

ACCION FRATERNA ECOLOGY CENTER

Gender Policy

(updated version July 2014)



Accion Fraterna Ecology Centre

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** AF Ecology Centre acknowledges with thanks the contribution of Ms. Kalamani, Hyderabad in updating the Gender Policy.*

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1. About Accion Fraterna Ecology Centre

AF Ecology Centre was founded by Father Vincent Ferrer in 1982. Since then we have been involved in several Rural Development programmes such as watershed development, agriculture, drought management, non-farm livelihoods, gender and policy advocacy. We have made a substantial contribution since 1986 in Anantapur district with our Participatory Watershed Development Programme supported by EED (Germany) & ICCO (Netherlands). It was perhaps the largest participatory watershed programme by an NGO in India spread over about 300 villages, covering about 1.35 lakh ha of farm land and 60,000 farmers. We're known for our participatory approach and very high quality standards in watershed development on a sizable scale. The major interventions under the watershed programme included Soil and Moisture Conservation, Rain Water Harvesting, Horticulture, Rain fed Agronomical Practices, Farm Forestry, Bio-gas and Peoples Institutional Development.

Since 2007, as the Government also initiated watershed activities in the District under MGNREGS, we have decided not to duplicate what Government is extensively implementing and we shifted our programme towards promoting Sustainable Agriculture. However, we continue to implement participatory watershed development projects with the support from NABARD and IWMP (Integrated Watershed Management Programme) & MGNREGS under Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. We have also been contributing substantially to the effective implementation of MGNREGS by way of awareness building and empowering the labour to assert and access their right to employment and utilize the same effectively to improve productivity of their lands by undertaking soil and moisture conservation, farm ponds, rain fed horticulture, plantation etc.

We have made a significant contribution in influencing a favourable and enabling policy for a people-centred watershed development, rural livelihoods, gender, poverty alleviation, and rural employment (MGNREGS) in the State of Andhra Pradesh. We have been actively involved in various policy making bodies like Andhra Pradesh Water Conservation Mission, Andhra Pradesh State Commission on Farmers' Welfare, APRLP, APREGS and Advisory Committee on Watershed Development Programme of Andhra Pradesh. Further AF has been actively involved in various consultations by the Ministry of Rural Development at National level.

Our Vision :

All people in rural areas lead a respectable and decent life with economic security, social equity, gender equity and human dignity, in an atmosphere of democracy, peace, cooperation and community support.

And all people and institutions live as Eternal Trustees of Mother Earth and follow a culture of 'simple living' and ethics of conservation. Thus People and Nature live in harmony showing due care for sustainable ecology, environment and bio-diversity.

Our Mission :

1. Organize and strengthen the organizations of distressed farmers and rural poor for attainment of their economic security, empowerment, self-reliance, food and nutritional security.
2. Work with drought affected farmers in general and small and marginal famers of rainfed areas in particular and promote drought resistant, integrated and sustainable farming systems, which require low external inputs and are eco-friendly (as against high cost, high-tech and chemical based).
3. Combat desertification and promote sustainable ecology, healthy environment and bio-diversity, where people and nature live in harmony and support each other.
4. Work with poor and disadvantaged women and youth and promote Diversified Livelihoods including agri-processing, marketing and skill based employment.
5. Work for gender & social equality, human dignity, and create a responsible social environment with peace, democracy and mutual cooperation.
6. Collaborate with Government, like minded NGOs, CBOs, Civil Society Organizations, Intellectuals and Individuals to contribute towards poverty reduction and inclusive growth in the society.
7. Build itself into a strong, dynamic, dedicated and sustainable organization, learn from experiences and consistently improve its work for people's well being. It will strive to be positively influence the society and relevant to the changing needs and contexts.

Our organization is an integral part of Anantapur District. We are not alone in this endeavour. There are several organizations, institutions and individuals working towards achieving the above aims and objectives – like Government, NGOs, CSOs, Media, Judiciary, Scientists, Intellectuals and Individuals where each one play their role individually and often collectively. AF is committed to play a pro-active role in this endeavour individually as well in collaboration and partnership with other players and change agents.

Our Dharma:

AF adopts the following Dharma as its guiding principles and a code of conduct for itself and its staff.

- Concern for others, particularly poor and disadvantaged
- Work beyond duty
- Pursuit of excellence in work
- Reaching as many needy people as possible

Our Core Values

1. **Basic human values of compassion, love, concern, honesty, hard work, sincerity etc.**

We are committed to practice and promote the basic human values of love, compassion, concern, honesty, hard work, sincerity etc driven by the Vision, Mission and Values of AF Ecology Centre.

2. **Social Equality and Gender Sensitive**

We believe in social equality of all people and are particularly committed to the treatment of women, the disadvantaged and the poor with equality, respect and human dignity. We are committed to being socially equitable and gender-sensitive both within AF and in all our programs and interactions with people.

3. Concern for Sustainable environment

We ensure that all our policies and programmes have due consideration for sustainable environment, biodiversity and ecological balance.

4. Work together through Collaborations and Partnerships

We are committed to working with Government, like-minded NGOs, CBOs & CSOs in order to produce the best synergies through combined and coordinated efforts.

5. Influencing Government policies and programmes

We are committed to influence Government policies and programmes for maximizing impact in favour of the poor, disadvantaged and sustainable environment.

6. Pursuit of high quality in work

We are committed to the pursuit of excellence and high quality in our work.

7. Relevant and learning

We are committed to being a relevant and learning organisation through participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation; and open to change, new ideas and concepts, which will improve the lives of poor farmers and disadvantaged.

8. Participation and Team work

We are committed to the ethos of Participation and Teamwork which will be central in our work within AF and with people.

9. Transparent and Accountable

We are committed to be transparent and accountable to all our stakeholders.

2. Situation Analysis – Anantapur District

Anantapur, located in southern Andhra Pradesh (AP), is one of the poorest districts of the country. The district has a population of 4.2 million (2011 census) or about 800,000 families. About 20% of the population comprises of Dalits and Tribals, and 60% consists of other backward communities. 2.9 million or 70% of people are living in the rural areas. About 90% of the farmers are small and marginal farmers and have an average land holding of less than 5 acres and dependent on rain-fed agriculture and farm labour for their livelihoods. The district is the second lowest rainfall district in India and one of the most backward among the 250 backward districts. It falls under a rain shadow zone and receives an average annual rainfall of 552 mm. Anantapur, being chronically drought-prone, rain fed agriculture is an ever losing gamble with about only 2 normal crops in 10 years resulting in perpetual rural poverty and a vicious cycle of indebtedness. The farming community is in severe distress, which is manifested in high rural indebtedness, distress migration, farmers abandoning agriculture and opting to be labour under MGNREGS etc. The distress also is indicated by as many as 1000 farmers resorting to suicides in the past 15 years from 1998. Malnutrition, illiteracy, illness, deprivation and caste and gender based discrimination is prevalent in the area. Further, the rapid degradation of forest and land has negatively impacted the women in terms of inadequate access to water, fuel wood, fodder and food.

As per the Human Development Report of India 2007, with regards to the Human Development Index (HDI) Andhra Pradesh (undivided) ranks 10th in the country. Whereas within the state, amongst the 23 districts, Anantapur ranks at number 20 on both HDI and Human Poverty Index (HPI) and lags behind in terms of indicators that reflect human development (per capita district domestic product, adult literacy rate, life expectancy, IMR, access to basic amenities, etc).

The Gender Development Index (GDI) is the third important index, that takes into account the inequalities in achievement between women and men using the same dimensions and variables as the HDI does. On this parameter, the district ranks at number 19. Anantapur

ranks 17th among 23 districts in terms of the Gender Empowerment Measurement Index (GEMI). This indicates that women in Anantapur district are at a greater disadvantage with regards to the three indicators i.e. percentage of women representatives elected in local body elections, rate of violence against women and child sex ratio. (*Source: Andhra Pradesh Human Development Report 2007*).

The sex ratio of Andhra Pradesh has improved in the past decades from 978 in 2001 to 992 in 2011 is far better than that of the country (940 in 2011). However, the sex ratio of Anantapur district at 977 (2011 census) is far lower than that of the state at 992. The male literacy rate is 74.09%, general population literacy rate is 64.28% whereas female literacy is only at 54.31%. The AP State literacy levels are 67.66 for population, 75.56 for men and 59.74 for women.

The degraded forest and land, recurring droughts, and crop failures create distress and a sense of hopelessness among the farmers. The women are the most affected due to farmer suicides leading to feminization of poverty and increase in violence. For all of landless, small and even medium farmer families, especially women, the main source of income in drought years and otherwise is wage labour in agriculture or under MGNREGS. Though the wages paid to the agriculture labour have increased over time (from Rs. 30 per day in 2005 to about Rs. 100 per day in 2014), women's labour and contribution to agricultural sector is not recognized and economically valued. Their work is still considered inferior and paid about 20 less than men for similar work. The losses in traditional livelihoods in the district such as silk weaving, basket making etc, have also led to specific negative gendered implications for both women and men.

Anantapur district has more than 100,000 educated unemployed rural youth in the age group of 18-25 years. Poverty at home and the fact that schools are far away and education is expensive, every year about 25 to 30% rural youth, especially girls, are dropping out of school at the primary level itself. Their education is grossly insufficient to find them any employment in government or private sector. They have neither the entrepreneurship nor the skills nor capital to take up any alternate self-employment.

All the above mentioned economic and gender disadvantages need to be located within an overall context which is patriarchal and unequal. While it is true that often decisions at a household level are taken jointly between the man and the woman, it is also a fact that the man's opinion prevails. Property ownership traditions are in favour of men, and customs of dowry, marriage expenses etc ensure that girls are considered a burden. The Gender Empowerment Measurement Index already indicates high violence against women. And anecdotally also, there appears to be an increasing trend over the last few years of girls being forced into trafficking. Taken together, the situation is grim for the women and girls in the district; and concerted efforts are needed to enable them to attain well-being and equality.

3. Concept of Gender and Gender Mainstreaming

Accion Fraterna (AF) recognizes that while both men and women face deprivation and exploitation of their basic human rights and are vulnerable, in most instances, women face greater vulnerability. Even though women are not a homogenous group and their situation varies with age, caste, class, religion, ethnicity and place of domicile, overall the subordination of women in our society makes them poorer and more vulnerable than men. Women face social and cultural discrimination, have less access to resources, more deprived of opportunities, and are less likely to be involved and represented in decision-making bodies.

AF believes that any development effort which is not gender sensitive will lead to further marginalization and inequity. In recognition of this, AF strives to address gender issues in all aspects of its functioning. The Gender Policy document of AF is a public statement of its commitment to promote gender equity, and establishes the basis for AF to ensure that gender differences are taken into account and dealt with in relation to the organisation and all its programmes.

Gender is a social construct. Gender is largely in the realm of behaviours, attitudes, values and stereotypes that translate into objective realities such as do's, don'ts, roles, responsibilities, skills, choices and power relations. Gender is a culturally acquired specific set of value characteristics that influence and determine the social behaviour of women and men and the relationship between them. The heterogeneity in the social structure in our communities gives rise to multiple facets of gender. Understanding gender issues has to be accompanied by a thorough understanding of the context of its occurrence. Therefore, gender cannot be generalized.

Gender equity is a basic human right. Mainstreaming gender in organizations is not only an equity issue, but restoration of basic human right. It involves not only bringing women and men on board but goes beyond numbers to more substantive or qualitative issues of changes in gender relations. Hence, gender mainstreaming needs to be process-oriented with an action-reflection-learning cycle.

Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions and opportunities to realize and fulfill their full human potential, participate in and contribute to the political, social, economic and cultural development processes. However, gender analysis reveals that providing equal opportunities for women and men does not necessarily yield equal results; and that different treatment of women and men may sometimes be required to achieve sameness of results.

4. Mechanisms and Structures for Mainstreaming Gender

Accion Fraterna's vision and mission places high emphasis on social equity between all people, with gender equality and equity being one of the important values that it strives to mainstream in institutional structures, processes, and programmes. AF also recognizes that in all spheres and parameters of development, women are far behind men and that along with mainstreaming gender in all its policies, practices and programmes it is equally important to facilitate women specific projects/interventions that will address women's concerns and ensure their empowered participation. **AF thus follows a twin-track strategy, comprising of the following components:**

- **Specific activities aimed at women's empowerment**
- **Mainstreaming of women's and men's concerns, needs and interests throughout the development process (in all its policies, practices and programmes).**

Towards this end, AF's Gender Policy lays down guidelines for action at both the organizational and programmatic levels.

5. Goal and Objectives of AF's Gender Policy

Goal: Promote the development of a democratic and peaceful society, in which women and men enjoy human dignity, equal conditions, opportunities and rights, and become active partners in the process of development.

Objectives

- Promote gender equality and conducive work environment in Accion Fraterna through its policies, practices and programmes
- Establish a gender sensitive culture through promoting values such as human dignity, equality, participation, team work, transparency, concern, mutual support, accountability and fairness within the organisation and the communities supported by AF.
- Enhance women's, men's, girls' and boys' equal participation in planning, implementation and assertion of entitlements in all programmes supported by AF.
- Empower women and girls to realize their full potential as human beings and agents in development.
- Create a gender voice in society and a voice against all forms of discrimination, domination and violence, and build public opinion in favour of an enabling and gender sensitive policy environment.

AF has about 110 competent and committed staff (principal resource). A look at the gender balance shows that AF has 32% women on its rolls. At the field level there are about 34% women, which is indeed very good, though the ratio is still weak at senior management.

AF's Social Equity Policy for Social Justice

AF has a clear policy on Social Equity providing the disadvantaged sections a reservation in accessing the programme benefits. A higher share in programme benefits is reserved for SC, ST, BC, single women and women-headed, so that most deserving are given highest priority and social justice in programmes is ensured.

Before 2002, AF was largely male. After 2002, once AF became an autonomous organization, it started working on correcting this imbalance.

AF's location has also been a constraint since Anantapur is remote and one of the most backward districts that few women from outside want to come and work here.

6. Organisational Level (Internal Mainstreaming)

6.1. Vision and Mission

The vision and mission of AF was revisited in the year 2013 and ensured that the gender equality is explicitly mentioned.

6.2. Gender Balance

AF is committed to improving the gender balance at all levels in the organization.

6.2.1. Governance: The Governance structure of AF has the Board of Trustees (BoT) and the Executive Committee (Core Team) headed by the Director. While the BoT is the highest policy making body and legal entity, the Executive Committee is appointed by the BoT and responsible for execution of the programmes in pursuance of the objectives of BoT. Efforts will be made to invite more women to the AF Board of Trustees, as Trustees or special invitees, in order to create a higher gender balance. Efforts will also be made to arrive at greater gender parity within the Executive Committee and any other committee that will be established to strengthen the governance of the organisation.

Presently, there is one women member out of 5 in the Board of Trustees. The Executive Committee has three women members out of 15 members.

6.2.2. Human Resources

AF will analyse the causes for gender imbalances in staff at various levels (PME, implementation, admin, finance, and support services) and take necessary measures as

mentioned below in recruiting, retention, capacity building and promotion of staff members especially women in various positions:

- **A democratic / participatory approach in management:** AF follows as democratic and participatory approach in managing the organisation. Ethos and culture of participation and transparency in decision making at all levels is followed. The culture of team work collective decisions and accountability are practiced in the field teams. Inputs from staff in general and women in particular are sought in the organisational decision making.
- **Equal Opportunities** – AF is an equal opportunity employer and it encourages women candidates to apply for all its posts and does not discriminate on the grounds of marital status, pregnancy, caste, class, religion or disability.
- **Preference for women:** During recruitment process if two more candidates are found scoring equal points (for the same post), and then the woman candidate will be automatically preferred.
- **Reservation of positions** – AF has reserved 30% positions at Area Team Leader (ATL) and Agriculture Extension Officers (AEOs) level for women. At present their ration is at 3:8 i.e., 37.5%. Such reserved positions will not be filled up by men. In order to maintain the 30% women ratio, over induction of women at Socio Technical Organiser (STO) level may also be done.
- **Policy of internal promotion:** AF follows a policy of internal promotions for filling up vacancies at middle levels. The only exception to this policy is when there is suitable woman candidate from outside, and then the promotion is opened up only for external women candidates. AF will also proactively promote women within the organisation as Area Team Leaders (ATOs) and take steps to build their capacities for the leadership roles.
- **Prevent staff turnover:** AF will take adequate measure to analyse the reasons for the staff turnover and address appropriately to retain the staff especially the women.
- **Career development:** AF will take affirmative action and develop strategies for staff capacity building and skill up-gradation from time to time. It will also provide opportunities to women staff for taking up higher studies or specific courses.

6.2.3. Human Resource Policies

Human Resource (HR) Policy: Based on AF's understanding of the triple-burden borne by women who work outside their homes, and of the responsibility to create safe and enabling work space for women, AF developed staff HR policy which will support women on these dimensions. Some examples of such enabling policy include:

- Preferential consideration for women in selection and promotion by positive discrimination.
- Preferential consideration for single women, for housing on campus
- Provision of flexible hours of work for women staff, especially for expecting and young mothers
- Provide enabling environment for staff to perform their role and responsibilities (job sharing, work from home, childcare provision, safe and secure transport and accommodation while travelling to field and outside particularly to women staff).
- Rest room for women and work space in the office for women staff who come from the field for various meetings and events

- Child accompaniment (during field visits/meetings)
- Arranging transport for women staff for work related travel at night
- Hiring of couples as staff and making efforts to place them at the same location or allow the couples to live in one place, provided they have worked for a period of at least 3 years in the organisation.
- Maternity and paternity leave
- Separate toilets for women in the office premises at convenient location
- AF is committed to pay equal salary and remuneration for equal work/position irrespective of sex, caste and religion
- AF will ensure that the women staff have equal access to technology, vehicles (both two and four wheelers) and tools & implements which would enhance their confidence and work performance.

This is only indicative, and the HR policy will be developed, reviewed and updated to keep pace with changing societal and organisational realities.

Committee to address Sexual harassment at workplace (CASH): AF is committed to formulating a sexual harassment redressal policy in a participatory manner and adopting in its true letter and spirit. The operational guidelines will be developed to make the CASH functional and ensuring the work place safe for women.

Professional Requirement: AF will ensure that gender sensitivity is the professional requirement for both men and women staff and each of the staff to take responsibility towards achieving gender equality in the organisation. This will be assessed in the staff performance, staff meetings and programme assessments.

Staff Performance: AF will develop gender sensitivity indicators in its overall performance review of staff. Differential performance assessment would be followed in some areas of work to equalise the disadvantages faced for being women.

Gender Sensitization: AF will continue to invest in building staff understanding and capacities on gender issues. Towards this end, AF will organize gender trainings for all its staff members (women & men) at regular intervals, to build gender perspective and in order to weave in gender concerns into planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes. AF will also ensure that women and men staff will not be engaged in stereotyped role and responsibilities but in diverse functions. Further, it will be ensured that the culture of the organisation is pro-active for encouraging women's participation, respecting and recognising their contribution in private and public domains of the society.

IEC Materials: AF is committed to ensure that all the IEC (Information, Education and Communication) materials and reports prepared and published are gender sensitive in terms of content, usage of language, pictures, photos, examples etc.

Regular Agenda: AF will ensure that gender concerns become a regular agenda in the meetings, reviews and events for discussions and taking corrective measures.

Linkages and Alliances: AF already has an active association and membership with RDT Women Core Team, which engages in all issues related to gender in the organisation and in the programmes. AF will further establish collaboration and association with the organisations, networks and institutions working on gender and women's rights for receiving up-to-date information on women's issues and gender equality and sharing it with the staff and the management as necessary.

AF Women Forum – Space for women: AF has created an exclusive forum and a space for all women working in AF with the following objectives:

- a) Build solidarity, support and cooperation between the women staff
- b) Provide a forum to share their problems at work and at home; and take up grievance redressal if any in consultation with AF administration
- c) Suggest gender sensitive policies and procedures to AF in its management.
- d) Suggest gender sensitive interventions in the programmes and in the CBOs
- e) Identify training needs of women staff and bring it to the Management.
- f) Organise professional counselling services in cases of need
- g) Interface with RDT's Women Core Team (WCT) for mutual support and learning.

The Women Forum Convenor is Ms. Rizwana, ATL being the senior most woman. The Forum meets once in a month for one full day. The entire meeting is planned and organised by women themselves. The Director or any other staff will attend only specific agenda upon invitation.

Gender Specialist: Accion Fraterna will induct a full time or part time Gender focal point person to support gender integration within AF. Gender focal person (a woman) will be responsible for providing inputs for proactive gender policies within AF and in its programmes for monitoring gender initiatives, and for organising gender sensitization opportunities for staff and people at various levels. She will also work towards enabling procurement, development and dissemination of reading/ reference material related to gender issues. Further, the Gender focal person will facilitate the empowerment of AF Women Team through capacity building, promoting systems of conflict resolution, and grievance redressal within AF.

7. Programme Level (External Mainstreaming)

Accion Fraterna will adopt the following strategies to ensure gender mainstreaming at all stages of programme, including planning, designing, implementation, monitoring, impact assessment, development of measurable gender indicators, knowledge management and dissemination for learning and policy influencing

- Enable and ensure programme staff to take responsibility for promoting gender equality
- Develop capacity of programme staff to carry out gender analysis
- Develop gender-sensitive approaches and methods of work which are empowering both women and men
- Develop guidelines and indicators for monitoring, reviewing and evaluation of programmes
- Promote the structures and opportunities for women's participation in decision-making at all levels

Policy Measures to achieve gender equality

- Provided equal membership for women in CBOs both at the level of primary groups (Sasya Mitra Group) and their federations at village, Mandal and Apex Body level.
- The convenor's position at all levels of CBOs is for women and the co-convenor as man.
- Ensured active participation of women in CBOs
- Ensured equal participation of women in Farmer Field Schools, Seed Banks and various interventions
- Cash or cheque payments are made in the name of women in the project families in all the programmes of AF

- Undertake capacity building for women and men on a regular basis to achieve gender equality
- Include a gender equality perspective in all campaigns and policy influencing
- Promote women's access to and control over land, employment, services and institutions, including their ability to exercise rights over their own bodies and find protection against violence.
- Develop, promote and use creative ways of engaging men and boys as agents of change in the pursuit of gender equality.
- Collaborate with various stakeholders who are aligned to our gender principles, and work
- Ensure knowledge management reflecting the gender perspective and gender equality and disseminate the learning to various stakeholders

The gender mainstreaming in various programmes of the Accion Fraterna will be ensured through gender sensitive measures and interventions as briefed below:

7.1. Sustainable Agriculture & Watershed Development

The Watershed Development and the Sustainable Agriculture Programme focus on addressing the concerns of women farmers for growing various food and nutrition crops by promoting mixed and intercrops, aimed at food and nutritional security. The agriculture paradigm will follow a sustainable and eco-friendly as against conventional paradigm which is chemical intensive, high-tech, high-cost, eco-logically destructive and unsustainable. The program will continually review its interventions and technologies from the point of being relevant and friendly to women and improving their well being and position within household, community and society.

7.2 Equal participation in CBOs

AF will promote specific policy decisions towards achieving gender equality in CBOs (Sasya Mithra Groups and their Federations). Such affirmative policies will enable women to lead CBOs and provide a better social status and respect in communities. AF will strive for the participation of equal number of women and men in various interventions such as Farmers Field Schools (FFS) and Seed Banks thus providing equal opportunities for learning, skill building and participation in decision making on agriculture matters. Most importantly AF will ensure access and control of women on technologies, seeds and choice of crops. AF, through the Sasyamithra Groups and their Federations will also continue to achieve equal wages to be given to women and men in villages as done by AF in its programme.

AF will periodically conduct gender analysis of its sustainable agriculture program to further understand the concerns and priorities of women and men and re-strategize its interventions to address them.

7.3. Women Initiatives and Sustainable Non-Farm Rural Livelihoods

The alternate rural livelihoods support programme of AF adopts a "women centric approach" and aims at diversifying the family livelihood base by enabling women to take up viable off-farm and non-farm income generation activities (IGAs). AF will organize and support interventions for enhancing women's awareness and building their capacities in identifying viable income generation activities, preparing proposals, establishing market linkages and skill-building. AF will strive to strengthen women's role in market economy by promoting skill based livelihood activities like garment making, sari weaving etc.

AF will provide opportunities for women-centric and women-led initiatives in policy advocacy activities and campaigns for public opinion building like International Women's Day Celebrations, Ecology Days, World Water Days, Sustainable Agriculture Campaigns etc. AF will also explore creation of new spaces for women to lead, organize and manage and learn by doing and from each other; and to collectively voice their needs, priorities and issues.

Women leadership development: AF will organize special trainings for women leaders in leadership development and management of resources and governance. Efforts will also be directed at developing deeper understanding and awareness among the women members on gender discrimination (declining adult and child sex ratio, domestic violence, reproductive and sexual health etc.). Based on the understanding, periodic reviews of strategies to address structural and social issues affecting women's subordination will be conducted.

7.4. Skill-building for Girls

Accion Fraterna has initiated a programme for rural youth for skill development, which can help them to get skilled employment or self employed. AF has started courses in driving, motor re-winding, hospitality services, customer relations, garment making and information technology enabled services. AF will strive to enhance the inclusion of girls in all these training programmes. Special efforts and provisions will be made to enable more girls to make use of these opportunities – like fee concessions, travel passes, hostel facilities, preferential selections etc. At present only boys are enrolled in driving and house wiring and motor winding course. Breaking the gender stereotypes, AF will strive to motivate girls to take up admission in these courses.

AF provides support services for placement of the trained youth particularly girls and acts as a liaison between employers and the trained youth. AF will conduct follow up visits to the companies and ensure safe and supportive work environment for the youth, especially for girls.

Skill-building trainings will also provide awareness and impart training on relevant issues like gender, early marriage, early pregnancy, reproductive and sexual health and other gender related issues etc. AF will also equip the trainees with entrepreneurship, knowledge and skills on small business management wherever needed, and promote forward and backward business linkages.

7.5. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

MGNREGA is being implemented in all the 230 villages in 8 mandals of Accion Fraterna's project area. AF advocates and collaborates with the government in enabling women - friendly implementation of the scheme. Besides creating widespread awareness amongst women and men with regards to the rights of labour under the scheme and its provisions, AF will also lobby on closing the inadequacies in policy, creating easy procedures, particularly with respect to women workers under MGNREGA. For example, it is observed that nursing mothers and single women are at a disadvantage under the present scheme. Focused efforts will be made towards setting up of work-place crèches and other enabling facilities for nursing mothers and single women.

7.6. Planning, Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation (PIME)

- Gender will be an active part while setting objectives, planning the activities and in implementation.

- The PME team will monitor and generate gender disaggregated information on project implementation.
- AF will work towards creating and strengthening forums for enabling women's participation in the organization and in its programmes.
- AF will make allocation of resources on priority for mainstreaming gender in all its policies and programmes.
- Research, studies on gender related issues like that of declining child sex ratio, women's land rights etc. will be conducted to develop deeper understanding and incorporate learning into AFs strategies and interventions.
- AF will identify gender related issues and networks working on these issues, for networking, cross learning, joint effort, policy advocacy and lobbying.
- AF will develop gender specific impact indicators and generate gender disaggregated data (both quantitative and qualitative).
- AF will conduct periodic review of the gender policy of the organization at regular intervals with the involvement of the staff in a participatory manner on an annual basis and place before the management for its approval.

8. Conclusion

The gender policy document of Accion Fraterna is intended to be a set of principles and policies to guide the organization's work on enabling gender sensitive environment and mainstreaming gender. The promotion of gender equality, social equity and empowerment of women is integral part of AFs vision, mission and strategic priorities. Thus AF will continue with its proactive efforts at re-ordering gender relations between women and men. Besides making efforts at integration of concerns of women and men in all its programmes and policies, AF will create spaces for women to realize their full potential as human beings so that they may act as equal and valued partners in the development of their communities.

Accion Fraterna understands that mainstreaming gender in the organisation is a continuous process and is committed to making efforts to bring about changes in perceptions, values, attitudes and behaviours at both organisational and personal level.

The AF Management is fully committed to implement the gender policy. It will seek the status report (gender audit) for reviewing and undertaking corrective measures as required. The staff members are dedicated to play a pro-active role in operationalising the gender policy through various measures and strategies.

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