

LORETO PROVINCE OF AUSTRALIA & SOUTH EAST ASIA

Gender Equality and Inclusion Policy



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Loreto Province of Australia and South East Asia is deeply committed to promoting gender equality and inclusion.

This commitment is grounded in globally agreed human rights principles, including non-discrimination. Gender inequality and exclusion is a key cause of many barriers to sustainable development. It intersects with and exacerbates other factors contributing to marginalisation, including race, religion, ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, age, displacement, caste, sexuality, gender identity, sexual orientation, poverty, class and socio-economic status.

The Province is committed to improving opportunities for the vulnerable and excluded, with a focus on women and girls.

2. POLICY PURPOSE

This policy defines the Province's explicit intention to support gender equality and inclusion by:

- defining and communicating clear commitments and consistent messages within the Province and to external stakeholders
- strengthening efforts to promote gender equality and inclusion within the Province and its ministries, with a particular focus on gender equity.

3. POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to all people engaged under the auspices of the Province and its ministries, including members of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto sisters), board directors, committee members, employees, volunteers and contractors (collectively hereafter referred to as 'personnel').

This policy acknowledges that:

- As a religious body, the Province may invoke certain circumstances where discrimination will not be unlawful. Sections 37 and 38 of Australia's [Sex Discrimination Act 1984](#) sets out the circumstances in which 'religious bodies' and 'educational institutions established for religious purposes' can discriminate against people on the basis of certain attributes protected by the Act, including for example, the exclusion of men from female religious orders.

- A focal area of Mary Ward International Australia (MWIA) is women in development: the majority of MWIA’s projects focus on women and their specific situations. These projects frequently involve only women as participants and beneficiaries of development initiatives, recognising that women often experience poverty and deprivation more acutely, and have a powerful role to play in development.

This policy does not apply to Loreto schools and associated schools in Australia as each has its own policies and procedures.

4. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Disability	Defined as the total or partial loss of a body part or a body function (such as mobility, sight or hearing); disfigurement; mental health disorders; or learning difficulties.
Exclusion	Exclusion is the process that prevents certain individuals or groups from fulfilling their rights. Exclusion is caused by inequality in the distribution of resources and power, by inequality in the value assigned to different groups, and by the social norms that perpetuate these differences. These causes are interlinked and compound each other. It is most often those that are not valued whose rights are not realised.
Gender	An individual’s actual or perceived sex, gender identity, self-image, appearance, behaviour, or expression, whether or not that gender identity, self-image, appearance, behaviour or expression is different from that traditionally associated with the sex assigned at birth.
Gender equality	Is a basic human right. Gender equality is when people of all genders and gender identities have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities, and are free to pursue whatever career, lifestyle choice and abilities they want without discrimination.
Gender equity	Equity is based on the concept of need. It recognises differences between individuals and genders and the subsequent need to allocate resources according to their differing needs, resources and experiences.
Gender identity	Refers to how an individual feels about their own gender. Individuals may identify as male, female, non-binary or another alternative and their gender identity may or may not be the same as the sex that they were assigned at birth.
Inclusion	Inclusion is about bringing people into a process in a meaningful manner. It is the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society and to fully enjoy their rights. It requires addressing the root causes of exclusion and understanding how intertwined the roots of different forms of exclusion are. Inclusion involves improving the opportunities available to women and girls, in particular those who are vulnerable and excluded, including children with disabilities, who are excluded on the basis of the social groups they identify with or are associated with, as well as respecting their dignity.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

1. Gender Equality and Inclusion Statement

- 1.1. We confront and challenge discrimination and human rights violations based on gender, including gender-based violence, and other forms of exclusion.

- 1.2. We challenge stereotyping and unequal power relations between genders to promote gender equality, women and girls' rights, and inclusion.
- 1.3. We foster an organisational culture that embraces and exemplifies our commitment to gender equality, women and girls' rights, and inclusion, while supporting personnel to adopt good practice, positive attitudes and principles of gender equality and inclusion.

2. Gender Equality and Inclusivity Commitment

The Province will operationalise its commitment to gender equality and inclusivity by committing to:

- 2.1 Appointing personnel and project partners with a commitment to gender equality and inclusion.
- 2.2 Building personnel capacity and skills in gender equality and inclusion, including suitable induction and training materials.
- 2.3 Creating a culture of inclusivity and consultation where personnel, project beneficiaries and project partners feel, and are, valued and respected, have the opportunity to participate, access opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve aims, decision making and outcomes.
- 2.4 Ensuring all operating plans, job descriptions and personnel performance plans reflect the Province's commitment to gender equality and inclusion.
- 2.5 Ensuring all policies, procedures and communications are developed with a neutral gender lens that upholds our commitment to gender equality and inclusion by being respectful, using inclusive and positive language and images and avoiding stereotypes with particular attention to those based on gender and ethnicity.
- 2.6 Ensuring all operational and project outcome objectives reflect our commitment to gender equality and inclusion and have measurable outcomes that reflect the participation of women and girls in decision-making.
- 2.7 Strengthening and building partnerships that promote respect for gender equality and inclusion, including engaging partners in joint approaches to promote gender equality, women's and girls' rights, and inclusion, and expanding our partnership base giving particular emphasis to representative groups such as women's and girls' rights movements among others that align with the Provinces and MWIA's objectives.
- 2.8 Incorporating gender data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant factors to inform decisions and actions across:
 - a) the Human Resources function including recruitment, staffing and termination trends.
 - b) MWIA projects, including gender equality of project beneficiaries and project partners' gender equality practices.
- 2.9 Reporting annually to the:
 - a) Province Council, Loreto Ministries Board and the MWIA Board on gender balance and inclusion practices in staffing and governance structures.
 - b) MWIA Board on progress on gender equality and inclusivity in MWIA's work, including gender equality of project beneficiaries and project partners' gender equality and inclusion practices.
- 2.10 Implementing targeted strategies to redress any evidence of inequity in gender balance or inclusion practices and taking measures to prevent and respond to all forms of gender inequality and exclusion by promoting awareness and training and providing effective systems for monitoring and reporting.

3. Management of Gender Equality and Inclusion Risk

Each organisation to which this policy applies must:

- a) commit to applying this policy;
- b) comply with laws relating to gender equality and inclusion in Australia and overseas;
- c) support and develop systems that maintain an environment that facilitates implementation of this policy and supports gender equality and inclusion: and

- d) ensure their personnel:
 - understand and comply with this policy;
 - are provided with regular training in its application; and
 - have sufficient resources for its implementation.

Each person to whom this policy applies must:

- a) know, understand, and comply with this policy;
- b) champion good practice and maintain an organisational culture that supports gender equality and inclusion; and
- c) Report all actual, suspected or potential gender equality and inclusion risks.

4. Gender Equality and Inclusion Monitoring and Reporting

Internal reporting of actual, suspected or potential gender equality and inclusion risks and breaches by personnel is both required and expected.

Instances of gender equality and inclusion risks and breaches should be reported to the Loreto Human Resource Manager or the MWIA Executive Officer as appropriate to the incident.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

Management of gender equality and inclusion is a shared responsibility of all who work under the auspices of the Province and to whom this policy applies. The Province is committed to ensuring that all persons associated with the Province, its ministries and associated entities and to whom this policy applies are aware of their obligations under this policy.

The following specific responsibilities exist in the application of this policy:

Role	Responsibility
Province Council	Notes and supports this Gender Equality and Inclusion Policy for the Province and its associated entities
Loreto Ministries Board and MWIA Board	Notes the Gender Equality and Inclusion Policy for approval by the Province Council.
Province Leader, CEO (Loreto Ministries) and EO (MWIA)	<p>Presents the Gender Equality and Inclusion Policy to the Province Council, Loreto Ministries Board and MWIA Board.</p> <p>Instructs and oversees the implementation of the policy.</p> <p>Works with key management personnel to operationalise the policy and ensures all requirements are followed.</p> <p>Notes feedback and opportunities for improvement within the Gender Equality and Inclusion Policy.</p> <p>Facilitates a regular review of the Gender Equality and Inclusion Policy.</p>
Key Management Personnel (Loreto Human Resources Manager, EO (MWIA), Supervisors)	<p>Key management personnel must ensure that all personnel and project partners understand and comply with this policy.</p> <p>The Human Resource Manager is responsible for robust recruitment, induction and training as per policy points 2.1. and 2.2 in respect to personnel, and monitoring and reporting as per policy point 2.9. a).</p> <p>The MWIA EO is responsible for the implementation of policy point 2.1 in respect of project partners and monitoring and reporting as per policy point 2.9. b) within MWIA projects.</p> <p>Supervisors are responsible for individual personnel management to ensure the implementation of the policy.</p>

	Notes feedback and opportunities for improvement within the Gender Equality and inclusion Policy.
Committee Members, Contractors, Employees, Sisters and Volunteers	Are familiar with the content of this Gender Equality and Inclusion Policy and the Province's commitment to eradicating gender inequity and exclusion. Inform partners of the Province's commitment to gender equality and inclusion.

7. RELATED POLICIES, LEGISLATION & COMPLIANCE

[Loreto Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)

[Loreto Discrimination Policy](#)

[Loreto Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#)

[Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\)](#): the principal Australian legislation to combat all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, marital or relationship status, pregnancy, potential pregnancy, breastfeeding or family responsibilities or involving sexual harassment.

[MWIA ACFID Compliance Requirements](#)

Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct, Good Practice Toolkit, Quality Principle 2, Participation, Empowerment and Local Ownership, specifically: [Compliance Indicator 2.3 'We Promote Gender Equality and Equity'](#):

- **Compliance indicator 2.3.1:** Members demonstrate an organisational commitment to gender equality and equity
- **Compliance indicator 2.3.2:** Members' planning process includes consultation with those marginalised due to their gender, in particular women and girls, contextual analysis of barriers to their inclusion and identification of opportunities for their participation
- **Compliance indicator 2.3.3:** Members promote opportunities for those marginalised due to their gender, in particular women and girls, to participate in decision-making
- **Compliance indicator 2.3.4:** Members monitor and evaluate their progress in promoting gender equality and equity.

8. POLICY GOVERNANCE

Action	Detail
Policy Owner	Province Leader
Noted	Province Council, Mary Ward International Australia Board, Loreto Ministries Ltd Board
Approved Date	21 April 2022
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Review Date	28 April 2024

9. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Amendment details
1.0	17 June 2022	First publication of policy

10. PROCEDURE

There are no attended Procedures to this policy with the exception of those detailed within the policy.