

GENDER POLICY

Rural Development Society (RDS)

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Speeches from Executive Director

Systematic discrimination against women is present from the dawn of time. Since the beginning of civilized society all kinds of maltreating, deprivation, subjugation and fragility of their nature was used to put the women race down. Women were never truly free from neither gender discrimination nor being spared from any injustice. Women got limited by the current and traditional socio-economic standard, and got oppressed by men and systematically got limited and was never able to express themselves neither skillfully nor with ingenuity. This is the scenario same everywhere in the world. Some might think a third world country like Bangladesh is more likely suffer from this discrimination and injustice, but the fact is even developed countries oppress women in their own mechanical cruel ways. Women empowerment became an agenda of social reformation for activist, reformist, politicians, policymakers and teachers who got unified to ensure the initiative from the late 60s along with a lot of NGOs who ushered the way for women to have and use power and endowed them with confidence to ask and fight stridently about gender impartiality which soon became a social movement.

Without women empowerment, issues and factors like democracy, poverty eradication, economic growth, or self-adequate Bangladesh is never going to be conceivable. You can't expect a country to prosper without the help of half of the population and expect a country to get developed. The first plea for gender equality was first done in 1792, which is almost 215 years ago. In 1792, a 32 years old lady, Mary Olsten croft put a scratch on the existing male-controlled society with her journal "vindication of the rights of women: with structures on political and moral subject". She announces the manifesto for women liberty and choice. Her publication didn't start any initiatives or besought any action then but it planted the seed of a long struggle, which is still not achieved till date.

Rural Development Society (RDS) has always been a gender sensitive institute from its initiation. RDS has been working with equal right among men and women since the birth of this glorious nation from 1972. It was the first of its kind in Bangladesh to break social barrier and employed and trained women in "challenging works" like driving, riding bikes, welding, boiler operating, constructor, wood smith and carpentry, electrician, plumber, machine operator. These works were social taboo for women back in those days. RDS identified the discrimination against women to be a result of male oppression which was and still somewhat present in the current state of the world. As RDS always involved significant number of women employees in the work fields, and on that light the gender policy was finalized in 2000 after several amends and correction throughout the years. The 3rd amended policy was published in 2020 in a more organized and improved fashion.

This gender policy is meant for keeping the work harmony balance and stop women from being a victim of male discrimination and work as a guidance for staffs of both genders. Before proposing the gender policy guideline, all the staffs were taken in to consideration and it was mutually discussed for creating and amending of the policy. RDS would like to acknowledge the

generous contribution of Ms. Roksana in the creation of this policy. This also includes the staffs and well-wishers of RDS; who contributed with their ideas and opinions in creation of this policy deserves a special thanks and regards.

Dr. Azizul Haque
Executive Director
Rural Development Society (RDS)

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of

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History:

Rural Development Society (RDS) conceived July 1986 in the noble aim to build-up better future for the disadvantaged and distressed peoples who are totally helpless and deprived groups of the society. Later on 25/09/1989 was officially registered with Department of Social Welfare, Government of Bangladesh and 24/12/1994 was officially registered with Department of NGO Affairs Bureau, Government of Bangladesh.

RDS is a local nongovernmental Social Organization. It was established in July, 1986 with the initiation of a group of educated likeminded social workers with an aim **to promote the socio-economic and cultural status of the rural poor and vulnerable people, emphasizing the women and children through conscientization, capacity building, institution building, capital formation, and imparting felt-need based problem solving programs by adopting modern scientific technologies in a view to reduced poverty and empowerment of rural women in decision making processes.** RDS believes in non-directive, bottom up, participatory and integrated development frameworks and acts as a catalyst with its beneficiaries. The organization has a strong Management Committee. At present, RDS has been implementing various development program/Projects with assistances of National and International donors including Bangladesh Government. RDS has prepared this project as per need of Local women of Kotalipara Upazila.

RDS along with its humanitarian services in the affected areas has undertaken program to protect gender based violence through its actions and the activation as well as activation of the systems services existing in the areas at Union and Upazila Level. The activities encompass prevention of violence and services to the victims of violence along with functioning of concerned committees and judicial system at Union Parishad.

What is gender policy?

Policy is a process of systematic and neutral work system. Main implication of a policy is to initiate, giving orders according to the organization, and to motivate the employees to maximize productivity and workplace harmony. Policy specifies and dictates the standard of boundaries and work process. Gender policy dictates the interwork relationship between genders, their responsibilities, and rules/ guidelines to follow and provides detailed guidelines for the employees.

Significance of gender policy in Rural Development Society (RDS):

RDS working for training women into so called nontraditional skills, the main reason for that was to ensure equal gender rights to ensure a stable improvement of the society itself. It worked towards giving the women employment, create job opportunity, and development socioeconomically. The vision of RDS is to eradicate gender based violence, prevent inequality, and create a gender neutral women friendly workplace, along with create a friendly and happy social structure and give health service and others to the poor demography. To ensure the vision, RDS is fighting against unjustified social norms, illiteracy, malnutrition, and superstitious beliefs which were present in the people's frame of mind. RDS sent women representative in villages to guarantee that various services reach every corner of the RDS's working area from 2000 till date which helped break social barriers, tradition and norms significantly. RDS blames gender quality on the mindset and socially accepted discrimination of women. Since RDS included women in all sectors of its activity, so it was obligatory that a gender policy was introduced and created to ensure the safeguard on gender equality. It was meant for eradicating the gender discrimination happening in the society and was implemented on the workplaces in RDS as well. This initiative was taken to make this society a better place along with being socio-politically equal to women. This policy is universally implicated in every activity that RDS is involved in.

1. Ensure equal rights on every level of the organization
2. Giving gender equality the utmost importance
3. Creating an effective workplace for women based on positive discrimination
4. Create a positive environment of women to develop and skill training
5. Giving women opportunity based on skills rather predated ideology and norms
6. Ensure gender equality and development on every steps of work
7. Making male worker tolerant and create a friendly environment for women

Grounds of development for the staffs

1. Standards, conduct, erudition and culture:
2. Staff development
3. Micromanage the employees
4. Work schedule and workspace

Standards, conduct, erudition and culture:

1. This organization will work as a chain breaker from the man controlled society.
2. Creating examples of capable women and highlighting their contribution to the society.
3. Main morale of the organization is gender equality. This motto is implemented through ideas, feelings belief, and work. The practice is observed on every level of the organization.
4. Policy concerning any coarse behavior either direct or indirect, such as lewdness, offensive comments and signs are shown zero tolerance and punishable by organization rules.

5. The training on gender equality and workplace ethics and moral development is mandatory for all staffs.

Staff development:

1. In order to keep employee standard, and develop them with higher and further education, the selection process would be gender equal and in special cases women would be given higher priorities if needed.
2. Preserve 50% candidacy for women on higher education and special training.
3. Keeping the awareness of gender quality would be achieved by teaching the value of team building among both gender and creating awareness.
4. Arranging trainings especially designed for women such as team building, leadership development, and management training.
5. Both gender will be given equal opportunity for participating in different workshops, seminar or meeting.

Management:

Financial and others:

1. There will be no gender discrimination in the pay scale, provident funds, medicine fund, increment, TA/DA, travel stipend, training stipend, retirement fund, and special stipends.
2. Telephone stipends, transportation and accommodations would be same for both men and women.
3. Women will be taken into equal amount as men on every kind of choice making or associating within the organization.

Accommodation and transportation:

1. Office would allocate remunerations for every staff for conveyance purposes according to the designation.
2. Employees would use cycle or motor bikes in accordance with organizational guideline and rules. In case of women who are unable to drive would be taken into account and take necessary steps to ensure productivity.
3. Women staff would get priority on using organization car for transportation.

Employment:

1. At least 50% women will be employed in administration level based on skill.
2. 50% of representative should be women in the staff employment committee.
3. Widowed, divorced, physically handicapped and women from lower social group would be given special priority and precedence.

4. Families of any deceased staff or employees would be given significance based on skills.

Transferring:

1. Direct family members such as parents, husband or wife's workplace or housing would be taken into account when being relocated.
2. Ensuring safety and lodging for women employees.
3. Aspects like societal and situational factors would be taken into consideration when reallocating women staff
4. Married staffs will get lodging facilities within project area. If the lodging is not fit for accommodation, employees are allowed to take their own lodgings outside the complex.
5. Process for transferring near husband's workplace will be taken into consideration.

Promotion:

1. Women might get special favors in terms of advancement within the organization.
2. The policies and rules for a promotion are same for both genders.
3. Women will be given priority for same job than men.
4. There's got to be 50% female representatives in projects management and decision making process

Lodging and others:

1. Toilets and bathrooms should be near the houses of a female employee.
2. Toilets should be different according to gender and has to be marked as such.
3. Women would get separate guest quarter.

Day care facility for children of employees:

There's going to be a full functional day care center for the working mothers whose children are under 5 years of age.

1. Sufficient amount of care givers should be available for looking after the babies.
2. The day care has to retain a standard of cleanliness and healthy atmosphere.
3. Children should have sufficient toys and play things.
4. Children must have a regular health checkup routine.

Guideline and facilities for breastfeeding mothers:

They will be a separate room for breast feeding their children for mothers.

1. The room has to be well ventilated and get enough light.

2. Mothers would not need to take part in daily agricultural activities from 7th month or pregnancy till the child is 1 year old.
3. The facility must be able to accommodate 5-6 mothers and their children.
4. Mother would be given chance to breast feed every 3-4 hours.
5. New mothers are relieved from night duty till the baby turns 1.
6. Mothers with children of 2-5 years can keep their babies with them during night duty in a chosen chamber.

Pregnancy leave:

Terms for eligibility:

1. Employee would get 6 months of full paid leave during their first pregnancy. If she wishes, can take extra 2 months leave without pay according to the rules.
2. During the 2nd time pregnancy, mothers would get 4 months of paid leave along with 2 months of leave without pay. The interval between these 2 pregnancies has to be 3 and half years.
3. Staffs have to serve a minimum of 3 years in the project.
4. Mothers have to be at least 20 years old to be eligible for pregnancy leave. Otherwise she won't be eligible for the leave.
5. Woman staff is allowed to have the pregnancy leave twice in her work life in total.
6. Staffs would not need to take part in daily agricultural activities from 7th month or pregnancy till the child is 1 year old.
7. The leave can be prolonged by discussing with the authority.

Leave for fathers:

The father would get 2 weeks of leave with full pay if he's a staff of the organization. He will get 2 weeks of special paid leave for his 2nd child. He will get the leave even if the mother is not a part of the organization and it's mandatory for the father to be with his wife and newborn.

1. The wife of a male employee must be over 20.
2. The employee must obey the directive regarding birth control. More than 2 children are prohibited by RDS rules.
3. Employee won't be entitled for paternal leave if the employee was not employed in the project for less than 2 years. For any exceptions, the increment would be paused for 1 financial year, and the mother will get 5 months leave without pay.
4. In case of 3rd child, the act would be considered as a disciplinary breach and the employee would be deprived of project given DPS and life insurance partially. The central council will decide about the amount of penalizing.
5. Still the mother will get 4 months of unpaid leave.

6. If the father does not abide by the guideline given by the project (it's mandatory for the father to be with his wife and newborn), his paternal leave will be considered forfeited and get penalized.

Emergency leave:

Following causes would be taken into concern for special leave.

1. Any direct family member gets sick.
2. Death of a close family member or in case of accident.
3. For his/her own marriage.

Leave of absence for illness:

Every staff is entitled for a 2 weeks paid leave in case of serious medical condition. Staffs who are working in the project for more than 2 years can get up to 4 weeks of leave with director's permission. Staffs must take medical advices from the hospital doctor. Without recommendation from a doctor, the leave will not be valid. Staffs who are employees for more than 4 years but less than 7 years of service time would get a one-time leave of 3 months. Considering the service life, and situation, central committee might even grant leave up to 6 months. If the staff needs more than 6 months of leave, it'll be decided by the central committee.

Employee management:

The felony below would be properly examined and get penalized according to investigations. The degree of these penalties can be from show cause notice, temporary suspension to legal concerns.

1. Sexual harassment: the staff would be immediately suspended and sacked if any direct or indirect allegation of sexual harassment rises. The degree of punishment is varied from temporary to direct expulsion from the organization.
2. Dowry, adultery, and torture: no staff can accept dowry when the staff is under RDS management. No male staff can remarry without properly going through the whole divorce system. This is applicable for the female staffs too. If the allegation is proved, measures will be taken according to that.
3. Gender cell would help to resolve any kind of domestic problems and situations.
4. No degrading or vulgar poster can be hung or displayed which are insulting and disrespectful.
5. Staffs cannot post degrading or vulgar posts on social media either.
6. Staffs, male female alike must maintain a decent dress code.
7. Office will investigate any lewd or vulgar jokes, comments, or verbal conduct against women and take actions.

8. RDS will provide many kinds of help and advices to resolve if a female staff is being discriminated in her own household.
9. Disciplinary actions will be taken against staffs who are involved in unsocial or detrimental activities.
10. Female staffs would be encouraged to save money and teach them investing and money management.

Things listed above are going to be supervised by the gender cell. Gender cell would conduct enquiry if needed and take decisions according to the degree of the offense and take managerial verdicts.

Activity based steps:

1. No decisions can be made without considering the gender policy.
2. Any projects ran by RDS must maintain gender impartiality in involvements.
3. RDS must take actions needed if a woman staff gets harassed in the workplace in any way.
4. To ensure equal rights to ideas in the workplace and in the grassroots level, and making the system gender sensitive along with taking participatory steps.
5. To eliminate discrimination in the project progress practice and taking necessary steps.
6. Including topics about women and child abuse in the training process to educate and create awareness.
7. Creating awareness among women to fight the gender discrimination and educate those roles of gender, reasons for discriminations, and how to prevent the culture.

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8. If staffs face the social dogma of gender working together along with community and religion related doctrines, those factors will be handled by participating actively, Also to create a defense mechanism for fighting such difficulties and barriers.

Implementation techniques:

1. Gender cell should maintain active involvement to guarantee the execution of gender policy of RDS Kendra's activities.
2. To aware all the staffs about gender policy and its effective implement.
3. Train staffs about the gender policy and create awareness.
4. Motivate the staffs and the locals about gender sensitivity and provide proper education, programs and activities on the topic.
5. An effective gender cell to play the leading role in ensuring gender equality.

Gender policy monitoring process:

Rural Development Society (RDS) is gender sensitive organization. This morale should be implanted on all departments of the organization. The gender policy was made to ensure systematic and effective implementation of gender equality and the thoughts of employees and staffs both male and female were taken into consideration.