POLICY G010: GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT POLICY

Responsible person:	CEO	Version:	1.3
Approved by Board of Directors on:	27 February 2019	Scheduled review date:	November 2027

PREAMBLE

This policy was written by So They Can (Australian Entity) for use across all So They Can offices. So They Can operates six offices registered in each of Australia, Kenya, Tanzania, New Zealand, England & Wales and the USA, which are part of the So They Can Global Alliance. In this policy, 'CEO' means CEO of So They Can (Australian Entity). Unless specified otherwise the 'Board' refers to the board of So They Can (Australian Entity). This policy is intended for all So They Can staff, Board members and volunteers, in all 6 So They Can offices. So They Can procedures are consistent with So They Can policies.

DEFINITIONS

Gender refers to the social differences between females, males and non-binary people throughout the life cycle that are learned, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between cultures. We recognise that many individuals identify as male or as female. We also recognise that gender is not binary, and includes a wide spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively feminine or masculine. "Gender," along with class and race, determines the roles, power and resources for females and males in any culture. Historically, attention to gender relations has been driven by the need to address women's needs and circumstances as they are typically more disadvantaged than men. Increasingly, however, the humanitarian community is recognizing the need to know more about what men and boys face in crisis situations.

Gender equality refers to the equal enjoyment by all regardless of the gender they identify with opportunities, resources and rewards. Equality does not mean that individuals of various genders, women, men and non-binary, are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are not governed or limited by whether they were born female or male.

Gender equity means justice in the distribution of resources, benefits and responsibilities between women, men and non-binary people. The concept recognises that power relations across different gender are unequal, and that such inequalities should be addressed.

Gender-based violence is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions. Examples include sexual violence, including sexual exploitation/abuse and forced prostitution; domestic violence; trafficking; forced/early marriage; harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; honour killings; and widow inheritance.

Women's empowerment involves awareness-raising, building of self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. Empowerment comes from within; women empower themselves. Increase women's power through power to; power with and power from within which

focus on utilizing individuals and collective strengths to work towards common goals without coercion or domination. Women's empowerment is achieved when women and girls acquire the power to exercise their rights, act freely and fulfil their potential as full and equal members of their society.

POLICY

So They Can's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy is in line with the United Nation's Fifth Sustainable Development Goal – to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls– and is aligned with the Australian Government's gender equality and women's empowerment strategy.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide directions to So They Can and its partners to strategically advance gender equality goals within the organisations programs, procedures and systems, roles and accountabilities.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment are to be central in design, implementation, operation and evaluation of all So They Can projects and activities in all countries where So They Can works.

PRINCIPLES

So They Can acknowledges the critical role women play in accelerating the progress in development and through adopting this policy articulates commitment to the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment developed by UN Women:

- Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Treat all women and men fairly at work—respect and support human rights and non-discrimination.
- Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

PROCEDURES

With respect to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, So They Can is fundamentally committed to:

- adopting a rights-based approach to issues of gender which promotes and advocates the rights of women and girls and models best practice in gender justice;
- increasing the capacity of women and girls to realise their rights, determine their life outcomes and influence decision-making in their households, communities and societies;
- eliminating gender inequalities in access to, control over and benefits from resources, education and health services and employment opportunities;
- ensuring women's equal participation in community consultations, decision-making processes in program design and implementation;
- ensuring that gender equality is taken into account in every stage of the project cycle including monitoring and evaluation;
- risk analysis and implementation of strategies to manage potential risks and harms to women, girls, boys and men.
- encouraging gender balance in all working groups and initiatives;

- eliminating all forms of discrimination based on gender, age and other relevant diversity factors such as ethnicity, religion, etc.
- responding to gender-based violence and mitigating its harmful effects on individuals and communities;
- promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through specifically designed projects and initiatives;
- supporting women in achieving leadership positions in their communities and societies;
- ensuring that gender equality and female empowerment training is provided for all project personnel;
- working with partners to advance their own gender equality priorities

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- So They Can Policy and Manual Register
- DFAT Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (February 2016)
- ACFID Code of Conduct, Commitment 2.3

Date	Version	Comment
27 February 2019	1.1	Review of the policy in line with DFAT requirements
29 March 2021	1.2	Policy reviewed by So They Can International office, non-binary people and acknowledgement of their diversity and rights added into the definition.
November 2023	1.2	Biennial policy review, no changes
November 2025	1.3	Addition of England & Wales entity into preamble, Biennial policy review.