

ASPIRE DEBATE RWANDA

**GENDER
POLICY
2025**



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ADR - GENDER POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

To achieve its mission and vision, Aspire Debate Rwanda is unwavering in its commitment to promoting Gender Equality and Equity both within the organization and across all its programs. The organization recognizes that societal stereotypes and ingrained social norms often limit the opportunities for both women and men to exercise their full potential, stifling their individual growth, contributions, and rewards.

Aspire Debate Rwanda is dedicated to fostering gender equity through strategic management of human resources, cultivating an inclusive organizational culture, and ensuring that its programs and projects empower communities to overcome these barriers. Through these efforts, we strive to create a more equitable society where all individuals have the freedom to thrive and contribute equally.

2. PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES

This policy aims to empower and support staff and volunteers in their efforts to advance gender equity. It reflects the core values of Aspire Debate Rwanda and aligns with global frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).

Aspire Debate Rwanda is committed to fostering gender empowerment through the following guiding principles:

- ♣ Every individual, by virtue of their shared humanity, possesses equal dignity and rights. The organization is steadfast in its mission to affirm and uphold the equal rights and opportunities of women and men, ensuring a just and inclusive environment.
- ♣ Each person brings a unique identity shaped by their character, context, aspirations, and abilities. Aspire Debate Rwanda is dedicated to understanding these differences and tailoring opportunities to help individuals and groups overcome barriers, realize their potential, and thrive in their unique contexts.

3. DEFINITIONS

"Gender" encompasses the social attributes, roles, and relationships associated with being male or female, as well as the dynamics between women, men, girls, and boys. These characteristics are not biologically predetermined but are shaped through socialization processes, making them context-dependent, time-specific, and subject to change. Gender influences societal expectations, norms, and values about what is considered appropriate or valued for individuals based on their perceived identity.

In most societies, significant disparities exist between women and men in terms of responsibilities, access to and control over resources, and decision-making opportunities. These gendered inequalities are deeply rooted in the broader socio-cultural framework, intersecting with other critical factors such as class, race, ethnicity, poverty, and age. Understanding gender is essential for analyzing and addressing the complex fabric of social dynamics and inequalities.

"Gender Equality" encompasses the principle of ensuring that women, men, girls, and boys enjoy equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. It does not imply that women and men must be identical, but rather that their rights and opportunities should not be determined by their gender. True gender equality recognizes the unique interests, needs, and priorities of all individuals, acknowledging the diversity within and across populations. This is not merely a "women's issue." Achieving gender equality requires the full engagement and commitment of both men and women. It is both a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for sustainable, people-centered development. When equality is upheld, it serves as a powerful indicator of societal progress, enabling inclusive growth and fostering resilient communities.

"Gender equity" embodies the principle of fair treatment for all genders, tailored to their unique needs. It recognizes that achieving true fairness may require equal treatment or differentiated approaches that provide equivalent rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities. In the development context, gender equity is not just a goal but a commitment to addressing historical and social disadvantages faced by women through intentional measures, creating a foundation for inclusive and sustainable progress.

"Gender mainstreaming" is a transformative approach to ensuring gender equality by evaluating the impact of all planned actions, be it legislation, policies, or programs on women and men across all levels and sectors. It is a strategy that embeds the priorities and perspectives of both women and men into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of initiatives within political, economic, and societal domains. By doing so, it seeks to ensure equal benefits for all and to eliminate the perpetuation of gender-based inequalities. At its core, gender mainstreaming aspires to create a world where gender equality is not just a goal but a lived reality.

4. THE ORGANISATION'S TWO-FOLD APPROACH TO GENDER EQUITY

The organization's Gender Policy adopts a comprehensive two-pronged approach, seamlessly integrating operational strategies with internal organizational practices.



Operational Focus: Integrating gender mainstreaming into all offices, programs, and projects is done to ensure the following: -

- ❖ All offices and Rooms will systematically employ gender analyses during the design and implementation of strategies, programs, and projects. This ensures optimal impact on gender equity by addressing specific needs and opportunities for all genders.
- ❖ Program and project activities will deliberately target diverse participants while maintaining a balanced representation of gender roles and responsibilities. This approach actively supports the advancement of long-term strategic gender interests.
- ❖ The organisation shall monitor and evaluate all programs and projects that measure the relative impact on men, women, boys and girls.

Organisational Focus: Creating and maintaining a gender-sensitive work environment to ensure that:

- ❖ Ensuring balanced gender representation across all organizational levels and decision-making structures.
- ❖ Guaranteeing that recruitment, transfers, compensation, and promotions are free from gender-based bias, promoting meritocracy and equality.
- ❖ Designing benefits policies that address the diverse needs of staff, including work-life balance, family responsibilities, and gender-specific roles such as pregnancy, childrearing, and caregiving.
- ❖ Promoting a culture of mutual respect, non-discrimination, and recognition of diverse work and management styles, creating an inclusive and supportive work environment for all.

5. PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

The organization acknowledges that progress toward gender equity unfolds at varying paces and through diverse approaches across its offices, programs, and projects. While embracing the flexibility of this process, we hold all staff accountable for making measurable progress towards ensuring that women and men have equal rights and opportunities. To realize this objective, the organization commits to implementing this policy through both operational and organizational tracks.

5.1. Implementation of operational goals

The organization will integrate gender equity into all its operations by embedding gender awareness and analysis throughout the project cycle, from design to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This will be achieved by:

- ❖ Embedding gender considerations and perspectives into project design documents, guidelines, and monitoring and evaluation tools to ensure inclusivity and equity.

- ❖ Analyzing the roles, responsibilities, cultural constraints, stereotypes, and dynamics between men and women within programs to ensure that interventions are equitable and sensitive to gender differences.
- ❖ Investigating the structures beyond the community that influence women and men's access to resources, decision-making power, and how these structures can be influenced or reshaped by the program.
- ❖ Developing and applying gender analysis tools to support project participants in addressing both immediate needs and long-term strategic interests, challenging socially defined roles that hinder development potential.
- ❖ Ensuring that technology, training, and information are designed to be equally accessible and relevant to both women and men, fostering inclusive development.
- ❖ Enhancing staff awareness and expertise through regular training on gender issues, sensitivity, and analysis to promote a gender-responsive approach in all activities.
- ❖ Integrating gender awareness into partnership strategies, and supporting partners in adopting and applying gender equity practices in their own programs.
- ❖ Continuously expanding the organization's knowledge of gender issues by conducting research, documenting experiences, and sharing lessons learned to drive innovation and foster accountability in gender equity efforts.

5.2. Implementation of organisational goals

The organization is committed to creating an inclusive work environment that actively supports and rewards the full contribution and productivity of both women and men. To achieve this, the following activities will be implemented:

- ❖ Conduct a thorough gender analysis to identify and address any barriers to equal representation within staffing structures. Based on the findings, measurable goals will be established to correct staffing imbalances, and policies related to personnel and benefits will be adjusted as needed.
- ❖ Ensure that career development opportunities, including formal mentoring and coaching, are equally accessible to both women and men, enabling their professional growth and advancement.
- ❖ Make intentional efforts to ensure that candidates of all genders are given equal consideration for available positions, promoting diversity and fairness in recruitment processes.
- ❖ Develop and review existing policies, procedures, and systems to create a gender-sensitive and family-friendly work environment that accommodates the diverse needs of all employees.
- ❖ Establish and integrate core competencies that emphasize gender awareness, equity, and organizational values. These competencies will be embedded into performance management systems and all management development programs, ensuring that gender equity remains central to organizational success.