

Third Session of the Assembly
28-29 October 2019, Seoul

Agenda Item 3.1(f)

DECISION 29-III-19R**Gender Policy**

The Assembly of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO),

Mindful of the principles of equality and equity between men and women, and support for the promotion of social justice, equal opportunities, diversity, and equity in all of its programs and projects in all member countries; and

Enhancing the effective integration and gender mainstreaming considerations in all aspects of AFoCO's policies, projects, trainings, workshops, and other activities,

Decides to:

1. Adopt the Gender Policy in document D-29-1; and
 2. Task the Secretariat to facilitate the necessary follow-up actions, including amendment/update of related institutional documents.
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Gender Policy

Document D-29-1 (Decision 29-III-19R)

I Background

1. Recognizing the crucial role of gender equality in the successful implementation of the Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ set by the United Nations General Assembly, all AFoCO Parties are committed to advancing Sustainable Development Goal 5²: To achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.
2. In this context, Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) recognizes that:
 - (a) Gender equality and empowering women are essential to achieving sustainable forest management³, including transforming proven technology and policies into concrete actions, which is one of the core AFoCO objectives.
 - (b) Women participate in the forest sector in diverse ways and within different cultural and geographical contexts, including as part of indigenous and local communities, as migrants, farmers, workers, technicians, and professionals⁴.
 - (c) Due to a variety of interrelated cultural, social, economic, and institutional factors, which vary from country to country and sometimes within countries, women are often disadvantaged in the forest sector. Women are also often disadvantaged in forest product processing where they may not have equal access to employment opportunities or receive equal pay for equal work⁴.
 - (d) In addition to cultural biases, the lack of sex-disaggregated data and statistics on the role of women in forestry, hampers the development of policy interventions to address gender inequalities⁴.
3. The Gender Policy of AFoCO translates AFoCO's respect of the principles of equality and equity between men and women and support for the promotion of social justice, equal opportunities, diversity, and equity in all of its programs and projects in all Member countries.
4. Considering the national policies of each Party, AFoCO recognizes the importance of gender in terms of its main programs; thus:
 - (a) In the Strategic Plan (2019-2023): "Equity: We will work for equitable development among the members in the areas of (1) access to information and technology; (2) participation in decision-making process; (3) narrowing development gap; and (4) gender equity."

¹ [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

² [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

³ [Collaborative Partnership on Forests - SFM and Gender](#)

⁴ [ITTO Policy Guidelines on Gender Equality and Empowering Women \(GEEW\)](#)

- (b) In the Staff Regulations: "Staff Members shall refrain from any action or behaviour which might reflect adversely upon his or her position or to the general welfare of other Staff Members by engaging in harassment, including sexual or gender harassment, abuse of authority, and retaliation."
- (c) In the Code of Conduct: "This Code provides that efficiency, competence, merit and integrity shall be necessary considerations in the recruitment and employment of the staff, taking into account the principle of gender equality. This fundamental requirement is the basis for AFoCO's core values: professionalism, integrity and respect for diversity, all of which underpin the specific obligations placed on Staff Members."
- (d) Further, in the Code of Conduct: "Diversity of the workplace is an invaluable asset to the accomplishment of AFoCO mission, as it brings together individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, genders and professional experience. Staff Members are expected to welcome and respect diversity of persons and points of view, and its potential to enrich the work done by AFoCO."
- (e) In the Guidelines for the AFoCO Fellowship Program: "The final list of the candidates for each term will be decided by the Executive Director considering the results of the interview evaluation and geographic and gender balance among awardees."

II Definitions

- 5. For this Policy, the following terms shall be defined as below:
 - (a) "AFoCO" means the Organization established under the Agreement on the Establishment of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization.
 - (b) "Agreement" means the Agreement on the Establishment of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization, that entered into force on 27 April 2018.
 - (c) "Assembly" means the Assembly established by Article 8 of the Agreement and the highest decision-making organ of AFoCO.
 - (d) "Awareness" is being conscious of the fact that men, women, boys, and girls have different roles, responsibilities, and needs.
 - (e) "Empowerment" is the process of gaining access to resources and developing one's capabilities with a view to participating actively in shaping one's own life and that of one's community in economic, socio-cultural, political and religious terms.
 - (f) "Gender" refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition, gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, and age. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities.

- (g) “Gender analysis” is a systematic gathering and examination of information on gender differences and social relations in order to identify, understand, and redress inequities based on gender.
- (h) “Gender equality” means the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.
- (i) “Gender equity” is the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources.
- (j) “Gender gap” means any disparity and inequality between the condition of men and women due to their position or role in society. It concerns inequalities in terms of their participation, access to opportunities, rights, power to influence and make decision, incomes and benefits, and control and use of resources.
- (k) “Gender inequality” is the disparity between individuals due to gender.
- (l) “Gender mainstreaming” means the process of assessing the implication for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs. It is a way to make women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.
- (m) “Gender perspective” means the considerations given and attention paid to the differences between women and men in any given policy area and activity.
- (n) “Gender-responsive approach” means that the particular needs, priorities, power structures, status, and relationships between men and women are recognized and adequately addressed in the design, implementation, and evaluation of activities. The approach seeks to ensure that women and men are given equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from an intervention, and promotes targeted measures to address inequalities and promote the empowerment of women.
- (o) “Gender-sensitive” means the taking into account of the impact of policies, projects, and programmes of men, women, boys, and girls and trying to mitigate the negative consequences thereof.
- (p) “Party” means a country which has signed the Agreement and has deposited its instrument of ratification, acceptance, or approval for which the Agreement has entered into force, or a country that has acceded to the Agreement.
- (q) “Policy” means this Gender Policy.
- (q) “Sex disaggregated data and statistics” means a collection and separation of statistical information by sex to enable comparative analysis.
- (r) “Technical Committee for Environmental and Social Considerations” means the body responsible for assessing environmental and social aspects of AFoCO-funding projects, consisting of a President; Gender Policy Officer; and Environmental and Social Officer.

III Purpose and Scope

6. Respecting fundamental rights of both women and men, the purpose of this Policy are to:
- (a) Enhance the effective integration and gender mainstreaming considerations in all aspects of AFoCO's policies, projects, trainings, workshops, and other activities.
 - (b) Build the capacity of AFoCO and its Parties to promote gender equality and empower women in forest restoration and rehabilitation.
 - (c) Men and women find equal rights, power, responsibilities and opportunities within the operations and functions of AFoCO.
7. The purpose of this Policy is to provide AFoCO with a framework for guiding its efforts to achieve gender equality, and particularly, to support women's diverse roles in the development of policies, plans, programs, projects, activities, and internal functioning intended to enhance the impact and effectiveness of AFoCO's operations.
8. This Policy aims to make gender equity an essential factor to be taken into consideration in its programs, projects, and activities with the overall objective of promoting forest restoration.
9. This Policy specifies AFoCO's goal and vision related to gender equality, complements AFoCO's Environment and Social Safeguards (ESS), and responds to the performance and reporting standards of international financial partners.
10. This Policy will allow AFoCO to promote gender-sensitive actions and make its interventions more effective, efficient, and relevant while responding to the priority needs and efforts of women and men within the Secretariat and areas of activities.

IV General Principles

11. This Policy reflects and flows from the following guiding principles to promote gender equality and the empowerment of men and women in AFoCO's governance and operations:
- (a) Gender equality is a core value to AFoCO. Achieving AFoCO's objectives will be accelerated by efforts to close the gender gap while recognizing that the roles of women and men in forestry systems may differ across cultures.
 - (b) Integrating a gender perspective means promoting equal, harmonious, and sustainable opportunities; rights; voice; influence; leadership; and benefits for women at all levels and all areas of AFoCO's activities for an effective mobilization of society and the international community.

- (c) This Policy will be linked with the universal principles of human rights and other national and regional policies and strategies. It must influence the development goals and the selection of programs and action plans' monitoring indicators.
- (d) Efforts to gender mainstreaming and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women are pursued in recognition of related international and national commitments to gender equality and human rights.

V Guidelines

12. This Policy addresses and provides guidance on the following six core elements:
- (a) AFoCO policies, action plans, and programs;
 - (b) AFoCO project cycle;
 - (c) Capacity building;
 - (d) Learning, knowledge management, and communication;
 - (e) Internal functioning; and
 - (f) Accountability.

5.1 Element 1: AFoCO policies, action plans, and programs

13. AFoCO's policies, guidelines, and regulations will integrate a gender perspective and consider gender mainstreaming through inclusive discussions and dialogues. AFoCO will incorporate gender mainstreaming, including women's empowerment in its Strategic Plan.

5.2 Element 2: AFoCO project cycle

14. AFoCO project cycle will integrate gender issues and consider gender mainstreaming. Gender equality will be addressed in all phases of the project cycle, including project formulation, implementation, monitoring, review, and evaluation. The needs and interests of women and men, including their effective participation and outcome benefits, will be equally taken into account and promoted within AFoCO projects.

15. AFoCO projects will be gender-responsive and will examine gender roles, norms, relations, and potential project impacts in line with the Environmental and Social Policy of AFoCO. Men and women will be provided with equitable opportunities to be included in stakeholders' consultations and decision-making during project formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

5.3 Element 3: Capacity building

16. AFoCO will encourage Parties to establish, strengthen, and implement laws, regulations, and policies designed to achieve gender equality and empower women, particularly within forest restoration and rehabilitation programs.

17. The Executive Director will promote a shared commitment to gender equality in all programs and internal practices within the Secretariat and ensure that staff members have the understanding, training, and capacity needed to carry out this Policy.

5.4 Element 4 – Learning, knowledge management, and communication

18. AFoCO will enhance learning on gender equality and empowering women and men as part of its knowledge management activities, including sharing experiences and lessons learned, upscaling best practices from different situations and cultural contexts, and working to develop a better understanding of gender in forest restoration and rehabilitation programs, projects, and activities.

19. The Secretariat will develop tools and platforms to raise awareness of the importance of gender equality to achieve AFoCO's objectives and to communicate AFoCO's efforts and achievements in promoting gender equality.

5.5 Element 5 – Internal functioning

20. AFoCO will strengthen efforts to seek gender balance in expert panels and working groups. The Executive Director will ensure an office atmosphere and culture that is respectful of women and men employees at all levels, enables them to reach their full potential, and promotes inclusion and transparency.

5.6 Element 6 – Accountability

21. AFoCO will regularly track progress and measure success on gender integration and mainstreaming within AFoCO's policy and project work through the Assembly.

22. AFoCO program and project managers will ensure to report regularly on gender integration in AFoCO's programs and projects, which may include developing gender-responsive indicators to measure progress.

VI Amendment to the Policy

23. The provisions of this Policy may be supplemented or amended upon proposal by the Executive Director and subsequent approval by the Assembly.

VII Report and Review

24. This Policy will be periodically reviewed and revised to ensure its alignments with international standards and national regulations and policies.

25. The Technical Committee for Environmental and Social Considerations will report on the status of implementation and the progress of this Policy to the Assembly every three (3) years after its adoption.

VIII Effective Date of Application

26. This Policy shall come into effect upon adoption by the Assembly, and shall remain in effect until amended or superseded by the Assembly.
