





Gender Policy
Georgian Farmers' Association

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INTRODUCTION

The commitment of the Georgian Farmers' Association to gender¹ equality is grounded in the company mission to strengthen the agricultural sector in Georgia and improve quality of life of Georgian farmers through bringing farmers together and promoting their visibility. GFA recognizes that gender inequality can be a significant constraint to economic growth, therefore, in order to maximize the impact on agricultural sector, the association is committed to integrating gender equality considerations into the implemented activities and projects.

The policy recognizes that gender relations, roles and responsibilities exercise important influences on women's and men's access to and control over decisions, assets and resources, information, services and knowledge, therefore the impacts of gender inequality can exacerbate existing economic inequalities. It further acknowledges that initiatives are more sustainable, equitable and more likely to achieve their objectives when gender equality and women's empowerment considerations are integrated into the design and implementation.

In order to effectively promote gender equality, the policy ensures that there is no disproportionate advantage for either men or women. It mandates the Association to provide overall integration of gender² into its processes and operations, managing knowledge on gender equality across activities, programs and projects that can lead to boosting organization's efficiency and eligibility for various partnerships.

GFA's Gender Policy is consistent with the Women's Empowerment Principles of the UN Women and UN Global Compact and are aligned with the international commitments on gender equality of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5.

1. OBJECTIVES

This Gender Policy reinforces the responsiveness of GFA to the diverse context of gender equality to better address and account for the women's economic empowerment. The Gender Policy provides for: (a) enhancing gender equality within the association's day-to-day operations; and (b) promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through its operations and services.

Gender Policy spells out the women's economic empowerment principles for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, through: (a) mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment aspects through a comprehensive gender approach, applied both within the institution and throughout its projects; (b) promoting women's better access to services and investments and business support for women-led farms and businesses (c) contributing to reducing the gender gap and enhancing economic growth and poverty reduction through increased access to employment opportunities and skills for women.

¹ Gender is defined as the social roles, behaviors, and responsibilities assigned to women and men in any society. Unlike biology, gender is mutable, and women's and men's roles, behaviors, and responsibilities change over time and are different in different societies.

Scope of Application

Gender Policy recognizes the equal rights of women and men to access GFA's services, thus it will be applied throughout GFA's operations and activities across four interconnected levels:

- (a) **Institutional level:** addressing gender issues in its day-to-day governance, operations and procedures, and to commit necessary resources, financial and human, to make this approach robust and effective;
- (b) **Project/portfolio level:** contributing to reducing gender inequality, deepening stakeholder engagement and delivering better accountability to both men and women; generating sustainable and resilient livelihood opportunities;
- (c) **National level:** supporting and sustaining an enabling environment among GFA, partners and stakeholders that builds on existing commitments, standards, and redress mechanisms to achieve gender equality;
- (d) **Sector level:** contributing to high-quality, comprehensive, systematic and participatory sex-disaggregated data collection, qualitative and quantifiable gender analysis and action plans.

Guiding principles

GFA's gender policy is congruent with the national legislation on gender equality and women's rights: Law of Georgia on Gender Equality, Georgian Labor Code and other international arrangements including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the International Labor Organization's core conventions to which Georgia is a signatory.

GFA is committed to contribute to gender equality and women's economic empowerment in multiple ways. Beyond the basic responsibilities of respecting human rights, the association can advance women's empowerment within their workplaces, marketplaces and communities. It will adhere to Women's Empowerment Principles created jointly by of the UN Women and UN Global Compact to adapt policies, programs and initiatives to create inclusive environment where women and girls can succeed.

Commitment to establishing high-level corporate leadership for gender equality

GFA's leadership has an important role in achieving gender equality and human rights. Top executives of the association agree on the importance of gender equality and affirm high-level support as well as direct top-level policies and corporate culture to advance gender equality.

How to implement:

- Affirm high-level support and direct top-level policies for gender equality and human rights
- Establish company-wide goals and targets for gender equality and include progress as a factor in managers' performance reviews
- Engage internal and external stakeholders in the development of company policies, programmes and implementation plans that advance equality
- Ensure that all policies are gender-sensitive – identifying factors that impact women and men differently - and that corporate culture advances equality and inclusion.

Commitment to treating all women and men fairly at work – respecting and supporting human rights and non-discrimination

In order to promote non-discriminatory environment in which men and women enjoy equal professional development opportunities, GFA enacts non-discriminatory policies, such as equal pay for equal work (including benefits) and considers women's specific needs by providing services, resources and information to both women and men.

How to implement:

- Ensure that workplace policies and practices are free from gender-based discrimination
- Implement gender-sensitive recruitment and retention practices, and proactively recruit and appoint women to managerial and executive positions and boards
- Assure sufficient participation of women in decision-making and governance at all levels and across all business areas
- Offer flexible work options, leave and re-entry opportunities to position the equal pay and status
- Support access to child and dependent care by providing services, resources and information to both women and men

Commitment to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers

GFA commits to providing safe working conditions and protection from exposure to potential risks, including the risk to reproductive health, physical or verbal abuse and sexual harassment.

How to implement:

- Offer health insurance or other needed services – including for survivors of domestic violence
- Address safety and security issues, including safety of women traveling for work-related purposes
- Train managers and security staff on gender equality, human trafficking, labor and sexual exploitation
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of violence at work, including verbal and/or physical abuse, and prevent sexual harassment by establishing a proper reporting mechanism.

Commitment to promoting education, training and professional development for women

GFA invests in the workplace policies and programs that open avenues for advancement of women. It provides equal education, training and professional development opportunities, and guarantees women's access and participation in training and professional development.

How to implement:

- Invest in workplace policies and programs for the advancement of women at all levels and all business areas, encourage women to enter non-traditional job-fields
- Ensure equal access to all company-supported education and training programs
- Provides equal opportunities for formal and informal networking and mentoring.

Commitment to implementing enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practice that empower women

GFA is well-placed to promote gender equality through providing direct support to women farmers and entrepreneurs, better access to services and resources, and encouraging suppliers to promote gender equality practices.

GFA can support women through external communications and partner/stakeholder relations, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women and respect their dignity (using unbiased language, equal representation of men and women/images, non-stereotypical visuals in the marketing and other company materials).

How to implement:

- Implement supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
- Expand business relationships with women farmers/entrepreneurs and women-owned enterprises, including small businesses
- Provide gender sensitive services
- Respect the dignity of women in all marketing and other company material

Commitment to promoting equality through community initiatives and advocacy

GFA will lead by example and contribute to women's empowerment within the wider community through implementation of CSR or grant projects inter alia, community initiatives and campaigns with stakeholders, business partners, broader public, suppliers and vendors.

How to implement:

- Leverage influence, alone or in partnership, to advocate for gender equality and collaborate with business partners, suppliers and community leaders to promote inclusion
- Work with community stakeholders, officials and others to eliminate discrimination and exploitation and open opportunities for women and girls
- Use philanthropy and grant programs to support company commitment to inclusion, equality and human rights

Commitment to measuring and publicly reporting on progress to achieve

By measuring and reporting the gender equality goals to stakeholders and broader public GFA will be able to popularize effective initiatives on empowering women

How to implement:

- Make implemented activities public for further promoting gender equality
- Establish benchmarks for inclusion of women at all levels
- Measure and report on progress, both internally and externally, using sex-disaggregated data
- Incorporate gender markers into ongoing reporting obligations

2. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AT A PROJECT/PROGRAM LEVEL

Gender Policy is supporting the implementation of the project-level gender mainstreaming as well as reporting on results, including generation and use of sex-disaggregated data.

At the project preparation stage:

- a) Ensuring that projects and programs developed by GFA meet the principles and requirements of the Gender Policy
- b) Ability to carry out gender assessments, analysis of context and socio-cultural factors exacerbating gender inequality and develop a project-level gender action plan to ensure benefits for women and men of all ages

At the project implementation, monitoring and reporting stage:

- c) Taking necessary measures to implement the project-level gender integration action plan
- d) Implementing gender-related baseline surveys, indicators and targets
- e) Monitoring and reporting on the progress made in implementing the project-level gender integration action plan
- f) Assessing and addressing gender impacts (using tools and checklists) and improving gender performance over time at a project/program level

3. MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

Purpose

Gender Policy aims at assessing the outcomes and impacts of GFA's interventions on women and men and ensuring equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, equal access to resources and services, as well as collecting sex-disaggregated data to track gender impacts and benefits for women and men.

Gender Sensitive Indicators

Gender-responsive indicators and targets (sex-disaggregated) can be a strong foundation for conducting gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation. The collection of gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data is essential for M&E and for reporting on gender outcomes.

Reporting on Gender Outcomes

Based on gender-responsive approaches and gender-sensitive data collection reporting on gender outcomes should be a component of all project reporting processes:

- including documenting and disseminating gender-relevant best practices and lessons learned
- ensuring that progress reports, implementation status reports, and other reports present gender equality results and lessons learned

Sexual Harassment Reporting Mechanism

A sexual harassment reporting mechanism is established as a formal complaint process that can be used by individuals who are negatively affected by certain activities. Any individual or a group harmed by assault of a sexual character can file a complaint with the mechanism. GFA human resource cadre or a committee of independent experts or a Chairperson can take part in complaint treatment steps, as

detailed in the rules of procedure. The mechanism strengthens the transparency and accountability of employees. GFA is planning to train all staff in sexual harassment prevention and gender equality issues by using online training resources of the Public Defender's Office in Georgia.

GFA will choose upon the manner in which complaint's mechanism is reported (anonymous email, letter box or other) and dealt, namely through dialogue-based, problem-solving methods like mediation or a fact-finding investigation leading to recommendations.

Extract from Non-Discrimination and Harassment Regulation of GFA

Complaint and its Handling Procedure

- a) A person who considers himself a victim of sexual harassment, discrimination or harassment, if possible, should notify the alleged harasser that his or her behavior is undesirable and unacceptable;
- b) If the victim is unable to directly address the alleged harasser, he or she may notify the Chairperson of the Association or any member of the Board of the fact of sexual harassment, discrimination or harassment. The victim shall file a complaint about alleged sexual harassment or discrimination in writing (see Annex N3 of the regulation);
- c) The alleged victim shall indicate in the complaint the first name and last name of the alleged harasser, the position he/she holds, information about their employment / professional relationship, the facts of sexual harassment, discrimination or harassment. If available, the alleged victim shall attach evidence (written, photo, video, audio and other material, identifying third parties who may possess information about the fact);
- d) It is prohibited to victimize the complainant who files a complaint on the fact of alleged harassment;
- e) After a victim of an alleged harassment or discrimination has filed an oral or written complaint, the Chairperson of the Association shall issue an appropriate order (see Annex N5 of the regulation), on the basis of which three members of the Commission shall be selected to investigate the incident. Based on the submission of the final report / conclusion of the Commission to the Chairperson, the latter shall consider the disciplinary liability against the alleged harasser and make a final decision. If the addressee of the complaint is the Chairperson of the Association, the report / conclusion of the Commission shall be submitted to the Supervisory Board, which shall make a decision on disciplinary liability.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

GFA develops an organization-wide gender equality policy and action plan that identifies specific priority areas to achieve company-wide goals and targets for gender equality and women's empowerment and measure progress through clear performance indicators. The gender equality policy document articulates the link between gender equality and other areas of corporate sustainability and business performance.

GFA designates a gender focal point (GFP) on the level of middle management who is directly responsible for proactively planning and achieving gender equality goals and targets, widely

communicating gender equality strategy and goals to the management, staff and wide audience. GFP assists GFA's executive management in advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment and promoting the company's commitment publically.

GFA commits to apply the gender policy at the entity level and program/project level. GFP has the technical expertise in ensuring integration of gender considerations throughout project cycles and implementing the gender equality action plan. Gender Focal Point is reporting to GFA's top management on the issues of gender mainstreaming at entity level and project/program level.

CONCLUSION

Operationalizing Gender Policy

The policy requires application of gender-responsive procedures and requirements at the entity level and project/program levels, such as procedures to:

- Developing and implementing gender action plan
- Integrate gender aspects into the budgets of project/programs to implement gender activities
- Conduct gender-responsive stakeholder consultations and knowledge management
- Integrate gender-relevant activities and gender-responsive indicators at activity, output, outcome and impact-level

Key priority areas for operationalizing the Gender Policy of and Gender Action Plan of GFA include:

- (a) Governance;
- (b) Competencies and capacity development;
- (c) Resource allocation, accessibility and budgeting;
- (d) Operational procedures; and
- (e) Knowledge generation and communications.

Effectiveness and revision

This Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan will come into effect upon adoption by the Board. The policy will apply to ongoing activities to the extent reasonably possible and those that will be approved after the effective date of this policy.

This Gender Policy will remain in effect until amended or superseded by the Board.

GFA understands that promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women at the institutional and project levels is a long-term undertaking and a sustained commitment, which includes tracking and reporting on progress annually.

It also acknowledges that approaches to gender equality and women's empowerment evolve over time. The Gender Policy will be reviewed and updated by a decision of the Board, as appropriate.

