with continuously adjusted concrete targets for this purpose.
 - (7) NETZ ensures that gender concerns are routinely addressed in all activities of the organisation, e.g. in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development and human rights projects as well as regarding all other activities and events organised or supported by the organisation.
 - (8) NETZ is committed to increasing the number of women to achieve gender equality in decision-making and policy-making bodies guiding organisational and programmatic issues.
 - (9) NETZ ensures equal career development opportunities for all staff members irrespective of their gender identity as well as specific capacity building initiatives for women staff members as well as staff members with trans or non-binary gender identities.
 - (10) NETZ follows existing national law in Bangladesh and Germany regarding the provision of entitlements for maternity and paternity leave. At the same time the organisation promotes equal rights of all staff members irrespective of their gender identity to take care of their families, e.g. children and elderly relatives, and partners.
 - (11) Any case of violence or discrimination against individuals based on their gender identity should be reported to the Gender Focal Persons or Ombudsperson of NETZ (see NETZ External Ombudsperson Policy), whose contact details are made available on our website. Every form of violence and discrimination will be prosecuted.
 - (12) Nobody who reports violations or suspected violations or submits tip-offs regarding violations with honest intent needs to fear any disadvantage or other consequences, even if the report or tip-off later turns out to be unfounded. It is not the responsibility of the whistle-blower to conduct investigations, deliver evidence or determine whether a violation has taken place.
 - (13) If any of the parties mentioned above under (1) and (2) violate this policy, NETZ has the right to terminate the contract.

5. References

Some of the above-mentioned references can be accessed under (last access: 25.04.2022):

- OHCHR, 1979: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/professionalinterest/cedaw.pdf>
- OHCHR, 1993: Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (CEVAW): <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/eliminationvaw.pdf>
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>
- Istanbul Convention, 2011: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>
- UN Sustainable Development Goals; for Goal 5 see: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>
- VENRO Orientation Framework Gender in Development Cooperation, 2009: <https://venro.org/publikationen/detail/orientation-framework-gender>
- Violence Against Women (VAW) survey, 2015, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
- <https://www.brac.net/latest-news/item/1142-94-women-victims-of-sexual-harassment-in-public-transport>
- <http://fourteeneastmag.com/index.php/2016/05/20/breaking-the-gender-binary/>

- NETZ Child Protection Policy, <https://bangladesch.org/beitrag/child-protection-policy-2042/>
- NETZ External Ombudsperson Policy

Description of selected concepts

Introduction

In the following brief descriptions of selected concepts are provided to which the Gender Policy of NETZ refers. For this purpose mainly quotes are used and references to its sources are provided. Please note that some descriptions mainly focus on the identities of “women” and “men” but do not make explicit references to trans and non-binary gender identities.

Gender

“Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman 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, as are other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age, etc.” (Source: UN Women, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>)

Gender equality

“This 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’s 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 development.” (Source: UN Women)

Gender identity

“One’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.” (Source: Human Rights Campaign, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>)

Gender-based violence

“Gender-based violence is violence derived from gender norms and roles as well as from unequal power relations between women and men. Violence is specifically targeted against a person because of his or her gender, and it affects women disproportionately. It includes, but is not limited to, physical, sexual, and psychological harm (including intimidation, suffering, coercion, and/or deprivation of liberty within the family or within the general community). It includes violence perpetuated by the state.” (Source: Jhpiego, <https://gender.jhpiego.org/analysistoolkit/gender-concepts-and-definitions/>)

Non-binary

“An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.” (Source: Human Rights Campaign)

Sexual harassment

“Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. While typically involving a pattern of behaviour, it can take the form of a single incident. Sexual harassment may occur between persons of the opposite or same sex. Both males and females can be either the victims or the offenders.” (Source: UN Women, Secretary-General’s bulletin, 11.2.2008, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No8/238/36/PDF/No823836.pdf?OpenElement>)

Transgender

“An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.” (Source: Human Rights Campaign)