

**GENDER POLICY (A DRAFT COPY) FOR
MPSSS**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Madhya Pradesh Samaj Seva Sanstha (MPSSS) is a regional organization, coordinating and facilitating the development works of the 9 diocesan Social Services of MP. It also builds the capacity of the DSSS staff for the effective implementation of the programmes for the poor and the marginalized. It adopts common policies and effective actions in all matters concerning the interests of the people in Madhya Pradesh.

As a social work organization MPSSS is trying to promote gender equality and equity among the target population. It fights against the gender discrimination in its work for the people. It focuses to sensitize and conscientize women and men on Gender relations and existence. It strives for mutual harmony and value for each other despite the nature-endowed differences. It places emphasis on the commonalities between them as members of the human race. It is rooted in the Biblical Vision of the wholesome human being, created in the image and likeness of God.

It desires to form communities of solidarity, of justice and equality, at the service of all people, especially the poor and the marginalized. It is committed to “a new society built on justice, peace, love and harmony: a civilization of love.”¹ This Gender Policy is addressed to Women and Men and all people of goodwill.

MPSSS is committed to channelizing energy, effort and resources in to processes that create a society that values women, men, girls, boys and the third gender equally.

Over the years MPSSS has worked towards women empowerment through the net works of Self Help Groups established by its partners across the state. It has also taught us that working with a gender perspective mean involving and engaging men and boys in order to improve the status of women and girls. The lessons learned from the field also led us to recognize that there is a need for improved learning and monitoring around gender issues.

The policy seeks to ensure greater consistency of gender principles, policies and practices across the organization and to provide an accountability framework in relation to gender, against which all personnel can be accountable and MPSSS will audit itself.

We, the members of MPSSS adopt this gender policy and will try to implement the provisions as required since the society and communities undergo rapid changes, women are being marginalized and continue to suffer and are discriminated.

¹ CBCI proclaimed in 2000
Gender Policy/MPSSS

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Fundamental Rights

Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and condition for social justice. Recognition of and respect for the dignity of human beings is at the centre stage of human development. Being born in the image and likeness of God, all human beings are equal. Article 14 of Indian Constitution guarantees to every citizen Right to Equality. Article 15 further states that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. But over the 61 years after the Constitution was adopted there are discriminations and differences in the factors determining health, decision making, opportunities and resources available to women and men.

2.2 Situation of women in the Society

Discrimination still prevails among the uneducated and the educated, in developing countries and the developed countries, among the poor sections of the society and the rich. It exists not only in the Society at large, but within the family as well. Gender Discrimination has a greater impact on women though men are also affected. This discrimination exists due to class, creed, caste, religion, socio-economic, cultural and political structures and the systems in the society.

2.3 Indian scenario of women

In the Society, compared to the past there are some definite positive changes in the situation of women. Increasing number of women has acquired education inclusive of higher and professional education. Women today are visible in all spheres of society and have started articulating their concerns and asserting their dignity both individually and collectively. However, behind this visibility, there are manifestations of both covert and virulent forms of gender based discrimination such as female feticide, infanticide, sexual abuse (rape, molestation and other forms of harassment) trafficking, domestic violence inclusive of marital rape, physical and emotional abuse, murders and forced suicides. The gruesome incidents of bride-burning, acid attacks, witch-hunt, kidnapping and torture of women are being frequently reported by the media. These problems result in immense physical and emotional suffering to women and leave permanent scars.

Women of the marginalized groups such as dalits, tribals, minorities and other backward castes are the worst affected by gender discriminatory practices and lack of equitable access to food, health care, education, employment, equal wages or denial of basic human rights. In addition, they are being displaced from their lands and livelihoods. They suffer systemic and structural violence that enslave them and dehumanize them economically, socio-politically and religio-culturally.

In most socio-cultural communities in India, women's human rights are limited by religious, cultural and traditional practices that are based on patriarchal norms.

Issues of culture, religion, ethnic and other forms of identity have become highly politicized due to rising religious fundamentalism that reinforces control over women, keeps them confined to roles that perpetuate their subordination and prevents them from full enjoyment of their human rights.

Women bear the brunt of the structural adjustment policies that led to globalization, liberalization, and privatization. They are burdened with the responsibility of meeting the essential needs of family in the face of increasing economic hardship and displacement from their lands and communities.

2.4 The Women In The Region of Madhya Pradesh

The social, economical and political condition of women in the Region is precarious in respect of their future and even of their existence. Madhya Pradesh recorded the largest number of rape and molestation cases but ranks much lower in the reporting of sexual harassment cases². The state topped the list for the fourth time with 585 cases accounting one fourth of the total number of suicides in India in the year 2007³. Maternal Mortality Rate comes to 498 per one lakh live births in the year 2007. The state has started various schemes for safe motherhood but the quality of services rendered by various health personnel are not really reaching the women. The fear is that the rights of women might get entangled into a web of schemes. The cases of Female Feticide are high in the state. The declining sex ratio in the State, particularly in Morena and other adjacent districts (822 females per thousand males) shows the increase in female feticide⁴. What would be the status of women in the coming decades? The UNICEF's state report of the children for 2007 states that the average age for marriage of girls has been increasing during the last 20 years, but 46 percent of girls are still married off before they reach 18 years. This shows that the health of women is at risk. The state lies behind in the matter of literacy. According to census of 2001 the literacy rate of women was 50.28 where as the male literacy rate comes to 76.80%. We have given a few data that shows women's sorry status in the state and the need to work for their upliftment.

2.5 Church teaching

As per the Law of the Church, unless and otherwise mentioned for laymen only, women have the right to participate in all the activities of lay participation. Because, on the basis of dignity and activities there is equality of men and women "Flowing from their rebirth in Christ, there is a genuine equality of dignity and action among all of Christ's faithful. Because of this equality they all contribute,

² (Source-Crimes Against Women. CAW2002)

³ (Source National Crime Records Bureau 2007).

⁴ (Source. The Hindu, News Paper Sep 16, 2006)

each according to his or her condition and office, to the building up of the Body of Christ”.⁵

Pope John Paul II in His appeal to Ecclesial communities, States and International Institutions, urged everyone to make every effort to ensure that women regain full respect for their dignity and role; to make effective and intelligent campaign for the promotion of women, concentrating on all areas of women’s life; to examine the past with courage, to work in a convincing manner so that the widest possible space be opened to women in the economy, politics and in the life of the Church⁶.

The Church has also made numerous declarations concerning the equality and relationship between women and men. Pope John XXIII reflected concern of the Church for women in his encyclical *Pacem In Terri*, “Since women are becoming ever more conscious of their human dignity, they will not tolerate being treated as mere material instruments, but demand rights befitting a human person both in domestic and in public life.” And again “Man and woman are called to work in a relationship of equality towards the attainment of universal good.”⁷

The second Vatican Council on various occasions dared to wipe aside the many layers of patriarchal dominance in the Church to come face to face with the egalitarian message of Jesus, with glimpses of models of a collaborative Church with Gender Justice. Vatican II in its Pastoral Constitution⁸, condemns any form of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion. Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, on the dignity and vocation of women affirms that the “essential equality of men and women since both of them - the woman as much as man -are created in the image and likeness of God.” He further states, “Both of them (man and woman) are equally capable of receiving the outpouring of the divine truth and love in the Holy Spirit. Both receive His salvific and sanctifying ‘visits’⁹. In her teaching, the Church continues to uphold the dignity of women, uniqueness of motherhood¹⁰, and the complementarity and reciprocity between men and women.

3. UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER

Gender refers to describe those differences between women and men, which are socially constructed, while sex refers to those which are biologically determined. Gender socialization attributes different roles and responsibilities to women/men/boys/girls. Gender differences have been built up and toughened by socio-cultural and economic institutions over time perpetuating discriminatory belief

⁵ (CIC 230/ § 3, 766)

⁶ (Pope John Paul II, Letter to Women 6).

⁷ *Pacem in terris*

⁸ *Gaudium et Spes* (No. 29)

⁹ CRI Gender Statement

¹⁰ (*Letter to Women*, 2)

systems and attitudes, imbalanced positioning and inequalities among women and men.

3.1 Gender equality

Gender equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex in opportunities, in the allocation of resources and benefits or in access to services.

3.2 Gender equity

Gender equity refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. Gender equity is a means and gender equality is the result.

3.3 Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is to initiate and institutionalize progression that will bring about gender equality. Mainstreaming requires changes at different levels within institutions, in agenda setting, budget allocation, policy making, planning, implementation and evaluation.

4. GENERAL GOAL, SPECIFIC GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 General Goal

To empower women and men for the formation of a society based on the principles of peace, equality and justice to enjoy the fullness of life in the society at large. “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”¹¹

4.2 Mission

The purpose of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. Gender mainstreaming is a cross cutting theme in all the programmes of MPSSS.

4.3 Objectives

4.3.1 To mainstream gender in all the programmes and projects which MPSSS undertakes.

4.3.2 To promote gender equity and equality, particularly empowerment of women in the marginalized section of the society.

4.3.3 To deepen among women a sense of their dignity as human beings created in the image and likeness of God.

4.3.4 To stimulate reflection in the community on the equality of gender and sharing the responsibilities equally.

4.3.5 To work for gender justice in the wider community.

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

¹¹ (John 10:10)

This policy is guided and rooted in the life and teachings of Christ and the social teachings of the Church.

5.1 Christ and His teaching

The evangelists not only highlighted Jesus' concern for women, but also his radical re-defining of their place and role in their society. In a culture where women were seen only in relation to men, Christ not only liberated them from their oppressive traditions but upheld their dignity e.g. the Samaritan woman¹² and Mary and Martha¹³. He used the life-experiences of women as a paradigm of God's love and Christian discipleship for all: woman and lost coin, woman and the dough and woman at birth pangs. Even at his death and burial, women were among those who bore testimony. Jesus entrusted to the women that they announce the Good News of Resurrection to his disciples.

5.2 Equal Participation

If a community has to succeed in achieving their goals there should be participation from all the members. If every member of the society participates in an equal measure the result will be much better. In the past the participation of women in the affairs of the society was lopsided and they were discriminated to the neglect of the human person.

5.3 Collective decision making

The members of the society will own up the programmes if the decision is taken collectively. Women have to be taken into confidence and their opinion should be considered seriously when a decision has to be taken that pertains to the family as well as society.

5.4 Freedom of expression and speech

The constitution of India has given the right to freedom of expression to every citizen of our country. But unfortunately women could not enjoy this freedom in the society and family. It is just that we empower the women to enjoy this right in their day to day life.

6. ACTION PLANS FOR MPSSS

6.1 Objective- 1: To mainstream gender in all the programmes and projects which MPSSS undertakes.

Strategies

6.1.1 Apply gender analysis at all stages of policy and programme work, including planning, implementation, impact assessment and development of measurable

¹² (Jn.4:7-42)

¹³ (Jn.11:20-40)

gender indicators

- 6.1.2 Develop capacity of programme staff to carry out gender analysis in all the projects and programmes of MPSSS
- 6.1.3 Develop gender-sensitive approaches and methods of work in all the programmes and projects of MPSSS
- 6.1.4 Ensure programme staff take responsibility for promoting gender equality in all their activities
- 6.1.5 Promote the creation of structures and opportunities for women's participation in decision-making.
- 6.1.6 Ensure that women's and girl's voices are heard in mainstream development processes.
- 6.1.7 Undertake capacity building to strengthen women's organizations and groups, and organizations working towards gender equality
- 6.1.8 Promote, support and participate in the women's movement to advocate for implementation of national and international instrument for women's rights
- 6.1.9 Support women and girls to secure their economic, social, political civil and cultural rights
- 6.1.10 Promote women's and girl's independent access to and control over, employment, services and institutions, including their ability to exercise rights over their own bodies and find protection against violence.
- 6.1.11 Develop, promote and use creative ways of engaging men and boys (not only women and girls) as agents of change in the pursuit of gender equality.
- 6.1.12 Work to inform and influence partner Dioceses to adopt gender principles.
- 6.1.13 As far as possible involve equal number of women in the governance at all levels of the organizations.

6.2 Objective 2: To promote gender equity and equality, particularly empowerment of women in the marginalized section of the society

Strategies

- 6.2.3 Recognize knowledge related to gender concerns and gender-related analysis as one of the core areas of capacity for staff and build capabilities throughout the organization as well as partner dioceses
- 6.2.4 Ensure that all training conducted by MPSSS is gender-sensitive

- 6.2.5 Make all HR systems and policies gender-sensitive and responsive, and integrate gender indicators into all programmes and projects.
- 6.2.6 Include gender sensitivity in all terms of reference, including TORs for external consultants.
- 6.2.7 Ensure Gender balance in staff recruitments and set targets for staff retention in the organization particularly women in senior positions.
- 6.2.8 Adopt of Vishaka guidelines or other sexual harassment policies
- 6.2.9 Safe and secure transport and accommodation when travelling particularly for women staff
- 6.3 **Objective 3:** To deepen among women a sense of their dignity as human beings created in the image and likeness of God.

Strategies

- 6.3.1 Every woman staff will be given due respect in the organization and provide opportunities to develop themselves as dignified human person
- 6.4 **Objective 4:** To stimulate reflection in the community on the equality of gender and sharing the responsibilities equally.

Strategies

- 6.4.1 Ensure that the staff be provided opportunities at the intermediary and grass root level programmes, to stimulate reflection on the equality of gender and their responsibilities.
- 6.4.2 To equip the staff of the diocese to promote gender sensitivity at the community level.
- 6.4.3 To encourage and help the diocesan partners to adopt gender policies and implement their provisions.

- 6.5 **Objective 5:** To work for gender justice in the wider community.

Strategies

- 6.5.1 Sensitize the community about the gender justice at the community level
- 6.5.2 Study the gender issues at community, family, and society
- 6.5.3 Organize orientations at the community level for the gender sensitization.
- 6.5.4 Train the intermediary staff at the diocesan level to conduct a gender audit of the programmes at the community level.
- 6.5.5 Ensure that every programme/project is prepared after a gender analysis and necessary provisions are provided for the gender justice.

7. Equal opportunities

7.1 Participation in public life

- 7.1.1 Promote the equal participation of women in the Parliament and State Assembly elections.
- 7.1.2 To create platforms for women so that they may be active in village structures.
- 7.1.3 Facilitate political awareness among women at grassroots level – enhancing women’s participation in political institutions like the Panchayati Raj, State Assemblies and both Houses of Parliament.
- 7.1.4 Train women for participating in public life

7.2 Education of women

- 7.2.1 To foster gender sensitivity, prepare and use appropriate modules and audio/video materials with regard to the promotion of education for various groups. This will be especially helpful for those with little or no formal education;
- 7.2.2 Oppose child labour and promote the education of girl children in schools;
- 7.2.3 Recognise that among the marginalised, women are the poorest of the poor and have not accessed formal schooling (e.g. 2/3 of the illiterates are women) and hence help them to enrol in education institutions close to their residence.
- 7.2.4 Give leadership training to women and promote them as animators in the society;
- 7.2.5 Help the partner dioceses to organize programmes at the village level, for capacity-building and raising of self-confidence among all categories of women.
- 7.2.6 Promote opportunities among women to take the initiative to empower themselves through the partners.
- 7.2.7 Promote among the DSSS information about the legal and civil rights, civil registration of birth and marriages;

7.3 Environment and women

- 7.3.1 Women will be involved and their perspectives reflected in the policies and programmes of environment, conservation and restoration. Considering the impact of the environmental factors on their livelihoods, women’s participation will be ensured in the conservation of the environment and the control of environmental degradation.
- 7.3.2 Educate on the impact of the environmental factors on the women’s livelihoods in our Institutions, local government bodies such as Panchayati Raj etc by networking with local NGOs
- 7.3.3 Ensure women’s participation in the conservation of the environment and the control of environmental degradation as a vast majority of rural women depend on the locally available non-commercial sources of energy such as animal dung, crop waste and fuel wood.

- 7.3.4 To ensure the efficient use of these energy resources in an environmental friendly manner, the Policy will aim at promoting the programmes of non-conventional energy resources.
- 7.3.5 Women will be involved in spreading the use of solar energy, biogas, smokeless chulahs and other rural application so as to have a visible impact of these measures in influencing eco system and in changing the life styles of rural women.

7.4 Women in Difficult Circumstances

- 7.4.1 We Recognise and acknowledge the agony of women in difficult circumstances. These women include, women in poverty, destitute women, women in conflict situations, women affected by natural calamities, women in less developed Regions, the disabled widows, elderly women, single women (in difficult circumstances), women leading households, those displaced from employment, migrants, women who are victims of marital/domestic violence, deserted women and prostitutes, etc.
- 7.4.2 Give professional and vocational training to women to address their life situation and assist them for job-seeking
- 7.4.3 We set up home for destitutes, counselling centres, grievance cells, short stay homes in our Institutions.
- 7.4.4 Give professional counselling and guidance for women in difficult circumstances

7.5 Violence on Women

- 7.5.1 Violence against women is the most universal and unpunished crime of all. It is linked to the status of women and perpetuated by systematic gender discrimination and societal norms that devalue women. To solve the problem of violence requires solving the problem of gender inequality. Thus eliminating violence against women requires a coordinated and sustained effort at various levels.

Domestic violence

- 7.5.2 Study the Act against Domestic Violence and promote protection of women from domestic violence, sexual abuse and harassment;
- 7.5.3 Prepare training a module to disseminate the provisions of the Act against Domestic Violence
- 7.5.4 Set up structures to address violence against women in families, workplaces, and Social work institutions and related offices;
- 7.5.5 Form vigilance and grievance redressal cells in our Institutions and villages;
- 7.5.6 Eliminate discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; by building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations

7.6 Trafficking and sexual abuse

- 7.6.1 Condemn sexual abuse through letters, circulars and media;
- 7.6.2 Take concerted efforts to address the needs of migrants and domestic workers, and keep fighting against the trafficking of women and children.
- 7.6.3 Create and promote awareness to prevent trafficking and child sexual abuse.

7.6.4 To combat trafficking at the sources, traditional areas and disturbed places through prevention, rescue and rehabilitation

7.7 Tribal and dalit women

7.7.1 We commit towards the upliftment of the tribal, dalit and disadvantaged women, including their education and opportunities for employment.

7.7.2 Resource centre for women, program for women development to be designed involving tribal women.

7.7.3 Network and create tribal women leaders to fight for social justice and dignity of women.

7.7.4 Special emphasis is to be given for girl's education, vocational training, legal awareness and networking with all stakeholders

7.7.5 Develop Integrated development programme for Dalit Women to eradicate poverty through various programmes and projects. Support Dalit women in acquiring land titles and initiating livelihood programmes.

7.8 Social Awareness

7.8.1 Create an environment through positive, economic and social awareness for the overall development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.

7.8.2 Change societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.

7.8.3 Mainstream a gender perspective in the development process.

7.8.4 Support women-friendly structures for working mothers;

7.8.5 Address the cultural and economic factors that lead to abortion, and support a culture that promotes life at all stages.

7.8.6 Accompany women emotionally and legally through the painful processes of annulment and civil divorce

7.9 Net Working

7.9.1 Provide opportunities for the networking of women with like minded women groups and NGOs, and people's movements.

7.9.2 To organize Gender awareness and Gender sensitivity programs to different Groups of society.

7.9.3 To make use of the National, Regional, and International Policy on Gender Aspects and Develop Strategic alliances with other advocacy groups, organizations and civil society.

7.9.4 To Network with Inter-Religious Women's Organizations

7.9.5 To network with like-minded groups and NGOs

7.10 Economic Independence:

7.10.1 Promote Just wages for women, domestic workers, etc;

7.10.1 Support equal pay for equal work, and land/property rights for women;

- 7.10.2 Impart skill-based training for women to ensure skilled jobs; Encourage income-generation programmes for women and provide them awareness on govt. schemes;
- 7.10.3 Promote couples for joint ownership and decision-making, equal access and control of income, and role sharing in family life.
- 7.10.4 Promote and start Gender Budgeting in all our programmes and projects.

7.11 Advocacy, Documentation, review, etc.

- 7.11.1 Promote advocacy in women empowerment programs and reinforcement of law.
- 7.11.2 To prepare disseminate gender sensitization resource material
- 7.11.3 To create a data base policy development and net work with other civil society
- 7.11.4 Ensure that each program/ project is prepared after gender analysis as a part of overall situational analysis.
- 7.11.5 Facilitate the implementation and periodical review of the gender policy and plan of action
- 7.11.6 To promote gender equality we seek to join hands with the Government departments, civil society organizations, and other faith based organisations to safeguard the rights and freedom of all, especially women, irrespective of caste, creed, and vocation. We desire to strengthen institutional mechanisms with adequate personnel and finances at all levels, inspire, motivate, coordinate and monitor the process and results of execution of the gender policy.

8. PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

- 8.1 A gender perspective helps to integrate and consider women's and men's diverse roles, responsibilities and opportunities in developmental and political processes. Further it recognizes pluralities and diversities in our society and political realities of our country. MPSSS understands and adopts a gender perspective that includes focusing on both women and men and their relationships with each other, their access to, control over and ownership of benefits and resources. Mainstreaming gender implies that women and men have equal opportunities to realize their potential and human rights and enjoy equal status. It means creation of an enabling working environment with gender sensitive structures, systems and staffing in place. It also implies that MPSSS will encourage and facilitate local partners to develop grassroots involvement from a gender perspective and create structures that promote gender equity and equality.
- 8.2 It upholds the importance of developing specific interventions to meet the practical and strategic needs of women in order to ensure the empowerment of women as a step towards gender equality. It highlights the need to engage both women and men in the processes of gender sensitization aiming at attitudinal change, the effect of which will be seen in the behaviour and gender relations.

- 8.3 The concept of women's empowerment was further sharpened through involvement in the process of critical consciousness-raising, transformative action/reflection among the marginalized and the oppressed.
- 8.4 It will also aim at developing gender mainstreaming programs at the level of program/appraisal/monitoring and evaluation.

9. CONCLUSION

This policy guideline seeks to address the situation of women in Madhya Pradesh, especially in the working areas of partner organisations. We will always be engaged in relentless efforts to fight discrimination and subordination of women wherever possible. Gender Policy will assist it to achieve gender equality at home, in the work place, in communities, villages and society at large.