

# POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY

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This policy forms the basis of Olof Palme International Center’s (Palme Center) gender equality work and how it is aligned to our goals and work. Furthermore, the policy outlines the imperatives regarding gender equality work and how it will be integrated in our operations. The policy applies to all operations – domestic and international – and the implementation is embodied in the action plan for gender equality.

The Palme Center defines gender equality as the equal distribution of influence, conditions and power between the sexes. This means that everyone, whatever their gender identity, must have the same rights and obligations in every area of life.

## BACKGROUND

Women are a group that is discriminated against economically, socially and politically in the majority of countries in the world. They have fewer resources and rights than men and poorer opportunities to make decisions that affect their lives. Women and girls do the majority of unpaid housework and often have low-paid and dangerous jobs, particularly in the informal sector. According to UN body UNIFEM, the value of unpaid work done by women amounts to almost half of total global GNP. In general, women have lower salaries than men and face greater discrimination on the labour market.

Women are also severely affected by the conflicts in the world but are underrepresented and in many cases completely excluded from peace and reconstruction processes. The civilian population is highly exposed in today’s conflicts, with women and girls particularly vulnerable. Sexual assault is a widespread phenomenon in conflicts all over the world. It is used as a weapon and results from lawlessness and anarchy.

To address these challenges, the world’s political leaders have adopted goals through Agenda 2030, which aim, among other things, to achieve gender equality and empowerment for women and girls. In Sweden, gender equality is a priority in development cooperation and forms part of Sweden’s global development policy. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a powerful tool for women all over the world to take control and shape their own lives.

Working for greater gender equality is a fundamental part of development cooperation, as it is a question of human dignity, democracy and the equal rights of all people. The link between increased gender equality and reduced poverty is also broadly supported by research.

## PALME CENTER’S GENDER EQUALITY WORK

The Palme Center’s vision is a world of peaceful societies founded on democratic principles and the equality of all people. Therefore, our work is to promote three things: democracy, human rights and peace. Our theory of change is based on the idea that fundamental change is best

achieved through organised communities. That means people organising themselves and claiming their rights as a collective.

For the Palme Center, gender equality is a prerequisite for democracy, peace, sustainable development and poverty alleviation. The Palme Center is a feminist organisation and this approach must be integrated in all our operations. Our gender equality work is about peace and freedom. Achieving the principles of democracy means giving everyone the same opportunity to shape society and their own life, regardless of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. We therefore focus on both gender equality and non-discrimination, in the knowledge that different types of discrimination compound one another.

Achieving gender equality requires changes in the structural imbalance of power that exists between men and women. This includes political, economic, social and cultural power. The Palme Center emphasises that gender equality is not just an issue for women. Men and women both have a responsibility for gender equality work. Equality benefits everyone.

The labour movement has an important role to play in gender equality work through organisation, mobilisation and shaping public opinion together with representatives of the authorities, political actors and at grassroots level.

## **OPERATIONAL PERIOD PRIORITIES**

The Palme Center will, through the broad popular support of partner organisations in the various programme countries and the Palme Center's communication work in Sweden, further integrate gender equality in its operations and highlight the importance of gender equality for achieving democracy, peace and human rights.

During our operational period 2015 – 2019, the Palme Center prioritises to further develop and strengthen our work in this focal area by:

- Increasing the quality of and further developing effective internal steering documents and tools for gender equality work.
- Projects that are run using funding from the Palme Center must contribute to increased gender equality. Operations must be run on the basis of an analysis of the gender equality situation as well as clear objectives in a way that reinforces the equal value and rights of all people. This applies during all phases of the programmes: application, implementation and reporting.
- Increasing awareness and understanding among the Palme Center's personnel, project workers, partners and target groups of the connection and context from a gender equality perspective with regard to how power structures, discriminatory social structures, norms and attitudes affect everyone, regardless of gender identity.
- Continuing to develop lobbying work and being an opinion-shaping voice for international work permeated by a feminist approach and gender equality, as well as the positive effects it has for peace, democracy, sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

## WORKING METHODS

The Palme Center uses gender equality integration as a working method to increase gender equality and this is also a specific objective within projects and programmes. Gender equality integration means incorporating this view in decision-making at all levels of the organisation and in all stages of the process: concept and planning, budgeting, implementation and evaluation. Gender equality integration work involves systematic monitoring, analysis and highlighting of the consequences of different suggestions and types of operation for women and for men. Examples of how gender equality is integrated in operations include:

- Appoint a person responsible for coordinating and monitoring gender equality work. The work should be done in close collaboration and in dialogue with all parties involved.
- Training of personnel, member organisations and local partner organisations in gender equality and how the Palme Center’s methodology support can be used.
- Assessment of the gender equality work of partner organisations within their own organisation and support for the partner organisations in developing their internal and external gender equality work.
- Meeting activities (seminars, networking meetings, conferences) where we highlight how the gender equality situation affects society and democracy in their efforts with equal gender representation among attendees and speakers<sup>1</sup>.
- Strengthen information and advocacy work on gender equality and non-discrimination by integrating these perspectives in relevant action plans for information and advocacy.

## OWNERSHIP AND MONITORING

This policy is reviewed annually by the board of the Palme Center. The Secretary General is responsible for the compliance with the policy and related documents and ensuring it is updated and relevant. The policy is monitored and followed up annually.

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<sup>1</sup> Consideration should be given, however, to cases where an over-representation of women is considered justifiable, for example meetings with women’s organisations.