

GENDER POLICY  
“PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY TO  
SUSTAIN ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH  
AND DEVELOPMENT”

Windows User

**YOUTH AND CHILD ADVOCACY NETWORK (YACAN)  
13 FORT STREET FREETOWN**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Youth and Child Advocacy Network has been working to promote the rights of Children in Sierra Leone; especially girls through its advocacy work with children, community leaders, Government officials and other likeminded Civil Society organisations. Recently, the organisation's programmes have been focusing on promoting the rights women and girls through influencing the development of policies and legislations that protect women and girls within the organisation and at the field level.

YACAN has recognise the need for a gender equality policy that will strengthen the organisation's commitment to address gender issues fairly and dispassionately adapt and self-renew.

## 2. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Gender inequality is rife within both government and non-governmental organisations in Sierra Leone. Women and Girls suffer from a whole range of discrimination in accessing equal rights and opportunities in the employment, education, health, entrepreneurial and other sectors. Even wealth distribution and power dynamics also still remains a huge challenge.

Although there are national and international instruments to address discriminatory practices, such as the Convention on

the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections among other, and Governance (ACDEG), such practices is still a common phenomenon. Rights regulatory mechanisms entitles that the rights of all persons shall be guaranteed irrespective of gender, political opinion, ethnic, religion, disability, background and race. In line with Political, Economic and Social Governance, women are entitled to participate in governance and "State parties are obligated to create the necessary conditions for full participation of women in the decision making processes and structures". Other provisions states that "Equal opportunities must be given to women and gender parity in representation at all levels".

Although Sierra Leone is making notable strides in meeting the development agenda for women and their participation in governance and economic empowerment, a fundamental reason it have not achieved gender equality in every realm is that women and girls' voices are too often excluded from national decision-making. Ostensibly, at the organisational level, gender inequality is slowly shrinking the space for women and girls in local non-governmental organisations, viz a viz, power relations, equality and gender awareness and growth.

To this end, there is need to address the growing inequalities that affects women and girls in all spheres of work including employment education, health, social protection, governance and empower them to participate in the development planning process.

### 3. OUR VISION

#### 4. OUR POLICY STATEMENT

We promote a just and equal society for young women, men, boys and girls to claim their fundamental human rights and challenge norms, values, systems and processes that affects equal power relations in Sierra Leone.

#### 5. OUR POLICY STATEMENT

We contribute to promote a just, equitable and equal work environment and society for young women, men, boys and girls to claim and enjoy their fundamental human rights and challenge norms, values, systems and processes that affects equal power relations in the work place in particular and in Sierra Leone in general.

We build power with civil society organisations, youths and children to confront patriarchal norms that violates the rights of women and derails them from reaching their full potential.

***YACAN envisage a society that is free from all forms of discrimination and abuse against children and youth, the foundation for sustainable peace and economic growth, Child Protection, Health, education, human rights and security in Sierra Leone***

### 6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

YACAN's strategic plan provides for sound organisational growth and gender sensitivity. For the organisation (YACAN) to meet its human resources policy requirement, YACAN has positioned itself to develop, validate, implement and monitor a sound gender policy. The aim of the policy is to provide among other things, an equal and non-discriminatory work environment for all YACAN staff, volunteers and partners to enjoy equal rights and treatment.

This policy further responds to the organisation's commitment towards promoting the rights of female workers and beneficiaries both within the organisation and in the field in conformity with national and international best practices of gender equity, equality and non-discrimination. This effort will strengthen the organisation to respond adequately to internal and external changes and growth processes for women as well as develop its adaptive capacity to promote and sustain partnerships and collaboration within an enabling, ensuring and empowering environment.

### 7. POLICY OBJECTIVES

1. To demonstrate YACAN's commitment in promoting gender equality within the organisation and in the field.
2. To have clear gender standards by which YACAN can be held accountable.
3. To promote a fair and conducive workplace that recognises diversity, inclusion and gender parity.
4. To have a clear road map in addressing gender justice issues within YACAN and in the field.
5. To strengthen civil society networks to act as agents of change in promoting gender equality in Sierra Leone.

## 8. POLICY GOALS

1. To demonstrate YACAN's commitment in promoting gender equality in at all levels in the organisation.
2. To have clear gender standards by which YACAN can be held accountable.
3. To promote a fair and conducive workplace that recognises diversity, inclusion and gender equality.
4. To have a clear road map in addressing gender justice issues within and outside YACAN.

5. To strengthen civil society networks to act as agents of change in promoting gender equality within their organisations.

## 9. OUR COMMITMENTS

1. YACAN will build and support young women and girls agencies in accessing their fundamental human rights.
2. YACAN will influence the development of policies, systems and processes that will enhance an enabling environment for women and girls to thrive.
3. YACAN will confront norms and practices that subdues the position of women and girls in society.
4. YACAN will challenge policies, structures and systems that contributes to gender inequality in Sierra Leone.
5. YACAN will dialogue with men and boys to promote gender equality in Sierra Leone.
6. YACAN will amplify young women and girls voices to challenge the systemic barriers in accessing their fundamental human rights.
7. YACAN will network with other CBO's and CSO's in confronting stereotyping, discrimination and other

norms and practices that inhibits girls and young women's access to their fundamental human rights.

8. YACAN will design and implement strategies that will contribute to transforming social relations between boys and girls and young women and men.
9. YACAN will build systems and an internal culture that will promote Gender equality in the organisation.

## 10. OUR VALUES

1. **Mutual respect**; recognizing the innate worth of all people and the value of their unique experiences.
2. **Equity and justice**; working to ensure equal opportunity to everyone, irrespective of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, disability, location and religion.
3. **Honesty and transparency**; being accountable for the effectiveness of our actions and open in our communication.
4. **Solidarity** with the poor, powerless and the excluded; being the only bias in our commitment to improving poverty conditions.
5. **Courage of conviction**; encouraging creativity, boldness, and innovation without the fear of failure as we work to make the greatest possible impact in the lives of the Children and young people.

6. **Humility**; recognizing that we belong to a larger movement fighting for the rights and welfare of Children and young people and their families.

## 11. MINIMUM STANDARDS

11.1 ADVOCACY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Advocacy strategies are designed to address structural barriers that prevents women and girls from accessing justice, their rights and realising their potentials</li> <li>+ Conducts research that will investigate gender gaps and periodically publish reports, bringing to attention the need to advancing women and girls rights in the country</li> <li>+ Engage Government and other Policy makers to develop or strengthen policies that addresses women and girls rights.</li> </ul>
11.2 PROGRAMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Design program outcomes that are gender transformative to facilitate equal power relations</li> <li>+ Organisations program strategy addresses gender stereotyping and unequal power relations</li> <li>+ Incorporate gender analysis in Project design.</li> </ul>
11.3 NETWORKING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Influence Child Rights and women's rights coalition human rights reports to reflect Gender Justice issues to change the gender dynamics in the country.</li> </ul>

- ✚ Integrate Gender Justice issues into YACAN's youth led and Children's forum( Pikin Veranda) to other children's network to lead and discuss girls rights issues in Sierra Leone.
- ✚ Work with men and boys group to change gender power dynamics and build more support for women and girls.
- ✚ Strengthen relationship with the media to amplify girls and women's rights issues.

#### 11.4 CAMPAIGNS

- ✚ Bring to attention issues of gender discrimination, gender based violence and unequal power relations during Human rights campaigns
- ✚ Develop and disseminate messages that addresses gender based violence in the media

#### 11.5 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

- ✚ Recruitment and selection procedures reflect our commitment to gender equality and promote a diverse workplace.
- ✚ Enforce work ethics that enhances safety and conducive workplace for women and men
- ✚ Provide all employees with an orientation session and materials where Right to Play's Gender Equality Policy (and Code of Conduct) is reviewed in detail.

## 12. AT ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL:

### 12.1 A) STAFF COMPOSITION/REPRESENTATION

- Ensuring numerical gender balance in all posts at all levels within the organisation by recruiting adequate women staff
- Ensuring equal opportunities among male and female staff for personal growth, in promotion benefits, training and working conditions
- Ensuring equitable gender representation and participation in the core groups, Board of Directors and in all other functional committees of the organization

### 12.2 B) WORKPLACE

- Providing a safe and secure workplace for women staff, free from sexual harassment with a Gender Complaints committee to look into specific concerns.
- Providing an enabling and friendly work environment where both women and men enjoy and actively participate in work. This includes providing flexible working hours and allowing working from home, wherever possible.
- Extending work related concessions and relaxations for women staff depending upon the situations and requirements; e.g. providing secure transport

facilities when they work late hours; giving relaxation over travel time for the next day for those in the field; ensuring security measures along with minimum basic facilities for women staff travelling in the field.

- Reviewing the organizational structure, functioning, problems in relation to gender imbalances among staff and the work environment from time to time and taking definite steps to address them.
- Strategic orientation to staff in the field based programs and advocacy initiatives towards increasing women's literacy and property rights.
  - Placing Gender in existing committees: A woman employee who has put in 6 months of service after confirmation shall be entitled for 2 months of Maternity Leave on Half pay and under probation, she will be eligible for leave without pay for the same length of period.
  - Men employees when their spouses give birth / delivers shall be entitled for 30 days of leave either immediately after child birth or fifteen days before child birth and fifteen days after child birth for primary parenting and child nurturing. In case of miscarriage / abortion, women staff can avail 2 weeks of Maternity Leave with full pay and spouses are entitled for one week's leave.

- Making efforts to develop infrastructure for childcare facilities in the office premises in order to ensure that the parents (staff) can bring their children to the work place in circumstances in which the child cannot be taken to a day care facility.

### 13. IN THE FIELD

- Furthering deliberate and intense efforts to promote participation of women and their collectives in various aspects of natural resource management.
- Facilitating participation and even representation of women in various institutional structures created for the management of natural resources like committees, user groups etc.
- Analysis of gender disaggregated roles and work patterns, and makes special efforts to reduce the work load of women.
- Extending constant orientation of field-level partners on gender perspectives in Natural Resources Management as part of long-term gender goals like formal recognition of women's rights over resources like land, assets etc.



- Ensuring equal wages to equal work for both men and women in the works as part of the programs, where YACAN is directly or indirectly involved either as an implementer of the program or as a facilitating support service provider.
- Making special efforts to constantly identify vulnerable women and provide them with the necessary support and guidance.
- Sensitizing the men and mobilizing their support towards gender balance.
- Building awareness and sensitivity by processing information and publishing communication material in diverse media to appeal different strata of people in our functional domain.

#### 14. C) STAFF CAPACITY BUILDING

- Facilitating staff capacity building processes and trainings to enhance perspectives and conceptual clarity on Gender issues (*for all the staff members*). This will be an important component of staff induction programme
- Ensuring that all trainings (internal and external) facilitated by the organization are gender-sensitive.-
  - a) training content/methodology/mode of facilitation
  - b) logistics part -time/location of venue/play group facilities/other logistics/first-aid kit.

- Conducting Gender trainings for both men and women; and ensuring participation of women in all the field level meetings and trainings.

#### 15. D) ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND SYSTEMS

- Making all HR systems and policies gender-sensitive and responsive, and integrating gender indicators into staff performance appraisal systems.
- Incorporating and explicitly mentioning gender sensitivity as an essential element in the tasks/job profiles in all terms of reference, including TORs for external consultants.
- Ensuring that the conceptual clarity and sensitivity on gender issues will be one of the important selection criteria in recruitment processes and capacity building efforts of staff.
- Initiating and building the advocacy around gender balance and making efforts to integrate gender concerns into the scaling up and mainstream developmental programs

#### 17. E) STAFF BENEFITS

- Following all statutory requirements related to maternity and paternity leaves.
- Ensuring that staff access to and use of information technology is gender equitable.

**NOTE:** Arrangements should be made for recording all information and open access for reviewing the performance of tasks mentioned at organizational level regularly in different forums from staff meetings to Annual General Meetings.

- Supporting and expressing solidarity with partners at field level in taking up issues of discrimination or harassment against women.

## 18. NETWORKING:

- YACAN would proactively make all efforts in promoting gender concerns in the work with partners. It involves extending support to partners in organizing training programs, conducting gender studies, preparing resource material, providing documentation support etc.
- YACAN would extend support to partner organisations in developing their own gender policies, strategies and programs.
- YACAN would further strengthen linkages with the Gender desk of its partners to work on various women issues. Participation and contribution to the common platforms like Synergy group of women employees of all Solidarity Institutions will further help the organization.
- Sharing Gender reports with our network members and partner organizations and also facilitating similar process within the partner organizations to promote gender sensitivity.
- Associating with networks and organisations working on this agenda.

## 19. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**19.1 GENDER EQUALITY:** Creating the necessary conditions for full enjoyment of rights without discrimination on the basis of gender, sex or otherwise. These include our commitment to promote a diverse and conducive work place for women in terms of recruitment and selection, the full and active participation of women and girls in decision-making processes and structures, as well as ensuring equal opportunities to women and girls and gender parity in representation at all levels in the organisation.

**19.2 EMPOWERMENT:** Supporting our staff, volunteers and beneficiaries especially women to think for themselves and by themselves, make their own decision, take action and accept responsibility for the cause of their own action within our organisational standards and principles.

**19.3 DISCRIMINATION:** Where we fail to respect, protect and guarantee the rights of persons especially women and girls within the organisation and at the field level because of

gender, political opinion, ethnic, religion, disability background and race.

**19.4 GENDER BASED VIOLENCE:** Any act of violence and inhuman act or behaviour that is inflicted on staffs, volunteers and other persons especially women and girls that deny them from enjoying their fundamental human rights within the organisation.

## 20. ENDORSEMENT :

This Gender Policy for YACAN was presented by the Consultant, Charles Lahai, and validated in a meeting held at YACAN'S Head Office, 13 Fort Street, Freetown and attended by Staff, Management and Board of Directors representatives.

**Signed:** Hassan Fuad Kanu,

Executive Director

Date: 8 August 2021