

GENDER POLICY: OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL

WHEREAS OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL celebrates the diversity and dignity of men and women as expressed in Scripture;

WHEREAS OPPORTUNITY affirms the shared responsibility of women and men for the care and maintenance of themselves, their children, their communities and their nations;

WHEREAS OPPORTUNITY affirms that having women in leadership positions strengthens the organization; and

WHEREAS OPPORTUNITY recognizes that in general when women benefit from development programs their families also benefit.

RESOLVED, that the Board adopts the following Gender Policy for 01-US, and authorizes and directs the staff of 01-US to develop action steps to implement the Policy:

GENDER POLICY .01-US

OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL affirms that gender equity strengthens the organization and the Network because it makes it possible to embrace the range of thinking and action possible in all circumstances.

- At the Board level, OPPORTUNITY is committed to the active recruitment of female Board members, resulting in an increase in the number of women on the Board. The Board is also committed to exercising gender sensitivity in its activities and in the programs it advocates.
- At the staff level, OPPORTUNITY is committed to achieving gender equity and sensitivity at all levels, including in hiring, career development, and compensation, especially at decision-making levels.
- At the program level, OPPORTUNITY seeks to enhance the ability of women and men in the developing world to become economically and spiritually transformed by participating in microenterprise development programs offered within a Christian framework to women and men on the lower rungs of poverty.
- OPPORTUNITY will monitor and assess its progress in the area of gender equity, and will reexamine the effectiveness of its policies and programs on a regular basis.

GENDER POLICY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The implementation of this gender policy will be made possible through the following strategies:

EQUITY AT THE BOARD LEVEL

Guiding Principle: For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. ...Rom. 12:3-6

- The Board Development Committee (BDC) and the Board Chairperson of the OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL Board will receive gender awareness training to assist them in creating an environment in which all new Board members feel welcomed and capable of making positive contributions.
- The BDC and the Board Chairperson will provide training on how to identify qualified females for membership.
- The BDC, in consultation with the Board Chairperson, will recruit qualified women and men to serve as Board members.

EQUITY AT THE STAFF LEVEL

Guiding Principle: Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Phil. 2:3-4.

Hiring Policies

Guiding Principle: As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Eph. 4:1-2.

OPPORTUNITY affirms its commitment to employment and salary equity.

- The Board will conduct an annual evaluation to determine whether policies to create greater gender equity are being implemented and whether progress toward achieving greater gender balance is being made in the action plans, implementation strategies and human resources of the organization.
- The terms gender “equity” and gender “balance” are used interchangeably not in a legalistic sense, but in the spirit of seriously considering and creating a gender diverse work force representative of society.
- OPPORTUNITY will endeavor to hire individuals who are sensitive to gender concerns both in the office and in the programs they develop.
- OPPORTUNITY will endeavor to create an environment in which all new employees will be made to feel welcome and capable of making positive contributions.
- The Board will affirm the CEO’s actions in making progress in achieving gender equity at all levels of the organization.

Career Paths/Professional Development/Annual Review

Guiding Principle: Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Col 3:23-24.

OPPORTUNITY affirms its policy of creating opportunities for employees to improve their skills.

- Senior staff annual performance evaluations shall address gender in terms of how they have promoted the principles and practices of gender equity in their departments, in the regions, among Partners and in the SupportNet.
- Training provided by OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL will be developed with the needs of women and men in mind, and will include gender components as appropriate.
- The Board will evaluate the CEO based on progress in achieving gender equity at all levels of the organization.

Personal Behavior/Language

Guiding Principle: Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Eph. 4:29.

- Gender-neutral terms will be used in official contexts, e.g., for chairman, the term chairperson will be used. Instead of the universal use of male pronouns, the use of pronouns will reflect the person(s) referred to.
- Office staff will be referred to only in a professional idiom; use of language that stereotypes women and men will not be tolerated.
- Men and women in leadership positions will serve as models of gender-sensitive behavior in the office and in the field.

Every Person's Voice has a Right to be Heard

Guiding Principle: Father, I thank You that you have heard Me. And I know that you always hear Me. John 11:41-42

- Suggestions made by women and men shall be weighed based on merit, not gender.
- Staff member skills constitute an OPPORTUNITY resource. Those with specific skills should be called upon for advice and consultation

EQUITY AT THE PROGRAM LEVEL

Guiding Principle: Our respect for one another compels us to fully value and affirm the dignity and uniqueness of each client. This respect is also the foundation for our relationships with our clients' communities and our relationships with others involved in our work: donors, creditors, colleagues and fellow members of the Network (Reflections on the Core Values, September 1995).

- OPPORTUNITY will model participatory methodologies in its program planning, which will include female and male staff members, and will take into account the specific needs of

women and men.

- OPPORTUNITY's program design will integrate gender in its goals, objectives, strategies and implementation plans, and specifically state ways in which women and men will benefit from each program.
- OPPORTUNITY will support its Partners in their development of models and training materials for gender-specific personal and group empowerment (including access to basic needs, knowledge, resources, skills, and networks; and training in self-respect, self-confidence, leadership and management, among others).
- All training OPPORTUNITY offers to Partners, Boards, regional staff and related individuals will take gender concerns into account and integrate gender sensitivities in the methodology of delivery and the content of each training package designed.
- OPPORTUNITY is committed to working with Partners to achieve gender equity at all decision-making levels in hiring practices, in the training and development of their Boards, in their manner of interaction, and in meeting the needs of the clients they serve.
- OPPORTUNITY'S Regional and Country Directors will be responsible for encouraging Partners to develop a gender action plan to be included in their annual objectives, will report annually on the progress made by each Partner toward meeting these objectives. Elements of such a plan, among others, are: gender balance in Board development, in hiring practices and appropriate compensation for the job performed.
- OPPORTUNITY will support its Partners in guiding them through the sex disaggregation of data collected in each Partner operation.
- OPPORTUNITY's MIS systems will be designed to disaggregate data collected according to sex and related variables that will produce information on the impact of our programs on families.

- OPPORTUNITY will develop indicators and monitor the progress of each Partner in incorporating a gender perspective in its operations. As part of the ongoing analysis of Partners conducted at OPPORTUNITY, Partners will be ranked in terms of their progress in implementing gender-balanced programs.
- In developing technical proposals in support of Partner operations, OPPORTUNITY will look more favorably upon Partners who supply appropriate sex-disaggregated data and who create gender-balanced programs.
- When designing and implementing impact evaluations, OPPORTUNITY will measure gender differences in loan use, the total number of people affected economically, etc. Data will also be collected on the use of the incomes generated by both male and female microenterprise owners.
- OPPORTUNITY will pursue avenues of funding that considers programming from a gendered perspective for both OPPORTUNITY International and Women's Opportunity Fund activities.

With its strong gender commitment, OPPORTUNITY will endeavor to publish research and articles on its gender-disaggregated approach in newsletters, academic journals and books, and to make presentations at professional meetings to highlight its commitment publicly and to share its best practices in reaching women and men in its programs.