Title: Vita Gender Policy

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Version Control

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2	March 2019	Emily Hosford (Ethiopia Desk Officer)	Addition of terminology to glossary	Board March 2019
3	March 2023		Review	

Vita recognises that gender disparities persist globally and at all levels. With consideration for international development, Vita recognises that women disproportionately bear the burden of poverty. Women across the world have less access to political representation, decent employment, dramatically reduced access to primary, secondary and tertiary education enrolment, and are less likely to access medical services or treatment.

The day-to-day responsibility of managing issues of gender within the programmes and within the organisation rests with Vita management. The directors of Vita will provide oversight of the gender policy process.

Each country of operation must separately adapt the organisational policy, in order to ensure its compliance with relevant national legislation, custom and requirements. The Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea have signed 'The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women' (CEDAW) in 1981 and 1995 respectively. Ireland acceded to the Convention in 1985. The promotion of this policy should be seen as Vita's contribution to realise the aspirations identified in CEDAW, and other international commitments, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace, the Sustainable Development Goals, and corresponding national legislation and commitments.

This policy document should not be misconstrued as an attempt to promote women's rights in an attempt to subvert local or national Government. Rather, this policy identifies Vita's commitment to gender equality and empowerment in terms of accessing and sharing the

benefits of Vita programmes, projects and activities. This policy also aims to ensure a fair, dignified and safe place of work for both male and female employees.

This policy is a statement of Vita's commitment to the belief that men and women must have equal access to resources and services and have equal participation in political and economic decision-making. As identified in the Irish Aid Gender Equality Policy, "gender equality is an important goal in its own right and its achievement is also crucial for sustainable human development". Vita appreciates the diversity of women and men as a target population as a central tenet of its mission.

This policy is fundamentally recognises the different practical and strategic needs required by men and women. This, in turn, recognises the need for customised approaches to address the different needs of society. Vita believes in the critical role women can and do play in improving their own livelihoods, and Vita recognises the organisation's role in assisting in this work. Vita also recognises the role which it must play in supporting the practical and strategic needs of women. Through supporting the achievement of gender equality through intervention consideration, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, Vita aims to ensure that gender is fully considered and mainstreamed across its activities.

The Vita staff and Board are crucially important to the attainment of gender equality across Vita's interventions, as well as within the organisation. As such, Vita commits to providing gender training to its staff members on a regular basis. Vita also commits to improve the attraction and retention of female staff members, as well as introduce appropriate measures to build gender competencies within the organisation.

Considering the centrality of gender to Vita's work, and its desire to improve performance, a review will be conducted at least every two years from implementation to assess organisational adherence to the policy and its recommendations. This will be a Board-led process.

Programming:

Gender should be considered an intrinsic component of all of Vita's work. This policy reflects Vita's commitment to implement and manage interventions in a manner that are gender sensitive. This will help with improving Vita's gender commitments in project design, implementation and monitoring of Vita projects.

In order to realise its commitment to gender, Vita will employ tools such as:

- Providing gender training to build gender skills and competencies among staff,
- Gender analyses and gender needs assessment to inform intervention design and identify women's and men's different priorities and needs,
- Ensure women and men participate in intervention design and review,
- Identifying barriers of entry for women into interventions, and apply appropriate mitigation strategies,
- Include intervention activities that strengthen skills and provide women and men with equal access to services and training, where appropriate,
- Include interventions that target women specifically, or interventions that aim to improve gender equality, where appropriate,
- Include gender sensitive indicators and objective, measure sex-disaggregated data and other approaches to deliver a gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation system,
- Develop and apply gender sensitive objectives and indicators to interventions,
- Scaling up and replicating successful interventions to reach poor and marginalised women and men in an equitable manner,
- Sharing Vita's gender policy with implementing partners,
- Communicating Vita's interventions in a gender sensitive manner when fulfilling donor reporting requirements or fundraising activities.

Human Resources:

Vita is committed to advancing gender equality amongst its own staff, Board of Directors, consultants and interns. This commitment is reflected in Vita's values.

In order to achieve gender equality in the Vita workforce and organisational culture, Vita will employ a gender sensitive approach to its human resource management. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The provision of gender training to all staff,
- Dissemination of appropriate human resource manuals to staff, ensuring staff are aware of their statutory and organisational entitlements,
- The introduction of gender competencies in appropriate job descriptions and performance management, varying according to seniority and role,
- Encouraging the development of an organisational competency in gender, as a result of inclusion in all job descriptions,
- Ensure dissemination and training regarding Vita's Dignity at Work policy, safeguarding staff from bullying, harassment and sexual harassment,
- Actively encourage female applicants in all job advertisements across the organisation,
- Develop strategies to recruit female staff at all levels of the organisation, and develop progression strategies for female staff.

Providing a safe and productive workplace is crucial to achieving a desirable workplace for all employees, and as such, Vita reaffirms its commitment to its Dignity at Work Policy. The Vita Dignity at Work Policy protects its employees from bullying, harassment and sexual harassment, and should be reflected in human resource manuals in all offices of operation.

Annex 1: Glossary

Equality between Women and Men (Gender Equality): Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, boys and girls. 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. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and engage men as well as women.[1]

Gender: Vita identifies gender as the social attributes, relationships and opportunities associated with being male and female. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation processes. They are context and time-specific and are changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. 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. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context.[2]

Practical Gender Needs: These are the short-term needs arising from women's and men's responsibilities and daily living conditions. For women, practical needs concern areas such as healthcare, education, water supply, food and income for everyday households' requirements. There is often a convergence between women's practical need and family needs, making them much easier and more visible for interventions to address.[3]

Strategic Gender Needs: Strategic needs arise out of women's subordinate position to men. They are not always immediately identifiable by the women concerned. They may relate to inequalities in the gender division of labour, in ownership or control of resources, in participation in decision-making or in experiences of GBV and discrimination against women under law. These needs require strategies for challenging fundamental inequalities and are more likely to meet resistance. Ultimately, these needs are strategic and have the potential to transform gender relations in favour of equality. [4]

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[1] UN Women
[2] UN Women
[3] Irish Aid Gender Equality Policy
[4] Ibid

Sex: These are universal, biological characteristics of men and women. There are a number of indicators of biological sex, including sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.

Gender mainstreaming: Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.[5]

Gender analysis: Unless we know who is affected and in what way by an issue, then we cannot respond appropriately. A gender analysis examines the different roles and responsibilities of women and men, their access to and control of resources and their different but equally significant experiences, priorities and capacities. This type of information is usually collected in qualitative ways (through interviews, focus group discussions etc.).[6]

Gender sensitive indicators: Gender sensitive indicators are like all other indicators as they measure change. However, gender sensitive indicators attempt to measure change for both women and men or measure change in gender equality issues. Gender sensitive indicators will provide information about the status/ activity of women relative to some norm.[7] For example in 2015, 32% of women in X community have access to agricultural assets, compared to 54% of men. Gender sensitive indicators require data to be disaggregated by sex.

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[5] United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), 1997
[6] Trócaire, 2010
[7] Trócaire, 2010

Annex 2: Recommended Gender Mainstreaming Checklist

1. Is a gender analysis included in the programme/project proposal?
2. Have women and men contributed to the design of programmes?
3. Does the intervention explicitly address women's and men's different priorities and needs? Do the intervention's proposed activities reflect these needs?
4. Are there barriers for entry for women to participate in the programme/project? How can intervention design mitigate/tackle these issues?
5. Does the intervention include activities which are targeted solely at women, or activities which aim to improve gender equality?
6. Will intervention design or implementation lead to positive/negative effects on women/men?
7. Are intervention indicators and objectives gender sensitive?
8. Are gender dimensions reflected in reporting dialogue?
9. Is data disaggregated by sex?
10. Has Vita shared its gender policy with implementing partners?