



GENDER POLICY

1. Background

Nepal is one of the few countries in the world where women have a lower life expectancy (58.3) than men (58.8) despite an equal gender ratio which is a direct reflection of the under-privileged status of women. Another key indicator is adult literacy rate in Nepal which is 59.6% for men but only 24.0% for women. Other development indicators reveal Nepal's deep-rooted poverty and deprivation and the poor status of women which contributes to this.

<i>Development Index</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Rank</i>
GDP Index	0.43	143/173
Human Development Index (HDI)	0.490	142/173
Human Poverty Index (HPI)	43.4	76/88
Gender Development Index (HDI)	0.470	119/146
Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)	0.385	N/a

*The Nepal Human Development Report 2002 (UNDP)
and Nepal Population Report 2002 (Ministry of Population and Environment)*

Women's nutritional status is the key to determine not only her own health status but also that of her children and family. Dietary intake of pregnant women in Nepal is inadequate. Low Birth Weight, the best indicator for malnutrition suggests that 30-50% of babies are born with low birth weight. Iron deficiency anaemia is a major nutritional problem among women and children. 50% of women of childbearing age and 63% of pregnant and lactating mothers are anaemic. Prolapse is a common health problem among rural women. Maternal mortality is 539 per 100,000 live births. Since the majority of the health staff are male not only in general services, but also in the women specific services, social barriers make it difficult for women to access health services thought these are widely inadequate in any case. (Source: Gender Assessment in Health Sector, UNDP 2002)

The triple role of Nepali women – namely reproductive, productive and community - is heavy and little valued. Women are oppressed by a combination of patriarchy and religious-cultural norms and values. Women are seen as subordinate to male partners, denied access to property and when engaged in development, predominantly objects rather than actors. Women have very little control over resources. Women's participation in politics is nominal, and they participate rarely in decision-making at all levels. Women are socially and economically disadvantaged. In this environment of denial of rights and subjugation, many women suffer from sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination with issues such as early marriage, dowry, and trafficking major and widespread concerns.

The constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 2047 (1990 AD) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, caste and creed. Studies undertaken by NGOs in cooperation with the Ministry of Women, found that "118 clauses/sections/rules in their entirety have discriminatory legal provisions": (Source: Discriminatory Laws in Nepal and their Impact on Women, Aug 2000). Despite provision for the protection of women's rights, in practice they are widely ignored or trampled upon. Women are silent, and invisible, their rights widely denied and violated.

2. LWF Nepal and Gender

LWF Nepal was established in 1984 and has been one of the leading International NGOs (INGO) active in both Development, and Relief + Rehabilitation work. The development approach practised by LWF Nepal has evolved from sectoral actions to community development and, in recent years towards empowerment, partnering and advocacy. LWF Nepal began implementing a Women's Development project, in Ilam in the mid 1980's.

Following evaluation and replanning, LWF Nepal developed a Strategic Plan for the period 2003-2007, which builds on the previous Strategic Outline (1997-2001). LWF Nepal is committed to the protecting and empowering the disadvantaged which include the displaced (such as refugees) and the marginalised including artisan castes (Dalits), former bonded laborers (Kamaiya), women, landless, ethnic minorities and other socially and economically deprived people in its working areas

The vision of LWF Nepal is "*People of Nepal living in a democratic and just society in peace, dignity and harmony, united in diversity and empowered to achieve their universal rights to basic needs and quality of life*".

The mission of LWF Nepal is "*LWF Nepal commits itself to challenge and respond to the causes and consequences of human suffering and to the alleviation of poverty through addressing basic needs and promoting the empowerment of the displaced, disadvantaged and vulnerable within Nepali society*".

LWF Nepal understands gender as a prescribed role and in-built social differences between women and men, which is changeable over time and varies from culture to culture. It provides scope to analyze power relations and animate people to consider and transform their attitudes and behavior especially discriminatory practices.

2.1 Program Level

The Women's Development Project in Ilam, operated from 1986-1999 was an important programme initiative. However LWF Nepal has also incorporated increasing elements promoting women's status in its programme.

In community development then later empowerment programmes, deliberate efforts to organise formerly isolated women and to develop their awareness and self-organisation. To expand their control over financial resources, women have received priority in livelihood opportunities offered through savings and credit groups, skills training and others.

In refugee work (BRP), refugee women and men are engaged in camp management. Refugee women in particular take a leading role in social activities including skill development and income generation. Priority is given to women, including freed Kamaiya (bonded labourer) women in agriculture related training. Legal rights education under Dalit advocacy are targeted at Dalit women.

HIV/AIDS and STI education is offered to both women and men of refugee camps and local communities. In schools, one girl and one boy from each grade are trained as peer educators for HIV/AIDS; similarly women from women's groups and men from men's groups are trained. Domestic violence issues are included in the training. Equal numbers of women and men are included in most training.

LWF Nepal works with a growing range of partner NGOs and CBOs including women-led organizations to address the specific issues of women. Other partners are also encouraged to emphasize gender issues in their organization and programme. Women self-help groups in all projects are aimed to encourage women leadership. Separate groups of women and men are formed and the leadership at CBO level is 70:30 in favour of women.

To address a historic imbalance, LWF Nepal introduced a Disadvantaged Girl's Scholarship programme in the late 1990's to education opportunities for girls in remote rural areas. Women's participation in empowerment-cum-literacy programmes has been higher than men having the positive effect of improved literacy among women and increased enrolment of children in school.

Gender sensitization training for all stakeholders has become a regular feature in all projects. Through marking International Days, rural communities are sensitized to human rights issues. Reproductive Health Education is extended to men also. As far as possible, all data are gender disaggregated.

2.2 Organizational Level

LWF Nepal has reflected its own awareness in the following organisational policy provisions to enhance gender sensitivity within the organization to promote the rights of women staff. Increasingly similar provisions are encouraged in the organisational policies of partner organisations also:

- a) Maternity leave of 65 working days that can be taken within a year of pregnancy and delivery.
- b) Paternity leave - 15 continuous days after the birth of a child.
- c) Childcare allowance for 18 months for care of a child up to 24 months age.
- d) To ensure female participation in training, travel, food and boarding facility to child caretakers.
- e) Provision of partner to women staff traveling in rural areas up to the roadhead
- f) Compassionate leave for female staff.
- g) Women's Staff Forum established; 2 positions out of 5 reserved exclusively for women staff in the LWF Nepal National Staff Council. Women can also be directly elected to the other 3 positions.
- h) Code of conduct for sexual- and gender-based harassment in effect.

The following are some of gender-friendly practices observed within LWF Nepal;

- a) Where practical, provision of a separate toilet for female staff,
- b) Breast-feeding time for lactating mothers, up to one hour,
- c) Within 65 days maternity leave half-day leave allowed,
- d) Room to rest,
- e) Vacancy announcement only for women,
- f) Priority for women staff in office vehicles,

3. Rationale for a gender policy

As seen in Section 1, Nepali women face deep-rooted, widespread and damaging discrimination which undermines their human rights, and presents one of the major constraints to development.

LWF Nepal and its partner organizations recognise the need to work more systematically and effectively to address women's strategic issues within their programmes and organizations. LWF Nepal strongly feels the need to formulate a more realistic and relevant gender policy in order to address inherent discrimination against women wherever it occurs in order to advance the status of women and enhance their innate power based on LWF Nepal's experience regarding empowerment.

Deleted: ¶

Based on the Vision and Mission of LWF Nepal, the following objectives are to be achieved:

4. Objectives

The following objectives are set for this Gender Policy.

- a) To create an environment where women's voices are heard and gender issues are raised.
- b) To encourage equal participation of women and men throughout the project cycle and to give priority to gender-sensitive program.
- c) To build the capacities of women and men to raise their voice against sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination.

- d) To create gender awareness and sensitivity at all levels (organisational, partner NGOs, CBOs)
- e) To build the capacity of staff and partners to mainstream gender at all levels.
- f) To create and promote opportunities to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in order to ultimately ensure equal representation of women and men.
- g) To create a favorable organizational environment through affirmative action and greater participation of women.
- h) To ensure the effective implementation of the Code of Conduct and this policy through effective mechanisms.

5. Guiding Principles

Within the framework of Core Values - Justice, Participation, Accountability, and Gender Equity – outlined by LWF Nepal in its Country Strategy, the following guiding principles will be followed in its gender policy;

- a) Collaboration: LWF Nepal and partners believe in collaborating and creating an environment that can sustain mutual trust, respect and transparency among men and women.
- b) Social inclusion: LWF Nepal believes in the participation of socially-excluded people (Dalit, Disadvantaged, people with disability, displaced) in the development process.
- c) Women's rights: LWF Nepal will make efforts to promote and protect women's rights essentially in socially discriminated sectors
- d) Gender justice: LWF Nepal believes in the promotion and practice of gender equity and justice in all their activities
- e) Sustainability: LWF Nepal believes that sustainability can be achieved through favorable organizational environment for women and can lead to development and harmony
- f) Equity: LWF Nepal believes that supplementing and respecting each other's values can achieve equity between women and men.

6. Strategies

For the implementation of this policy the following program level and organizational level strategies are established.

6.1 Program level

- a) Capacity-building of staff and partners and disadvantaged communities to address gender concerns.
- b) Conduct gender analysis before, during and after implementation of projects and actions.
- c) Women and men to be equally represented in project cycle.
- d) Sensitization and utilization of media to address gender concerns.
- e) Advocacy on gender issues at all levels of the program.
- f) Empowerment of women to increase their access to and control over resources,
- g) Avoid gender biases and stereotyping in the programme

6.2 Organizational level

- a) Capacity-building of staff and partners to address gender concerns,
- b) Ensure equal representation and active participation of women and men at all levels especially in decision-making positions and mechanisms throughout the process of planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation,
- c) Ensure adequate allocation of human and financial resources to include gender-sensitive programs and activities that empower women and build gender expertise,
- d) Personnel policy including recruitment, promotion, leave benefits, to be regularly reviewed and rationalized to take into account the specific situation and needs of women and men,

- e) Partnering and networking with NGOs, CBOs and other like-minded organizations, particularly those working on gender issues and for the advancement of women,
- f) Avoid gender biases and stereotyping in the organization,
- g) Strengthening relationships with existing networks, alliances and related agencies on gender issues,
- h) Gender-related documentation, research and monitoring systems,

7. Priority issues

7.1 Program level

- a) Gender analysis in planning and implementation,
- b) Incorporating sessions on gender in all trainings/ workshops,
- c) Priority allotted to dalit and disadvantaged women,
- d) Awareness and advocacy of women's legal rights including domestic violence issues,
- e) Community sensitization on women's reproductive health, focusing on pregnant women,
- f) Empowerment of women through increasing their access to economic resources and other capacity-building programs,
- g) Enhancing the participation of men in the program to create a supportive environment for the women,
- h) Support programs, which will increase the participation of women in the decision-making process at the household and community level.
- i) Support programs/activities that will enhance the practical needs of women in particular.
- j) Research on the situation of women in the working areas of LWF Nepal and partner organizations,
- k) Recognise the extra burden on women created by development work and adapt interventions accordingly

8. Accountability Mechanism

In order to ensure the LWF Nepal Gender Policy is applied in practice, accountability mechanism will be strengthened. Three Committees, one in each working region namely East, West and Central [Nepal](#) will be formed. Each committee will consist of 5 persons (3 women and 2 men). Among them 2 will be from the partner organizations, 2 from the community and 1 from LWF Nepal.

The committee will ensure implementation of the Gender Policy in their respective regions. Decisions for issues where only LWF Nepal is involved and which cannot be taken at the Committee levels, will be taken at the National Review Meeting (NRM). In cases where partners are involved the relevant partners will be invited to the NRM.

9. Time Frame

This policy will be effective for the period March 2004 to December 2007, to bring it in line with the Nepal Country Strategy. Based on this policy, LWF Nepal and each partner will prepare annual action plans relating it to their ongoing work [to ensure the policy is implemented](#). Progress will be reviewed in LWF Nepal Senior Staff Meetings and reporting through existing mechanisms