



# **RAHAT GENDER POLICY**

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**RAHAT**  
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## **1. RAHAT: An Introduction:**

A group of energetic experienced and comparatively young social workers established RAHAT in 2002.

### **BACKGROUND:**

GENDER EQUITY IS A PRECONDITION RECOGNIZED WORLDWIDE FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF EQUITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN ALL SPHERES OF DEVELOPMENT, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO DESIGN, IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR, WITH THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND MEN, EFFECTIVE AND MUTUALLY REINFORCING GENDER SENSITIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES.

THE ORGANISATION FOCUSES IS ON GENDER RATHER THAN ON WOMEN TO ENSURE THAT CHANGING WOMEN'S STATUS IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BOTH SEXES. IT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT DEVELOPMENT AFFECTS WOMEN AND MEN DIFFERENTLY AND THAT IT HAS AN IMPACT ON RELATIONS BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN. A FOCUS ON GENDER IS REQUIRED TO ENSURE THAT NEEDS OF WOMEN AND MEN (SET IN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF CASTE, CLASS, ETHNICITY, RACE AND RELIGION) ARE GIVEN ADEQUATE ATTENTION.

### **MAINSTREAMING GENDER**

IN INDIAN CONTEXT, STILL WOMEN HAVE LESS ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER RESOURCES. THEY ARE ALSO LESS INVOLVED IN DECISION MAKING. A GENDER ANALYSIS REVEALS THAT THE PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN AND MEN DIFFER AS A RESULT OF THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THEIR ROLES. THE WAY THIS SITUATION CAN BE ADDRESSED IS THROUGH MAINSTREAMING GENDER.

MAINSTREAMING GENDER IS THE PROCESS OF ASSESSING THE IMPLICATION FOR WOMEN AND MEN IN ANY PLANNED ACTION, INCLUDING LEGISLATION, POLICIES OF PROGRAMMES, IN ANY AREA AND AT ALL LEVELS. IT IS BOTH A TECHNICAL AND A POLITICAL PROCESS, WHICH REQUIRES SHIFTS ORGANIZATION CULTURES AND WAYS OF THINKING, AS WELL AS IN THE GOAL, STRUCTURE AND RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS. IT REQUIRES CHANGES AT DIFFERENT LEVELS IN THE ORGANIZATION FROM PLANNING TO EXECUTION.

### **GENDER EQUALITY**

WOMEN AND MEN HAVE THE SAME STATUS, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTICIPATING EQUALLY AT ALL LEVELS. GENDER EQUALITY PRESUPPOSES THAT THE GENDER ROLES ASSIGNED TO WOMEN AND MEN ARE SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED AND HENCE CHANGEABLE MANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN ARE SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED AND CAN BE CHANGED RATHER THAN BEING BIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES WHICH CANNOT BE CHANGED.

### **GENDER EQUITY**

IS A PROCESS BEING FAIR TO BOTH WOMEN AND MEN. TO BE FAIR AND TO ASSURE EQUITY OF OUTCOME, MEASURES, MUST BE PUT IN PLACES TO COMPENSATE FOR HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL DISADVANTAGED THAT PREVENT WOMEN AND MEN FROM OTHERWISE OPERATING AT THE SAME ALL

### **ORGANISATIONAL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES RELATED TO GENDER POLICY**

**THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF ORGANISATIONAL GENDER POLICY IS TO MAINSTREAM GENDER INTO ALL ITS ACTIVITIES AND POLICY DECISION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION AND IN ITS PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES.**

### **GENDER RIGHTS PROTECTION GROUP (GRPG):**

THERE WILL BE ONE GENDER RIGHTS PROTECTION GROUP AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL. THIS GROUP WILL COMPRISE OF 4 TO 5 PERSONS, ONE EACH FROM THE MANAGING COMMITTEE, CORE STAFF, PROJECT STAFF, GENERAL BODY, STAFF AND TARGET COMMUNITY (PREFERABLY COMMUNITY WOMEN). THERE WILL BE AT LEAST 50% OR MORE FEMALES IN THE GPG. THE GENDER RIGHTS PROTECTION GROUP WILL BE RESPONSIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY. THE GENDER RIGHTS PROTECTION GROUP WILL HAVE A NUMBER OF CRITICAL FUNCTIONS INCLUDING DEVELOPING AN OVERALL PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENDER POLICY FOR THE ORGANIZATION, DEVELOPING A COMMON ANALYTICAL METHODOLOGY FOR GENDER ANALYSIS AND TERMINOLOGY TO ENSURE A COHERENT APPROACH IN INCORPORATING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ACROSS PROGRAMMES AND IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGY FOR CAPACITY BUILDING ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION. THIS COMMITTEE WILL SIT AS PER THE NEED AND FORWARD RECOMMENDATION TO THE MANAGING COMMITTEE OF THE ORGANIZATION. THE ROLE EXPECTED OF THIS GROUP IS CAPACITY BUILDING, REGULAR ACCOMPANIMENT AND ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY FIGHT AGAINST ANY TYPE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR WILL TAKE UP CASES OF HARASSMENT AS AND WHEN THEY ARE REPORTED OR BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

### **REGULAR REVIEW:**

THE MANAGING COMMITTEE OF THE ORGANISATION WILL UNDERTAKE PERIODIC REVIEW TO ENSURE THAT THE GENDER POLICY IS IMPLEMENTED PROPERLY AND IS ACHIEVING ITS SET OBJECTIVES/GOAL.

RAHAT BELIEVES IN PROVIDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO WOMEN IN EVERY SPHERE SO THAT THEY ARE EQUAL PARTNERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIETY. OUR BELIEF OF GENDER EQUALITY IS STRONGLY EMBEDDED IN US. EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN EXISTS WHEN BOTH SEXES ARE ABLE TO SHARE EQUALLY IN DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND INFLUENCE; HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE THROUGH WORK OR THROUGH SETTING UP BUSINESS; ENJOY EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION, MEDICAL ATTENTION AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP PERSONAL AMBITIONS. THE CORE PART OF OUR POLICIES PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS ARE BASED ON GENDER POLICY. THIS WE BELIEVE IS OUR BASIC THOUGHT AND MOTIVATION.

### **RAHAT IS COMMITTED TO THE FOLLOWING:**

- 1. TO HELP IN MAKING EQUAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS.**





2. TO PROVIDE SAFE AND FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE FOR ALL WOMEN CONNECTED WITH THE ORGANIZATION EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY.
3. TO DO AWAY WITH ANY GENDER DISPARITIES AMONG GENDER IN OUR PROGRAMMES WHENEVER IT IS BROUGHT TO OUR NOTICE.
4. TO FORM A TEAM FOR BALANCED GENDER FOR ACHIEVING OUR HEALTH RELATED GOALS.
5. TO PROVIDE REFERENCE TO OUR PARTNERS/DONORS TO DEVELOP A GENDER POLICY FOR THEIR ORGANIZATION ALSO.
6. TO INDUCT WOMEN AS MANY AS POSSIBLE IN THE WORKING PROCESS OF THE ORGANIZATION.
7. IT STRIVES TO ENSURE PARTICIPATION OF BOTH MEN AND WOMEN IN ITS PROGRAMMES.

RAHAT WILL TRY ITS BEST TO PROVIDE THE REQUIRED FACILITIES TO THE FEMALE STAFF AS FAR AS POSSIBLE AS PER ITS CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE. FEW OF THESE BENEFITS AND SCHEMES/BENEFITS ARE MENTIONED BELOW:

### 1.1 Vision of RAHAT

RAHAT envisions a society in which poor and disadvantaged people are developed and self-reliant.

### 1.2 MISSION STATEMENT

RAHAT is a non-profit, voluntary development organization working in the areas of institution building, income and employment generation, health, human resource development, education and promotion of culture for the disadvantaged segment of the society especially for women, youth, and children.

RAHAT's goal is to establish a people-initiated development process and to ensure socio-economic development of people.

RAHAT is committed to follow people's participation, institution building, human rights, gender equity, environment friendliness, poverty alleviation and people's sustainability in achieving its goals.

RAHAT is following a path of organizational sustainability, consistent with people's self-reliance.

Considering development as a complex process, RAHAT encourages partnership and networking with government and other like-minded organizations.

RAHAT has experienced, energetic, dynamic workers and members committed to achieve its goals. It believes in people's capacity and creativity and also in participatory management and is committed to ensure participation at every level.

### 1.3. The Core Values of RAHAT

- Believes in people's capacity and dignity
- Culture and environment friendly
- Creativity and innovation
- Discipline, participation, team work and openness
- Cost consciousness
- Gender equity
- Accountability and transparency
- Honesty and integrity





- Justice and fairness
- Striving for excellence

#### **1.4. Legal Status:**

RAHAT is registered with the GOVT.OF Bihar Under Registration societies Act.XXI-1860 for the month of August in 2002.

## **2. The context: Women's Position in Kishanganj,Bihar**

The women in Kishanganj are extremely disadvantaged in terms of social and economic development indicators. Their low status in the society is due to low literacy rates, life expectancy, and most importantly lack of access to economic and informational resources. In Kishanganj district patriarchy finds expression in the perceived notions of female dependence and subordination. The practice of patriarchy creates in the minds of woman, whether mother, wife or daughter, a feeling of worthlessness, servitude and dependence within the family. The role of women is characterized by lack of freedom and limit individual development. The existing inequality is deemed to be the outcome of specific social institutions designed to restrain their power: namely, segregation and legal subordination in the family and social structure.

The biological or physical difference between man and woman is often interpreted in accordance with the patriarchal notion that men are superior to women. Patriarchal ideology influences and shapes the sexual division of labor where work is allocated on the basis of sex, within both the home and the workplace. The son is viewed as the sole supporter of his parents in their old age. a daughter on the other hand, merits an altogether different treatment. As a result of the prevailing negative attitude towards the female sex, it is common for mothers -to-be in Kishanganj to suffer from the anxiety over the sex of the unborn child. The desire for sons is so intense that the birth of a daughter can have serious consequences on the marriage itself.

This poor ranking is the result of the relatively low index value arising from the low literacy rates and the low share of earned income of women compared to men.

Although, in recent years some attempts were made to bring women into the mainstream of events in Kishanganj, they are yet be incorporated in any significant numbers in the decision-making structures of the country. Women hold less than 2-3 percent of senior positions in the civil service and their representation at the senior levels of the executive, legislature and judiciary is marginal. In terms of ownership of land and assets, men at all levels of society are better off than women, a significant portion of the people living in absolute poverty being women. Households headed by women are among the poorest in the country with 45 percent of female-headed households living below the poverty line.

Gender based violence, which often stems from existing socio-cultural attitudes that regard women as inferior to men, take place in various forms that include wife beating, rape, acid-throwing, trafficking, sexual coercion and harassment, as well as verbal and psychological abuse.

Despite some progress made in recent years, women in Kishanganj continue to suffer severe forms of discrimination. In a culture that places greater value on boys than on girls, women





experience discrimination and relative deprivation at every stage of their life cycle. They enjoy fewer rights and have access to fewer opportunities compared to their male counterparts. Women consequently have lower literacy rates, lower incomes, fewer assets and less access to productive resources. Women also experience higher levels of malnutrition and morbidity, female morbidity being 10 percent higher than male. This difference is most pronounced during women's reproductive age (15- 49 years), when morbidity for women is 50 percent higher than for men.

### **3. Rational for Gender policy in RAHAT**

RAHAT considers women as the gateway of bringing any change within the family and community level and so has taken efforts to direct resources and services to them. RAHAT's focus on women is also based on the assumption that women are the main change agents both at the family and community level. Therefore, RAHAT has to address their basic needs and upgrade their economic condition to improve their overall status in the family and community they live in. RAHAT realized that women's mobility, decision-making power, access to resources are all controlled by men in their households and therefore redistribution of power through economic, social and political empowerment of women is essential to bring changes in the status of women.

RAHAT strongly believes that the vital force of every organization is its people who engage in a collective effort to achieve a specific set of objectives. It is they who make the organization a living entity. Keeping this in mind, RAHAT is constantly trying to increase the number of women at all levels of its projects. It was found in a research that once a critical mass of about 30-35% women in the organization, including at decision-making levels, has been achieved the organization as a whole becomes more accountable to the specific needs and interests of women.

#### **Some Guiding Principles followed in formulating RAHAT's Gender Policy**

- A focus on gender rather than women implies not looking at 'women' and women's issues in isolation but recognizing the different needs and interests of women and men in the context of power relations between them.
- A gender analysis of an organization examines the processes and interventions in and by the organization in terms of their effects on women, men and the relationships between women and men. It explicitly recognizes the unequal gender relations between men and women in society.
- Gender equality means equality between women and men at various levels: equal material welfare, equal access to resources and opportunities, a value system based on the belief in equality, equal participation in decision-making, and equal control over resources and benefits.



#### **4. Gender Policy:**

##### **4.1. Gender Policy Goal/Objectives:**

- To ensure a Gender friendly environment within RAHAT
- RAHAT's Programs and Projects will be based on clear understanding on gender relations, roles and identities.
- Incorporating the concept of gender relations, roles and identities in designing and implementing program and project.

##### **4.2. Gender Policy Components**

4.2.1 Organizational Level

4.2.2 Program Level

4.2.3. Stakeholders Level

##### **5.1. Organizational Level:**

5.1.1 Governance (General Council and Governing Board)

5.1.2 Recruitment

5.2.3 Structure

5.1.4 Work Load

5.1.5 Staff Development

5.1.6 Staff Promotion and Transfer

5.1.7 Leave

5.1.8 Compensation Package

5.1.9 Transport Facilities

5.1.10 Child Care

5.1.11 Staff Counseling

5.1.12 Staff Safety

5.1.13 others

##### **5. Gender Strategies and Approaches:**

##### **5.1 Organizational Level:**

5.1.1 Governance

5.1.1.1 In the General Council and the Governing Board of RAHAT there representation of women is 5 out of 7 ,and two men.

5.1.1.2 There will be a gender advisor from Governing Board who will be responsible to see organizational gender issues. Gender core team is reportable to him/her about the practice of organizational gender policy.

##### **5.1.2 Management Position:**

- To Encourage and creating scope to bring women at every level of management.
- A 3-member core team heading by a convener will be formed to ensure the practice of organizational gender policy. This committee will look after organizational gender needs and other related needs of all staff.





- A gender Audit will be done by this team every year and report will be submitted to RAHAT governing board via advisor.

#### **5.1.3 Recruitment:**

- Using flexible terms and conditions for recruiting women staff.
- Special preference will be given to women candidates in the coming five years.
- Recruitment board will be constituted taking both women and men.
- Providing preference to a woman candidate over a male candidate when both of them are found equally competent.
- Recruit women candidate having lower education in some specific cases
- Recruiting advertisement will be made encouraging of women to apply.

#### **5.1.4 Work Load:**

- Same workload will be applicable for both male and female staff.
- Nature of job will be similar for the same position of the male and female staff.
- Workload will be reduced for female staff for their special time.
- Working distance in the specific field will be considered for female staff where the working field is scattered by consultation of other field staffs.

#### **5.1.5 Staff Development:**

- Equal opportunity for career development for male and female staff.
- Provide awareness to all staff about RAHAT's gender policy.
- Provide awareness on recent gender issues to all staff.
- Provide special training for enhancing their skills.
- Facilitate dialogue among staffs in every branch office on gender related issues through workshops and seminars.
- Introduce a Gender Audit Committee (GAC) to address the special needs/problems of women staff in RAHAT as well as organize gender workshops for them.

#### **5.1.6 Staff promotion and Transfer:**

- Preference will be given to a woman staff, if found competent, to promote in the next higher position.
- Transfer is applicable for both male and female staff. However, practical needs of women staff will be considered while transferring them.
- Organizational staffs will be given privilege to apply to the higher position of the org. while a new recruitment will be made.

#### **5.1.7 Leave:**

- All staff will have equal access to general leave and benefits. However, the women staff will have maternity leave (120 days) and male staff will have paternity leave (Seven days).
- Breast Feeding: Female staff will have one hour leave from her office duty during the first year of childbearing period. This facility will be applicable up to two children.





#### **5.1.8. Compensation Package:**

- All staff will have same level of salary structure at the same grade.
- Female staff will enjoy a nutrition allowance of Rs. 300.00 (Three Hundred) per month for a period of year from the date of conception.

#### **5.1.9 Transport Facilities:**

- Women staff will be allowed to use rickshaw instead of riding bicycle in culture sensitive rural areas.
- Both male and female staffs at the field level will have access to Rickshaw loan or Bicycle. Once 50% of the paid loan is realized then the staff can become owner of the transport.
- Staffs who are in Manager and Unit In charge level will have access to motor cycle loan of Tk. 100,000.00 (One Lac).

#### **5.1.10 Child-Care:**

- Develop a child-care center for the children of the staff (if there is needed)
- Children of RAHAT staff who will occupy First, Second or third position in their final examinations, will be awarded prizes annually.

#### **5.1.11 Staff Counseling:**

- Encourages an open and participatory environment.
- Women's voice will be given due importance in meeting and decision making process.
- Ensure an environment, free from sexual harassment (which includes physical, verbal and non-verbal).
- RAHAT will maintain a strict defined principle to deal with the cases of sexual harassment.
- RAHAT will follow an open door policy to ensure access to the management by the staff at any level.
- Incorporate gender sensitivity as one component of staff performance evaluation.
- Primarily Unit In charge will be responsible to see gender issues of all staffs especially sexual harassment and other safety issues. Moreover, there will be one person with whom the staff can openly talk and share about gender issues. Selected staff should be widely acceptable to other project staff. She/he will work as the gender focal point. He/She will be reportable to the convener of the gender core team.

#### **5.1.12 Staff Safety:**

- Provide required support/assistance to women staff in work especially during night travel and evening work.
- Allow flexibility for female staff during pregnancy and lactation period.
- There will be a provision for every staff to inform about his/her sexual harassment issue in a written form directly to the convener of gender core team.



- At the field level Unit In charge will be responsible to ensure the security of every staff.

#### **5.1.13 others:**

- Discourage the practices of giving and receiving dowry by all staff.
- All Muslim staff must give positive consent on article 18 in the marriage registration form.
- Staff will not be allowed to marry twice without the permission of 1<sup>st</sup> wife. RAHAT discourages 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage of every staff.
- Staff (male and female) working in RAHAT can marry each other. But different supervisors must supervise them.
- Gender practical needs will be considered. For example, female staff during their menstruation period will be allowed to do deskwork for 3 days.

#### **5.2 Programs and Stakeholders Level:**

- Screen all programs/projects through genders lenses.
- Improve women's access to information by using various media.
- Address the special needs of women and children during emergency relief operations.
- Empower women through capacity building.
- Impart education on democracy and encourage women to participate in local elections. Therefore, consciousness will be given to the program stakeholders in the socio-economic and political issues.
- Provide legal aid support in partnership with other relevant organizations working on women's legal rights.
- Promote women's control over credit and income utilization and participation in family decision-making.
- Enhance women's confident and social dignity.
- Ensure women's access to safe health practice and services.
- Organize women through instituting.

#### **5.3. Internal and External Strategy to ensure Gender Equity:**

- Conduct internal gender audit of all its programs and projects.
- Support movements, which uphold women interest.
- Protest any anti-women declarations and actions.
- Maintains strategic alliance with key actors in the field of gender, such as women's organization or other organizations with gender expertise.

#### **6.0 Other**

- Promote exchange, dialogue and openness regarding gender issues
- Records of organizational work in the field of gender and making them accessible for the staff.
- Accommodate organizational learning on gender issues.

