GENDER POLICY

AUGUST 2020
POLICY STATEMENT

Health Development Initiative (hereinafter HDI) is committed to providing a safe environment for all free from gender-based violence. **HDI will operate a zero tolerance policy for any form of gender-based violence in the workplace and in the course of work, treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations of gender-based violence.**

All complaints of gender-based violence will be taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence. No one will be victimized for making such a complaint.

1. Definition

HDI subscribes to the definition provided by the United Nations which defines gender as the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Whereas biological sex is determined by genetic and anatomical characteristics, gender is an acquired identity that is; learned, changes over time and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them.¹

**Gender Mainstreaming:** Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for all of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making all concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that people benefit equally and, inequality is not perpetuated.² The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

**Human Rights-Based Approach:** A conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human-rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities that lie at the

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¹ United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)

² United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), (2006).
heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress.³

**Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** GBV is all acts of violence perpetrated against anyone based on their gender; including girls, boys, violence against women, as well as violence against men, lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer (LGBTIQ). It is a human-rights violation and that it also directly affects SRH outcomes and, consequently, socio-economic development.⁴

2. **Scope**

This policy applies to any person working with HDI regardless of gender, sexual orientation, position, working relationship with HDI, seniority, marital status or any other status. This policy protects employees, interns /fellows, contractors and beneficiaries of HDI programs.

3. **Preventive measures**

HDI shall organize a mandatory training for new staff, interns or fellows (volunteers) as part of induction.

Each year, HDI shall organize at least one refresher training on gender and gender-based violence to its employee, interns or fellows. HDI shall also sensitize its employees, interns, fellows and beneficiaries of HDI’s programs on the prohibition of gender-based violence and existing reporting mechanisms. In addition, the disciplinary committee shall conduct a risk assessment annually and provide a written report with advice to the HDI management so that gender-based violence can be prevented at the workplace or field visits.

All HDI’s employees, interns or fellows and contractors must familiarize themselves with this policy on gender and seek guidance or further clarification from the disciplinary committee in case of doubt or confusion.

4. **Disciplinary committee**

A disciplinary committee is hereby established with the mandate of handling all allegations of gender-based violence and advices HDI accordingly on other preventive measures. The

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disciplinary committee shall be comprised of 2 HDI member Staff elected by their peers/colleagues and 1 Legal Advisor.

The disciplinary committee may also invite an independent expert in the following circumstances:

- When a member of the committee has recused himself or herself to avoid a conflict of interest such as being a close friend to the alleged perpetrator or the victim
- A member of the disciplinary committee is himself or herself subject to an investigation for committing gender based violence.

The disciplinary committee shall develop its rules and procedure to handle gender-based violence allegations.

5. **Reporting gender-based violence**

Any HDI Staff, intern /fellow or contractor who has experienced gender-based violence is encouraged to either report to the disciplinary committee or to the Police. In case, the victim opts to report to the Police, he or she may inform HDI about it.

Any HDI Staff, intern /fellow or contractor who witnesses an act of gender-based violence or having sufficient evidence must report the incident to the disciplinary committee.

The reporting might be made in oral or in writing. However the recording of the reporting must be in written and signed by the victim or witness who reported the incident in all circumstances. Beneficiaries who cannot manage to come to HDI’s office, can report through the hotline number 3530.

6. **Support to victim of gender-based violence**

HDI will provide any possible support to the victim of gender-based violence who has reported the incident to the police until the matter is resolved by providing sufficient evidence it may have in its possession. The victim must be informed on the outcome of the internal investigation carried against his or her perpetrator

7. **Protection against retaliation**
HDI will support employees, interns, or fellows who will be victims of gender-based violence or have reported as witnesses a case of gender-based violence and will not take any adverse action against them.

8. **Sanctions and disciplinary measures**

After internal or external investigation, anyone who has been found to have committed either gender-based violence or sexual gender-based violence or both under the terms of this policy is liable to dismissal from work without notice.

The following sanctions will be applied to those who condone gender-based violence by either failing to report the incident or assisting the alleged perpetrator in concealing evidence or threatening the victim /survivor:

- verbal or written warning
- adverse performance evaluation
- suspension
- dismissal

HDI will terminate employee, intern /fellow or contractor’s contract who is found guilty in a court of law for committing gender-based violence against his or her colleague, intern or fellow, contractor or beneficiaries of HDI programs, even if HDI has not conducted its own investigation.

9. **Implementation and dissemination**

All HDI employees, interns /fellows and contractors shall receive a soft copy of this policy via email and will be required to acknowledge its receipt. This policy is part and parcel of any contractual agreement between HDI and employees, interns /fellows and contractors. Henceforth, the gender policy will have the same effect as that of the contract signed by the employee.

Employee: __________________________________________________________

Employer: __________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________________________

Date: ________________