

<h2>AVI Gender Equality Policy</h2>	Effective date	July 2022
	Next review date	July 2024
	Sponsor	CEO
	Board committee	People and Culture
Level / Class Corporate Organisation	Approval / authorisation	Board

1. PURPOSE

This policy has been developed to outline AVI’s commitment to gender equality. It sets the standard and guides implementation of gender equality and equity priorities across both AVI’s organisation and its programs.

This Policy identifies gender equality as women and men and people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities enjoying equal status in society, along with girls and boys. It means that they have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy equal respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices and decisions about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices. Achieving gender equality requires the promotion of equal rights, since equality between all people regardless of gender is an integral part of human rights. It also requires an understanding of gender relations.

This Policy defines AVI’s commitments to advance the rights of women and girls and people of diverse gender identities, to achieve equal rights and gender equality. This involves work to change gender inequalities in the distribution of power and resources in our work and programmatic work with partners, women and girls and people of diverse genders in communities, as well as within AVI - in our offices, workplaces, teams and at individual level.

This Policy recognises that gender is not binary and that AVI’s work for gender equality will address discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity that prevents people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer (LGBTIQ+) from accessing their rights.

AVI recognises gender equality as an essential human right. Using a rights-based approach, our recognition of gender issues and inequitable gender outcomes enables us to develop affirmative policies and actions to support and promote the human rights of all.

2. SCOPE / PERSONS AFFECTED

This policy applies to our organisation, across all programming and projects (in Australia and overseas) and to all AVI employees and related personnel, to our external relationships including the

organisations that we enter into contractual or partnership agreements with, and our public engagements and communications.

- Board
- Executive
- Employees
- Interns and work experience placements
- Contractors
- Volunteers and their accompanying adult partners/dependents who accompany them overseas
- Program participants
- Development partners.
- Organisations that enter into partnership agreements or consortia with AVI and their staff who are working on joint programs or projects
- Partner organisations – in Australia and overseas – including their staff and people they provide services or work within communities.

Appropriate consultation (tick for 'yes', otherwise leave blank)

3. PRINCIPLES

AVI's Gender Equality Policy and practices are guided by the following principles:

- 3.1 AVI recognises gender equality as an explicit internationally recognised human right. AVI acknowledges that advancing women's rights and gender equality is also critical for effective policies, programs and institutions in all sectors as a more effective means to overcome poverty and injustice
- 3.2 AVI uses human rights principles, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹ and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)², to integrate gender equality perspectives in our development approach and all of our work.
- 3.3 AVI seeks to learn from good practices in work for gender equality and the legislative requirements and other standards in Australia and internationally in the operationalisation of this Policy. AVI recognises that governments in the countries where AVI works programmatically have signed and ratified various international conventions, including CEDAW, and undertaken work to reflect these commitments to women's rights and gender equality in national laws and policies designed to advance gender equality. This provides important context for how AVI engages in its programmatic work with partner organisations
- 3.4 AVI acknowledges the historical significance and on-going contribution of women's rights organisations, coalitions and movements in the work to advance gender equality at local,

¹The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations, setting out fundamental human rights to be universally protected.

²The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly which has been ratified by Australia and all of our current program partner countries (2016).

national and international levels. AVI acknowledges the critical role of women's perspectives and the work women have undertaken to claiming their rights and presenting their perspectives and priorities to influence government, civil society and in the private sector. AVI will seek to partner with and learn from women's rights organisations and those working for gender equality and human rights.

- 3.5 AVI recognises the importance of providing opportunities and support to compensate for the historical and current disadvantages that prevent women and girls and people of diverse gender identities from being recognised as equals to men and boys. We recognise the importance of women-centred programming to address gender equality. In order to change unequal gender power relations, AVI values and supports approaches which involve work with men and boys to challenge and change unequal gender relations in all spheres (in the home, at work, in organisations, in communities, in law and policy)
- 3.6 AVI respects and upholds the rights of women, girls and people of diverse gender identities to be free from gender-based violence, lateral violence, discrimination, harassment and abuse
- 3.7 AVI commits to a "do no harm" approach, meaning AVI will not intentionally harm women, girls or people of diverse genders, or worsen gender inequality in its work. This involves AVI assessing potential harm in local contexts and taking action to mitigate and prevent potential harm, intentional and unintentional, that women, girls and people with diverse sexual or gender identities may experience arising from our programs of work or programmatic work. This includes potential harm due to backlash and gender-based violence to women, girls and people of diverse gender identities among staff and Australian volunteers, partner staff and population groups and communities they work with.
- 3.8 AVI recognises the importance of considering intersectional issues and local context when identifying, understanding and addressing the different ways in which women and girls and people of diverse sexual or gender identities experience poverty and discrimination. In particular, the multiple layers of discrimination and disadvantage that women, girls and people with diverse gender identities may experience on the basis of disability, age, religion, ethnicity, class, gender identity and sexual orientation.
- 3.9 AVI recognises that privilege, hierarchies and unequal power relations and dynamics contribute to discrimination against women and inhibit women and girls from reaching their potential.

4. POLICY

AVI has an intrinsic commitment to human rights, recognising that human rights are for everyone, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, age, displacement, caste, gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, poverty, class or socio-economic status.

AVI commits to the inclusion and representation of those who are vulnerable and those who are affected by the intersecting drivers of marginalisation and exclusion. AVI supports and encourages the equal participation of people who identify across all genders in the process of development and is committed to ensuring they benefit equally from AVI programs. To achieve

this, AVI implements programs and organisational activities that intentionally address gender inequality and advance gender equality.

AVI has articulated 5 key policy commitments that underpin our Gender Equality Policy and drive our Gender Action Plan:

1. We are committed to creating an enabling environment for gender equality to thrive within our internal organisational culture
2. We will ensure that our policies, procedures and processes promote gender equality and do not lead to discrimination based on gender
3. We are committed to promoting and supporting effective practices to pursue gender equality with our partners, staff, program participants and other stakeholders
4. We will mobilise and dedicate the human, technical and financial resources to meet our commitments to gender equality
5. We will use consistent monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning to pursue continuous improvement towards achieving our gender equality goals

AVI has zero tolerance for discrimination against or violence towards women or girls and people of diverse gender identities. For staff, any substantiated breach of this Policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Gender Equality Policy will be embedded across the organisation, from AVI Board level through to each operational team. Each team will be responsible for including and integrating activities and procedures that advance gender equality and address gender inequality, and gender equality awareness and inclusion will be reflected in operational planning and templates.

- **Sponsor:** AVI's CEO is the sponsor of this policy, demonstrating political will at the highest level within AVI.
- **Champions:** Key members of the Executive team will be called upon to step forward to champion the Policy and Action Plan development processes.
- **Drivers:** AVI's Quality & Compliance Coordinator and People & Culture Manager will drive the change management process across the organisation and our programs.
- **All employees and related personnel** (responsibility to uphold the principles and commitments of this policy in their behaviour and working practices)
- **Managers** – ensure that all AVI and related program personnel understand and comply with this policy, staff have the necessary skills and attitudes to effectively implement this Policy; responsible for sharing this Policy and expectations for implementation with partners; ensure that the requirements of this Policy are incorporated in team, country-level and program level planning, budgeting and resource allocation, and appropriate training, supervision and

support is provided to staff to develop the skills and motivation to act in accordance with the policy)

- **Program participants** - responsible to uphold the principles and commitments of this Policy in their behaviour and working practices
- **CEO** - holds the AVI leadership team accountable to this Policy and ensure that review of the Policy is scheduled in Board agenda and at least two-yearly review of implementation of the Policy takes place in line with current ACFID Code of Conduct good practice standards
- **AVI Board** - ensure that AVI's work enhances gender equality in both its internal operations and in its program work; reviews progress on gender equality at least every two years.

6. RELATED POLICIES

- [AVI Bullying, Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy](#)
- [AVI Child Protection Policy](#)
- [AVI Code of Conduct](#)
- [AVI Disability Inclusion Policy](#)
- [AVI](#)
- [PSEAH Policy](#)
- [AVI Whistleblowing Policy](#)
- Australian Volunteers Program Gender Action Plan
- Australian Volunteers Program Gender Equality Statement of Intent

7. REFERENCES

- Workplace Gender Equality Authority
- ACFID Code of Conduct
- Other legislative requirements in Australia (Eg Commonwealth Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act (1999), Federal Sex Discrimination Act (1984), Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (which sets out reporting requirements for employers with 500 or more staff
- Gender Equality and Human Rights, UN Women (2015)_
<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/goldblatt-fin.pdf>

8. EVALUATION AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

AVI will measure against these commitments and their supporting actions on an annual basis. Reviews will be made against ACFID compliance verifiers. Review of progress in particular programs and projects will be more frequent to inform annual reporting and annual planning and budgeting.

9. REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision Number	Change(s)	Reference Section(s)
Dec 2019	2	Changes to definitions and general update to principles and purpose	
Jun 2022	3	Review of policy	

ANNEX

DEFINITIONS

Understanding and using language and terminology associated with LGBTIQ+ communities helps to ensure that our organisation and the programs and services we provide are inclusive and respectful. AVI recognises that concepts and definitions related to gender identity and sexuality are diverse and continuing to evolve. Therefore, the definitions provided below may be subject to change.

Discrimination: Discrimination means directly or indirectly treating someone differently due to their gender in a way which prevents them from exercising their rights. AVI discourages discrimination and actively promotes equal opportunities for all as stated in our Equal Opportunity & Diversity Policy 2016,

Gender vs sex: Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, attributes and expectations of men, women, girls, boys and people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities in a society; this is learned, changes over time, and varies according to cultural, religious, historical and economic factors across and within cultures. In contrast, sex refers to the biological and physiological differences between women and men and people of all genders.

Gender diverse: is used to recognise people who do not fall within the traditional binary notions of sex and gender (male and female). This may include people who identify as a gender different to their birth.

Gender equality: women and men and people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities enjoy equal status in society, along with girls and boys. It means that they have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy equal respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices and decisions about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices. Achieving gender equality requires the promotion of equal rights, since equality between all people regardless of gender is an integral part of human rights. It also requires an understanding of gender relations.

Gender equity: the process of being fair to people of all genders, according to their respective needs and conditions. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must often be available to

compensate groups and individuals who have faced historical and social disadvantages because of their gender. Equity leads to equality.

Gender equality outcomes: These contribute to changing unequal gender relations and reducing inequality between women and men, boys and girls and people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. They contribute to the elimination of discrimination for people of all gender identities and sexual orientation; equal access to resources, opportunities and services; and the advancement and protection of human rights that impact on gender relations. Assessing gender equality results requires an analysis of differences in male and female participation, decision making, access to resources, benefits, and the advancement of human rights.⁶

Gender identity: This refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female, or some combination of male or female, or neither male nor female. A person's gender identity may be different from their biological and physiological sex and may change over their lifetime.⁷

Disadvantage: Disadvantage is when the treatment of or opportunities offered to an individual or a group of individuals are less favourable than what is offered to another individual or group in a comparable situation.

Intersex: an umbrella term that refers to individuals who have anatomical, chromosomal and hormonal characteristics that differ from medical and conventional understandings of male and female bodies. Intersex people may be "neither wholly female nor wholly male; a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male" (*Sex Discrimination Amendment Act (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) 2013 (Cth)*).

Non binary: refers to people who may not be exclusively 'male' or 'female'. They may use pronouns to signal their non-binary gender such as 'they'

Transgender: an umbrella terms to refer to people whose assigned sex at birth does not match their internal gender identity, regardless of whether their gender is outside the gender binary or within it. Transgender/trans or gender diverse people may identify as non-binary, that is: they may not identify exclusively as either gender; they may identify as both genders, they may identify as neither gender; they may move around freely in between the gender binary; or may reject the idea of gender altogether. Transgender/trans or gender diverse people may choose to live their lives with or without modifying their body, dress or legal status, and with or without medical treatment and surgery (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2019)