

**Church Of North India
Synodical Board of Social Service
Gender Policy**

Approved by Office Bearers meeting
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I. Introduction

This policy paper should be understood in the context of CNI SBSS's work and its policy, which makes gender mainstreaming. Participation of women in the project activity constitutes an important component of the project. Integration of gender framework and analysis into plan, program and activities of CNI SBSS and partners are undertaken to resolve and ultimately eliminate gender inequalities. These address the concern of changing subordinate position of women in the community by giving them more opportunities to attain both their practical (economic) and strategic needs (socio-political and cultural). The underlying principle of gender integration that CNI SBSS strives for in the entire program planning cycle is that introducing gender concerns makes planning more people-oriented (involving both women and men) and genderized.

The major finding of the external evaluation forms the basis for this Gender Policy, which highlighted the need for developing greater clarity and strategic direction. This policy document represents organizational commitment to gender justice. Gender equality refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys, and men of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. Based on internationally acknowledged and agreed human right commitments, women and men are entitled to equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, civil, economic, social and cultural fields of life. CNI SBSS considers gender equality as a cross cutting issue and over the years, members have endeavored to promote gender sensitive approaches to rights and development assistance.

The term gender is often used as if it is synonymous and interchangeable with the word women. This is not the case. The reason why gender approaches often address women and girls is because of the acknowledged discrimination and exclusion which most women and girls still face in a great number of countries. While the ultimate goal of CNI SBSS is gender *equality*, it sees gender equity (fairness) as the means to achieving that result. CNI SBSS recognizes that women cannot achieve gender equality by themselves. Men need to be involved if gender equality is to be achieved for all.

II. Rationale

Gender equality is not only a basic human right, it is also essential for the achievement of sustained socio-economic growth. There is now growing evidence that empowering women in particular, “fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth”. Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in many societies throughout the world.

While there has been progress on gender equality in some part of our countries, but women all across the country suffer discrimination and are under-represented in decision-making processes. Violence against women remains an endemic problem inhibiting their full participation of women in their communities, economies and societies especially for *Dalit* and *Adivasi* women in India. When a humanitarian crisis occurs gender inequalities are even more acutely highlighted. In such situations, women, young girls and boys form the most vulnerable groups and are exposed to greater risk of sexual violence in particular. In recent years there has been growing evidence of violence, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, stigmatization and prejudice directed against people because of their gender and sexual identities.

The response to humanitarian and development needs and rights must be designed in a way that it pays attention to identifying the different needs, capacities and unique contributions of different individuals and groups. Ignoring these aspects has serious implications for the survival and protection of people and may create set-backs in efforts at long-term improvement.

Thus, all initiatives ranging from rights, development and emergency assistance should utilize and benefit from gender sensitive analytical tools and approaches.

III. Theological Rational

As a Christian Alliance we believe that men and women are created in God's image as equals with the same basic rights and dignity – regardless of faith, gender, culture, ethnic origin or traditions. God has made women and men equally responsible for the stewardship of creation and equally entitled to its enjoyment (Genesis 1).

In the course of human history, women and men are differently affected by life experiences and crisis and respond differently to them, has led to women and men assuming ever more divergent and changing roles and responsibilities. Growing disparities in rights and duties, ever further away from the original precept of equal, shared responsibility and enjoyment have been the result. This increasing divergence of roles and duties has led to growing inequality and injustices in the entitlement to and the enjoyment of the fruits of human life and labour and of God's creation, in most circumstances to the disadvantage of women and girls.

Gender as a social and historical construction, defines what roles women and men are allowed or expected to assume. Gender analysis is a useful tool to approach the inequalities between women and men in access to and control over resources and power to make decisions. Gender bias is a distortion of God's mission entrusted to human beings to live in harmony and mutual respect, with equal rights and responsibilities. To achieve gender justice in relations is grounded and motivated in a common faith perspective.

For the staffs and partner organization of CNI SBSS, a core value is acknowledging that the work is done in a plural and multi-faith context. Recognizing this diversity implies an attitude of respect. It is based on this respect, that the work of CNI SBSS and its implementing partners would undertake gender sensitive assessments and analysis of the needs of communities and individuals when planning and implementing CNI SBSS programmes. CNI SBSS and its implementing partners understand that it is a mutual responsibility to overcome any bias and injustices, so as to ensure equal access to appropriate assistance for all, be they girls or boys, women or men, old or young.

IV. Gender Perspective

Gender perspective traverses across the organizational, institutional and program perspective which aims to understand complementary role of men and women in a society and work towards this by acknowledging that men and women are biological different. It highlights the integration of both *separate* and *shared* space and by acknowledging the significance of separate space it observes if changes occur in shared space too. However, before sharing the space together it gives thrust on creating and strengthening the separate space where women could develop their confidence first.

Separate space which is commonly known as women empowerment, is initial step, it is not an end itself.

Gender based approach focuses on women and men rather than considering women in isolation. It highlights the hierarchies, which reinforce men's domination in the family and community and the way gender roles and relations change quite often as a result of economic forces and other factors. Gender justice is a development issue, which enables us to analyze the situation of half of the humanity and recognizes them as an important human resource for any development intervention. Gender justice addresses the question of equality and equity and ensures dynamic participation of women and men in decision-making process, to have control over resources and identify the obstacles that are detrimental to the process of empowering women. Collaborative space is an opportunity for both men and women to look into gender relation in terms of division of labour, value embedded in certain task and attitudes towards each other. This is a strategy that could lead towards transformation. Therefore, growing political will of the organization is to locate gender visibly in a proactive manner.

V. Definition

As noted in the introduction, CNI SBSS considers gender equality to refer to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys, and men of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. This section provides definitions of some other key terms used in this policy.

The terms "sex" and "gender" are often used interchangeably to denote if someone is male or female. Many consider that "sex" and "gender" are different. A few suggests they overlap and that there is a biological dimension to gender. For the purpose of this policy, the terms are defined as follows:

- **"Sex"** in science or medical terms relates to the biological determination of the individual and the physical distinction between male or female and their different biological functions.
- **"Gender"** is commonly viewed as relating to masculinity and femininity and refers to socially and culturally constructed differences between females and males that are learned and are changeable (Alliance Gender Policy Principles 506 September 2010 over time). These differences are evidenced in the identities, roles, responsibilities and attributes assigned to boys, girls, women and men in society.
- **"Gender identity"** refers to self-identification and one's own view of oneself and self-expression. It's about what it means to be a boy or girl, man or woman. It is also all of the

attributes and characteristic that our culture expects to go along with belonging to one or the other of the sexes.

VI. CNI SBSS gender commitment

In its Statement of Commitment, CNI SBSS acknowledges that “we believe that all persons are created in the image of God...therefore, CNI SBSS in ways that respect dignity, uniqueness, and the intrinsic worth and human rights of every woman, man, girl and boy [and] we respond to human suffering irrespective of race, gender, belief, nationality, ethnicity or political persuasion...”

In terms of participation, CNI SBSS and its implementing partners “ensure that all are given equal opportunity to contribute their different perspectives, strengths and resources, and must be sensitive to address imbalances in power dynamics, such as those created by control of funding, or by different forms of discrimination (whether gender, age or ethnicity).

VII. CNI SBSS’s Gender Policy Principles

Principle 1: Promote gender balance in CNI SBSS governance staffing and representation in meeting and training.

CNI SBSS members shall respect the promotion of gender balance at all levels and in all human resources requirements. This does not mean that the number of women and men has to be exactly the same everywhere, immediately and under all circumstances. It means that in the composition of CNI SBSS’s member office team, a field team, an evaluation team, the governance bodies and the forums the gender balance will be gradually improved until parity is achieved. Achieving gender balance (50:50) is not always easy and therefore a gender ratio of 60:40 is considered ‘reasonable’. Anything less should require corrective action. It is equally important to consider equality of women and men in terms of seniority and roles in the context of gender balance.

Gender balance is also a human resource issue and it is about equal participation of women and men in all areas of work. It is conducive to a diverse workforce, enhances the agencies’ capacity to serve the entire population and improves the effectiveness of programmes. All staff are treated equally and

offered equal opportunities for promotion etc., unless recognized gender imbalances calls for explicit affirmative action.

Principle 2: Promote gender equality through gender mainstreaming and rights-based tools at the programme level, for contextual analysis, needs assessments, planning, implementation and evaluation

A gender **equality** approach to programming promotes human dignity and ensures fair access to development or humanitarian assistance. It recognizes that women and men differ in terms of both sex and gender and require appropriate interventions that meet their distinct needs. At a minimum, a gender equality approach should ensure that:

- Assistance provided is based on a thorough gender analysis ensuring that all initiatives examine the relationship between women and men and their access to and control over resources and benefits, their roles and the constraints they face relative to each other;
- Need and capacities assessments take into consideration the different needs and interests of women and men, girls and boys, in relation to their basic needs, like food, shelter, water, sanitation, health, education, and prevention and response to gender-based violence;
- Assistance benefits women and men equally;
- Work can be undertaken with men and women together and/or separately depending on gender-identified needs;
- Women and men have full participation, including women being empowered in decision-making, in all areas of CNI SBSS"s work from planning through to final programme evaluation;
- Women's rights are promoted as human rights especially in the area of gender-based violence
- Men are empowered to support the promotion of gender equality;
- The protection needs of boys are given equal priority to women and girls in all humanitarian settings;
- Reporting and accountability mechanisms for monitoring gender mainstreaming are put in place; and
- Advocacy efforts recognize that gender equality is essential for socio-economic recovery and growth.

Gender sensitive programming always includes consultations with and participation of both women and men, building upon their own capacities and resources to cope with the conflict and crisis. This includes the identification of barriers to women's or men's participation during all phases of the programme cycle.

Gender analysis, therefore, is a prelude to gender sensitive programming. It is a tool to find out who in the population is affected by the crisis or conflict, how they are affected, what they need and what they can do for themselves. It is equally relevant to identifying needs and ensuring the enjoyment of rights in the development context. Gender-specific information is essential to better understand a crisis situation and the changes and dynamics occurring during and after a crisis as women and men often take on new roles as a result of the crisis, to ensure that gender-based injustices and inequalities are not exacerbated by development and humanitarian interventions and that, where possible, greater equality and justice in gender relations are promoted

Principle 3: Adhere to the CNI SBSS Code of Conduct

CNI SBSS has a zero-tolerance to Gender-Based Violence (GBV), including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). Therefore, all staff in CNI SBSS organisations must personally sign the CNI SBSS Code of Conduct for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and abuses.

Principle 4: Promote strategies that guard against human rights violations perpetrated on the grounds of people's real or perceived gender identity

CNI SBSS acknowledges that human rights violations based on gender identity constitute legitimate areas of human rights concern. Women, men, girls and boys who do not conform to social or cultural conceptions of gender are often victims of persecution, discrimination and gross human rights violations.

CNI SBSS acknowledges that member organisations hold differing views on issues related to sexual orientation. Some members oppose same-gender sexual relationships on religious and moral grounds. This policy does not serve to compromise such convictions and beliefs. CNI SBSS does however strongly oppose any discrimination, persecution and violence against any person based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

Principle5: To provide CNI SBSS members with a basic glossary of terms to ensure there is a common understanding of gender issues.

- **Access to resources and benefits:** the opportunity to reach and use available resources and benefits.
- **Control over resources and benefits:** the power to appropriate and/or make decisions on resources and benefits on how, when, where and by whom they will be used.
- **Gender** refers to differences between females and males throughout the lifecycle that are learned, deeply rooted in every culture, and are changeable over time. Socially constructed differences and relations, evidenced in the identities, roles, responsibilities and attributes assigned to boys, girls, women and men in society.
- **Gender equality:** Refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys, and men of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards.
- **Gender identity** refers to self-identification and one's own view of oneself and self-expression. It's about what it means to be a boy or girl, man or woman. It is also all of the attributes and characteristics that our culture expects to go along with belonging to one or the other of the sexes.
- **Gender mainstreaming** is a strategy for attaining gender equality. A process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned CNI action. It is a strategy for making the concerns and the experiences of women and men an integral part of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all economic, political and social spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated (ECOSOC).
- **Gender analysis:** Examines the relationship between women and men and their access to and control over resources and benefits, their roles and the constraints they face relative to each other. A gender analysis should be integrated into all needs and sectoral assessments or situation analyses.

- **Gender sensitivity:** The proper awareness of the different needs, roles, and responsibilities of women and men in design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policy and programmes in all spheres.
- **Gender policy principles:** a framework that explains the basic principles on which an organization's gender policy is based, and thus gives direction to achieve gender equality.
- **Gender disaggregated data:** the qualitative analysis of sex-disaggregated statistical information.
- **Gender-and sex-disaggregated data combined:** The collection and differentiation of data and statistical information by gender to enable comparative gender analysis. Data collected and analyzed routinely to understand the impact of CNI SBSS's humanitarian responses on the total population.
- **Gender-based violence:** An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences, like power inequalities, between females and males. Examples include sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, rape, forced prostitution, domestic violence, trafficking, forced/early marriage, harmful traditional practices, child labour and widow inheritance.
- **Protection:** All activities aimed at securing full respect for the rights of individuals – women, girls, boys, and men – in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of human rights, humanitarian law. Protection activities aim to create an environment in which human dignity is respected, specific patterns of abuse are prevented or their immediate effects alleviated, and dignified conditions of life are restored through reparation, restitution and rehabilitation.
- **Sex** in scientific and medical terms refers to the biological differences between women and men. These are universal. Sex differences are about men's and women's bodies and their different biological functions.
- **Sex-disaggregated data:** the quantitative statistical or numerical information on the difference between men, women, boys and girls.