



# Gender Policy

## Activity for Reformation of Basic Needs-ARBAN

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## Foreword

**ARBAN** has long been dedicated to promoting gender equality and integrating gender perspectives into its work in Bangladesh. This commitment is clearly reflected in its policies and various initiatives aimed at gender mainstreaming. ARBAN, a local voluntary organization based in the Greater Mymensingh region, one of Bangladesh's oldest districts, operates in an area that is home to a wide range of ethnic and religious communities. Despite this diversity, women in this region, especially in education, culture, and employment, lag behind men, except within certain ethnic groups like the Garo and Hajong, where tribal women are relatively more progressive.

ARBAN works at a grassroots level to enhance the living conditions of working communities. Through its field experience, the organization has realized that sustainable development cannot be achieved without the full participation of women in all aspects of production. Without such inclusion, women will continue to face neglect and marginalization. ARBAN believes that gender-balanced participation is vital for holistic community development. From its inception, the organization has prioritized women's engagement in every sphere, including empowerment efforts, and it strongly believes that sincere participation by women can lead to significant contributions to national development with dignity.

The organization's Gender Policy is designed to align with current realities while striving to meet broader gender-related goals. In line with this, ARBAN has adopted effective practices within its projects and ensures that all staff are motivated and guided to perform their roles in a gender-sensitive manner as outlined in the policy.

Looking ahead, ARBAN hopes that its updated Gender Policy will offer practical solutions to current challenges such as discrimination and gender bias. Over the long term, the policy is expected to help ARBAN lead in addressing the root causes of gender inequality in Bangladesh, particularly the disparities in power and status between men and women.

We gratefully acknowledge everyone who contributed to the development and revision of this policy. Our heartfelt thanks go out to all those who have worked tirelessly to implement the Gender Policy, with special appreciation to the team responsible for finalizing it.

Dr. Tarun Kanti Shikder  
Chairman, Governing Board  
ARBAN

## 1. Background

**ARBAN** (Activity for Reformation of Basic Needs) is a pioneering civil society organization committed to advancing socio-economic research and development across various districts in Bangladesh. Since its establishment in June 2002, ARBAN has operated from its main office in Purbadhalia, Netrokona District, with a liaison office in Dhaka.

With a strong commitment to reducing inequality and empowering underserved communities, ARBAN adopts a holistic, area-specific approach. Through inclusive, non-directive, and participatory self-development methods, the organization engages communities in initiatives focused on Education, Health, Women's Empowerment, Agriculture, Youth and Skills Development, Entrepreneurship, and ICT.

A core objective of ARBAN is to foster a knowledge-driven society, emphasizing vocational and IT skill development among youth. In addition, the organization prioritizes environmental protection—especially within the ecologically significant Mymensingh region—and aligns its programs with both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 1 (No Poverty), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 13 (Climate Action), and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

While ARBAN's primary entry points into communities have been through healthcare, water and sanitation, livelihoods, hygiene, and education, it also brings substantial experience in providing technical support for areas such as disaster risk reduction and emergency response.

Thanks to a flexible and responsive management structure, ARBAN has nurtured a skilled and adaptive workforce. The organization boasts strong capabilities in capacity-building, training delivery, development of tools and learning materials, and documentation. It has also established an independent monitoring unit and a robust Management Information System (MIS). Through coaching and human capital development, ARBAN plays a key role in enhancing the institutional capacity of local communities.

### **Vision**

A skilled, informed, and sustainable society where every individual can learn, earn, and thrive.

### **Mission Statement**

Empower learners and communities through academic and technical education, handcraft skills, SDG-focused consulting, and open knowledge—so people can access dignified work and sustainable futures.

## 2. Rational of Gender Policy

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh clearly states that no citizen shall face discrimination based solely on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. It further guarantees that "*women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and public life*" (Article 28). In alignment with this, the Government of Bangladesh is committed to taking active steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

As a voluntary development organization, ARBAN upholds the principles enshrined in the Constitution and is equally committed to the goals set forth in the Cairo Programme of Action, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Government of Bangladesh's declarations on women's empowerment.

ARBAN values and respects the cultural traditions of local communities, leverages indigenous knowledge and resources, and promotes participatory governance as a means of poverty reduction. It also pioneers innovative approaches for building human capital, while actively engaging local government bodies, community-based organizations, NGOs, and the private sector to raise awareness of their roles and responsibilities in delivering services to the public. Through diverse participatory techniques, ARBAN fosters a community empowerment process that strengthens Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and builds grassroots demand for services.

Gender is a core crosscutting theme across all ARBAN projects. Each project includes clearly defined gender-related outcomes and measurable indicators in its logical framework. To ensure these outcomes are achieved, gender issues are addressed from the grassroots level. ARBAN has introduced a Gender Analytical Framework (GAF) to assess the roles and responsibilities of men and women in society and to guide implementation strategies before launching community projects. This tool, refined through extensive field experience, has been used to engage communities, local government bodies, and development partners, while also sensitizing ARBAN's staff.

By applying the GAF at the community level, ARBAN integrates gender considerations into annual planning and works to ensure meaningful female participation in development initiatives—both within CBOs and at the local government level. This approach supports the broader goal of fostering gender-responsive practices within both projects and the organization itself.

ARBAN's long-standing commitment to gender equality is further evidenced by the establishment of internal structures like the Gender Core Team and Gender Focal Persons, which have actively conducted surveys, represented the organization in national and international gender forums, and promoted women's participation in traditionally male-dominated areas.

Looking forward, ARBAN believes that an updated gender policy, equipped with clear guidelines, will help staff and stakeholders effectively translate gender equity principles into practice. This will further strengthen efforts to eliminate discrimination and inequality throughout all levels of its work.

## 3. Perspective

ARBAN acknowledges the existing inequality between men and women in society. Women often occupy a lower social status and face severe forms of oppression. Such gender disparities pose significant barriers to overall development. That's why ARBAN places strong emphasis on integrating gender awareness into the design, management, and implementation of its programs. The deeply rooted societal mindset that discriminates against girls and women must be transformed to ensure equality in every aspect of life. ARBAN has taken on this challenge through its ongoing projects and initiatives.

The organization's focus on gender stems from the understanding that *gender* is a powerful analytical lens to examine the socially constructed roles and relationships between men and women, and how these

influence access to development opportunities and outcomes. This perspective allows for a deeper exploration of culturally defined ideas of masculinity and femininity, which shape behaviors and responses to development efforts.

ARBAN's commitment to gender equality and equity aligns with the Government of Bangladesh's efforts to advance the status of women. This includes adherence to the principles of equality as stated in the Constitution, as well as international commitments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action.

## 4. Goal, Objectives and Strategies

### 4.1. Goal

The aim is to transform ARBAN into a gender-sensitive organization that implements gender-responsive programs and projects, contributing to sustainable development.

The primary objective of this policy is to embed gender equality and equity within all aspects of ARBAN's operations, while enhancing the organization's capacity to design and implement initiatives that improve the social, legal, political, economic, and cultural conditions of Bangladesh's poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized communities. A key focus of the policy is also to ensure a safe, respectful, and gender discrimination-free work environment for all staff.

### 4.2. Objectives

The objectives of ARBAN Gender Policy are to:

- To guide and direct the planning, resource allocation and implementation of ARBAN's development programs and projects in a gender responsive manner and to provide direction to staffs at all levels;
- To ensure a gender sensitive and work environment for all staff;
- Establish system, policy and tools to empower women and men to transform gender relations in all aspects of work, at all levels of community, local government, partners as well as within the ARBAN;
- Ensure that gender considerations are effectively integrated into all activities, projects and programmes in the planning, designing and implementation by ARBAN;
- Advocate for the promotion of gender equality establishing institutional framework for the advancement of the status of women in line with the government policy;
- To ensure the support (including professional development) required to recruit, retain and promote female staff, with particular emphasis on senior levels;
- To establish and utilize monitoring and evaluation systems which measures gender impact of projects and programs and which will include processes for review and corrective action;
- To ensure active participation of women in designing and implementation of the project/programmes.

### 4.3. Strategies

The policy objectives shall be achieved through the following strategies:

Sensitization of staff on gender issues at all levels.

- i) Endorsement of gender policy by governing board and periodic revision of it to incorporate all updated rules, regulation and guideline.
- ii) Review and revision of all other policy, guideline and framework in light of gender

policy.

- iii) Promoting a Gender Analytical Framework that ensures gender is considered in all aspects of programming.
- iv) Ensuring the translation and dissemination of the policy to all persons employed in ARBAN.
- v) Promoting appropriate education, sensitization and creation of awareness on the responsibilities of management, Gender Core Team, Gender Focal Persons and individual staff members to address gender concerns in their daily work relations as well as in program/project implementation.
- vi) Adopting an explicit advocacy role in promoting gender equity.

#### 4.4 Guiding Principles

- Gender equality should be considered as a cross-cutting issue of all projects and programmes of ARBAN;
- Women's empowerment will be central to achieving gender equality within the pro- poor and disadvantaged communities;
- Ensuring the equal representation of women and men at all levels of the decision-making structures of communities, local government, partners as well as ARBAN structures;
- Equal quality services more accessible to women and men;
- Taking urgent measures to prevent violence against women; and
- Disseminate information and materials in respect of the human rights of women.
- A “Zero Tolerance Policy” for any “sexual harassment” shall be practiced within the organization. It shall also be applicable in cases of mental harassment, physical violation, and multiple marriages. Severe punitive actions shall be taken against the employee subject to proper investigation.

### 5. Organizational Measures

ARBAN will initiate the following measures to monitors the gender issues and improves organizational capacity to institutionalize gender awareness, equality and equity:

#### 5.1. Commitment/Organizational Will

Commitment/organization will has to be demonstrated through putting in place a comprehensive Gender Policy that will translate into practice at all levels. This will require the commitment of sufficient technical and financial resources, as well as structural changes, to bring about an overall orientation towards gender equity and equality. The principles of equal opportunity for women and men need to be institutionalized. This includes equal opportunity in terms of access, use of resources and benefits and gender balance in all positions (not only in numbers), especially at strategic levels, whereby all staff, male and female, are considered equal.

The dissemination of the Gender Policy must be carried out in a manner to ensure clarity among staff at all levels, particularly at management and program leadership levels. Both the conceptual underpinnings of the policy as well as the policy formulation process itself must be well understood by all.

The adoption of gender equity as a strategic direction in programming has to be supported by adequate institutional capacity and appropriate orientation of staff. The following measures therefore need to be implemented:

- Organization should have a strong Gender committee headed by the Gender Focal Person given them adequate power to regularly monitor the policy instruments and other institutional measures adopted to achieve gender equity and equality. The Committee should function in such a way as to allow women's voices to be heard regarding policy issues related to staff administration. (Terms of Reference of the Gender Committee and Focal Persons are included in Annex-3).
- Regular gender sensitivity workshops will be carried out to maintain and reinforce the adoption of equality between women and men as a core value as well as to identify and address conflicts and problems arising out of resistance at different points and levels. Although both men and women need to have their consciousness raised with regard to equality issues and the need to counter social prejudice/stereotypes about women and men, especially prejudice against women, the gender sensitivity workshops will especially target the participation of men.
- Affirmative action in the recruitment of women will be a guiding principle for the achievement of a better balance in staff sex ratio, especially at senior management level.
- Gender focal points at Head/Unit offices will ensure flow of information to and from the Gender Committee and act as a counsellor for female staff who face particular gender related problems.
- The performance appraisal system will not include any criteria that are prejudicial to the achievement of gender balance in the organization.
- The Human Resources Development and Management Department/Administration will prepare an annual work plan for competence building of female staff in areas such as leadership, technical skills and English.
- In cases of resignation of senior female staff and female staff who have served in ARBAN for at least three years, the Executive Director or her/his designate will hold a meeting with the concerned staff to ascertain the causes of the resignation. The outcome of the meeting will be preserved and use to retain competent women staff.

## 5.2. Organizational Culture

It is the responsibility of all staff in general, and all section head and management team members in particular, to build and sustain an organizational environment or culture that is supportive of "Gender Equity" as a programming goal. All staff members must therefore:

- Believe in and value women's human potential;
- Be congenial to the growth of and contribution by women;
- Ensure that men are not unfairly treated in the name of gender;
- Consider the gender disadvantage women experience in their ability to form networks, mobilize resources and gain recognition for their contributions;
- Establish clear norms and rules regarding equitable distribution of facilities (support services) and opportunities (study tours etc);
- Refrain from any comments or gestures that indicate a prejudicial view about women in management positions as not being merit based and about promotions being seen as linked to personal connections, including insinuations of sexual favours in the case of women;
- Understand the intent of the gender policy and other gender equity initiatives.

### 5.3. Accountability

The following measures will be used to ensure accountability on equality issues within the organization (ARBAN):

- A review of procedures to improve implementation of the policy;
- An internal monitoring mechanism;
- Gender Committee to oversee the implementation of the Gender Policy and monitoring of gender issues;
- Indicators for staff performance with regard to adherence to gender policy.

Refer to section 7 for further elaboration.

### 5.4. Technical Capacity

The following steps will be taken to enhance the organization's technical capacity to equip staff with the skills and knowledge needed to make ARBAN a gender sensitive organization:

- Gender awareness activities for staff will be undertaken, with emphasis on building sensitivity to women's needs and issues and developing abilities to address women's special needs;
- Staff participation in gender training will be given positive priority and all projects, departments and sections should have annual training targets for improving gender sensitivity and building competence in gender analysis;
- Wherever possible, gender training should be integrated and incorporated into other training (project specific) and should be taken into account in the planning phase of projects so that it is clearly stated in the project "Logical Framework";
- Ensure follow-up activities and refreshers on gender sensitivity and gender analysis;
- Special initiatives will be taken to develop and foster growth of women staff, including provision of, when necessary, counselling of female staff members facing abuse/violence at home as well as confidential counselling for female staff facing abuse/sexual infringement at the workplace;
- Competencies will be built on gender analysis and conceptual clarity on equality issues will be promoted;
- Special focus on violence against women will be built;
- Special emphasis will be placed on capacity building of gender focal points and gender committee members;
- Special training on conflict resolution will be provided in order to minimize tensions and resistance in relation to equality issues;
- Management meetings will regularly assess progress in relation to gender equity;
- Mechanisms will be developed and instituted which allow for husbands and wives to work in the same locality, whenever possible.

## 6. Programme Measures

### 6.1 Design of projects/programmes

- Identify and address differences between women and men in needs, priorities, access and control while designing projects (e.g. review existing knowledge on gender dynamics in target

communities).

- Carry out participatory needs assessments with both women and men.
- Ensure that at least one member of project design team has gender analysis skills.
- Assess how interventions will impact on women's control over resources.
- Assess whether the project will address women's practical needs or strategic interests or both.
- Analyze and clearly state various assumptions made regarding gender.
- Incorporate objectives and targets related to gender into strategic plan.
- Incorporate gender questions and perspectives into all projects design documents and tools, including project-planning guidelines.
- Ensure LFAs reflect gender considerations.
- Programs and projects should seek to contribute towards the empowerment of the disadvantaged people, especially women.
- Goal and objectives should make explicit references to gender wherever appropriate, and explicitly address women and men's interests and concerns.
- Goals/objectives should seek to challenge those gender stereotypes that impede the achievement of equality between women and men.

## 6.2 Implementation

- Ensure that explicit strategies are articulated to address the gender issues identified in the design phase and or revise accordingly.
- Devise mechanisms for promoting women's participation in decision making processes at all levels and in all spheres— projects, programs, community, and family.
- Identify and work to overcome women's and men's constraints to participation, whether they be physical, social, religious or otherwise.
- Special emphasis should be given to create women's access to information as it promotes participation, facilitates involvement in decision-making and contributes to empowerment.
- Ensure programs and projects have considered and incorporated Gender Policy guidelines into programs/activities development process and operational guidelines.
- Staffing should be designed to ensure adequate numbers of women with a gender balance at all levels.
- While promoting women's participation in program activities, women's other reproductive responsibilities must be taken into account and if necessary support provided e.g. childcare.
- Materials and campaigns should seek to specifically target women and the messages should address women's as well as men's interests and concerns.
- Ensure project/program results benefit women and men equally or benefit women more in order to overcome existing gender gaps and inequalities.
- Ensure that women and men both have control over resources or benefits generated by the projects/programs.
- Acknowledge women's workload and responsibilities and their contribution to the family and community.

### 6.3 Partnerships

- Integrate gender policy principles into partnership guidelines.
- Guidelines will apply to both NGO and Government partnerships.
- The partner's degree of gender awareness will be one criterion for partner selection.
- Partners will be supported to develop, address and ensure gender equity in their programming and management. Measures for capacity building for partners will be provided.

### 6.4 Networking/advocacy

- Establish and promote issue-based networks with other NGOs, including international NGOs, women's organizations, human rights organizations, education institutions, etc.
- In line with program/project objectives, undertake policy advocacy on gender issues.
- Contribute to raising awareness on issues of women's legal rights, reproductive rights, discrimination, inequality, inheritance rights, guardianship rights, violence against women etc.
- Promote inter-organizational co-ordination and co-operation with Government and NGOs on various gender issues.

### 6.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Review and revise on-going projects as necessary, in the light of the gender policy guidelines.
- Involve women and men participants of projects in project and program monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensure that monitoring tools and processes are made gender sensitive.
- Ensure that project/program information is collected in a sex disaggregated manner so as to provide gender specific information.
- Ensure that indicators selected are gender sensitive i.e. are relevant to measuring the participation, results and changes for both women and men.
- Ensure that all projects and programs analyses direct and indirect impact (including control of resources) on women and men.

## 7. Implementation and Monitoring of the Policy

### 7.1 Implementation

The responsibility for the successful implementation of the policy rests with each of ARBAN's sections and programs and all the staff of ARBAN.

In order to ensure that gender equity is a priority within ARBAN, solid and tangible support is required from top-level management. Management at all levels within ARBAN are expected to develop strategies for providing leadership, setting standards, demanding accountability and rewarding efforts. The following decision-making and management bodies will have to play an active role in steering the process:

- The Senior Management Team (SMT) composed of the ED, Head of Department, Managers.
- The Program Coordination/management team composed of senior level program staff.
- The ultimate responsibility for implementation of the Gender Policy will lie with the

Executive Director.

All staff within ARBAN is expected to have the professional competencies to promote equality between women and men in relation to whatever issues they are working on. Methods to ensure accountability have been outlined in the policy.

### **Special Structures**

While the responsibility for promoting equality is shared throughout the organization, there is continued need for specialist resources and organizational structures to facilitate the work. These include the following:

The Gender Committee, reporting to the Executive Director, Head/Field Office based Gender Focal Persons

### **Dissemination**

A first step after the approval of the Policy will be its wide dissemination. It will be translated into Bangla and discussions will be arranged at all levels to present its objectives and scope.

### **7.2 Monitoring**

A performance measurement framework including indicators against which to assess the implementation of the gender policy will be developed by the Gender Committee in collaboration with the Gender Focal Persons.

The framework will address issues such as:

- The collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex, as well as by age and socio-economic groups.
- Analysis of information on constraints to the achievement of gender equality and on progress in the reduction of gender inequalities and the promotion of gender equality.
- Collection of information on non-project activities such as advocacy and networking.
- ARBAN's organizational capacity to deal with gender issues in the program and internally.
- Availability and use of resources.

The annual plans formulated will also be reviewed. The next year's plan will be prepared on the basis of the review. The periodic reviews may lead to the Gender Policy's being reviewed and revised, on the basis of experiences.

## 8. Annexes of the Gender Policy 2019

### Annex-1: Concept and Definition

#### Sex

Sex is the natural biological construction and differences between men and women which are universal and not changeable.

#### Gender

Gender is the social construction determining differences in roles and responsibilities of men and women. It is created by men in the families, societies and cultures which is changeable. It also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviour of both women and men (femininity and masculinity).

#### Gender analysis

Gender analysis is the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated information. Gender analysis also facilitates the strategic use of distinct knowledge and skills possessed by women and men.

Gender analysis refers to use gender analytical framework as to determine the inequalities between men and women in the society.

#### Gender awareness

Gender awareness refers to the state of knowledge about the gender **discrimination** in the society and its evil effects and how to eradicate this social evil. Recognition of that women and men have diverse needs, interests and priorities for their own development and which should be made conversant for achieving gender equality.

#### Gender empowerment

Gender empowerment is referred to maximize the capabilities of the women, in order to actively participate in the **decision-making** process of all the social and economic institutions, and in the public life as well as family life.

#### Gender equality

Gender equality refers to a situation where women and men have equal conditions and opportunities for realizing their full human rights and potential. Gender equality entails that the underlying causes of discrimination are systematically identified and removed in order to give women and men **equal opportunities**.

#### Gender equity

Gender equity refers to the **fair and just** distribution of all means of opportunities and resources between women and men.

#### Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is meant to encouraging women to participate equally with men in decision making process and politics. It seeks to respond the needs and interest of the women and men and distribute the benefit equitably among them. It also redresses the existing disparity between women and men in income generating activities, resources, responsibilities and opportunities.

#### Gender responsive

Gender responsiveness refers to a **planning process** in which project; programme actions are developed to deal with and counteract problems which arise out of socially constructed differences

between women and men.

### Gender sensitive

Gender sensitiveness refers to the state of knowledge of the socially constructed differences between women and men, including differences in their needs, as well as to the use of such knowledge to identify and understand the problems arising from such differences and to act accordingly in order to **remove such differences**.

### Gender needs

Refer to the needs identified to help women so that they can **cope with the situation better** in their existing positions. The gender needs are related largely to issues of welfare and does not challenge the existing gender division of labour or positions of men and women in society as well as within the organization.

### Gender blindness

Gender blindness refers to the non-recognition of distinctions between sexes, both biological as well as socially constructed distinctions, and the differences in the implications these distinctions have in terms of the needs and interests of women and men. Gender blindness, by not taking conscious account of these distinctions, assumes biases in favour of existing gender relations and thereby tends to exclude women and favour the perpetuation of male privilege.

The following practices have led to gender blindness:

- Compartmentalizing: refers to the practice of treating social realities of women and men in segregated compartments as though these are isolated from each other and one has no bearing on the other. Compartmentalizing tends to, therefore reinforce stereotyping male female dichotomies (e.g. 'technical and social', 'macro and micro' etc.).
- Aggregating: refers to the use of aggregate categories which conceals differentiation and inequality within categories (e.g. household, poor, labour force, etc.). This tends to homogenize women and men in these categories as having identical needs and interests.
- Externalizing: refers to the tendency to assume gender attributes and gender relations as essential and absolute (i.e. therefore assuming that these cannot be changed). Thereby, biological attributes of women and men may be highlighted in rationalizing the perpetuation of existing distribution of resources, opportunities and rights.
- Depoliticizing: refers to a common tendency to conflate women with the private sphere and outside the realm of political intervention and men with the public sphere.

### Gender Disadvantage

It refers to cumulative effect of past and current discrimination against women and of the existing disparities between women and men in social, political, economic and health indicators. Disadvantage has a restrictive effect on access to opportunities and resources.

- Gender Intensified Disadvantage: Women suffer the same disadvantages as do men in the same class or socio-economic category, but these are more severe for women because of the additional factor of gender discrimination in the allocation of resources and responsibilities.
- Gender Specific Disadvantage: Women across classes and categories suffer a common subordination and are more vulnerable. However, the extent and nature of their subordination and vulnerability varies across class and category.

## Annex-2: Terms of Reference of the Gender Committee

### Introduction:

Gender means a concept to analyze unequal relations between women and men. In order to address this inequality, the Gender committee will have to aim for improvement of the working conditions for female staff to develop a better organization over the years.

### Gender Committee's objectives

"The Gender Committee will ensure the development and effective implementation of progressive gender polices, for the betterment of the organization."

#### *Specific objectives:*

- Ensures enabling working environment for female staff which is free from discrimination and harassment and to meet their special gender needs;
- Achieves a more equal gender balance by increasing the number of female staff especially in senior positions;
- Enables colleagues to assist each other in challenging gender roles and overcoming gender barriers through providing counselling services for all staff;
- Provides advice and assistance for gender sensitive project planning and implementation, as well as support for monitoring this process;
- Upholds the core values of ARBAN; Priority Areas of Interventions:

Following are the priority areas of intervention of the Gender Committee:

- a. Identification of problems and provision of counselling services for both male and female staff;
- b. Policy development and/or revision aimed at improving the working environment;
- c. Enforcing the implementation of the policies by all Sections/Projects;
- d. Gender awareness orientation for all staff;
- e. Networking with outside organizations on gender and gender-related issues;
- f. Advisory role to projects on gender sensitive project planning and implementation.

### Membership:

The Gender Committee will be formed consist of seven members and headed by Executive Director. Criteria need to be followed during formation of committee are as mentioned below;

- To ensure a good representation of different grades;
- To ensure that all sectors/project are represented;
- To ensure a unit office/field level staff representation;
- To have a ratio male:female of 3:4
- Gender focal persons will be the member secretary.

### Focal Persons:

The Gender Committee will assign one female staff member at each unit/Field office as the gender focal person. This focal person will contribute to an effective communication from H/O to the field and vice versa. She will be trained to act as counsellor and capable of handling confidential matters at

the field level.

### **Support provided to Gender Committee Members and focal persons:**

The Job Description of the staff who assign as Gender Committee member should reflect the gender activities and their involvement in gender committee. Their individual project or section specific work targets should be modified so that they are able to devote sufficient time to this initiative. Immediate supervisors should provide support to their staff in this regard so that they can work on Gender Committee activities and attend Gender Committee meetings. Each project management team is expected to assist their respective staff and arrange transportation and lodging when meetings are held outside the regular office location.

### **Meetings:**

Gender Committee Meetings will be held quarterly basis where they review the present situation of the policy implementation and prepare next course of action.

### **Communication:**

The assigned gender focal point will be responsible for dissemination of information (memos and other documents) to the staff by hanging information on the notice boards as well as by briefings during regular staff meetings. The committee chair will issue memos on important events and decisions. A Gender Bulletin Board will be developed in most visible area of the office. Any staff can communicate directly with any of the Gender Committee members or they can bring issues through the focal points. Staff are encouraged to share any gender or gender-related issues with the Gender Committee. The committee Chair represents the Gender Committee in the SMTM.

### **Action Plan:**

The committee will have an action plan based on the following activities;

- i. Review and compilation of the maternity and paternity leave of the staff. If necessary then conduct a formal survey;
- ii. Development of guidelines and grievance procedure on sexual harassment;
- iii. Survey on physical and mental working environment related to gender;
- iv. Review of child care possibilities;
- v. Assignment and training of gender focal points;
- vi. Staff orientation package development and plan of conduction orientation;

### Annex-3: Terms of Reference of Gender Focal Persons

#### Background:

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh recognizes that "The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth" in addition it provides that "Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and public life" (Article 28). The Government of Bangladesh is also committed to take the necessary measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all forms.

ARBAN as non-profit voluntary organization committed to the goals articulated in the Cairo Programme for Action and the Beijing Platform for Action as well as the declarations on women's advancement of the Government of Bangladesh.

Gender equality is one of the prerequisites for reducing poverty, improving quality of life and ensuring equitable access to services in terms of water, sanitation and health which is considered to be national priority by the government of Bangladesh. It also contributes to achieve the MDG goals of combating the gender disparity in Bangladesh by 2015. ARBAN directly and through partner NGOs are implementing a wide-range of activities in the community and in the local government institutes in this direction.

ARBAN ensures enabling environment in the work place and facilitate the process of implementation and documentation of gender related outcomes of the project's activities at the level of community and local government institutes.

In compliance with the DACCOH guiding principles, gender issue is one of the crosscutting themes of the organization. In the activities of the projects implementing by ARBAN, it is needed to ensure that gender is incorporated properly at the level of PCM outcome plan implementation. For these purposes, ARBAN selects a focal person to lead the proper implementation of the project activities from gender perspective and also a process of documentation of case study and the best practices where gender related achievements and problems will be highlighted.

#### Overall Objective:

To ensure that gender related project activities are properly implemented in PCM and to facilitate the process of implementation and documentation of gender related outcomes of the activities at the level of community and local government institutes.

#### Specific objectives:

- Assist the project management and implementation team in implementing activities in PCM related to gender.
- Providing assistance to M&E and MIS section of the organization and LGIs as required for outcome monitoring and reporting to capture and analyzing the gender disaggregated data.
- Monitor and facilitate the process of implementation and documentation of gender related disaggregated data and outcomes of the activities at the level of community and local government institutes.

#### Role and responsibility of gender focal point:

- Focal point will have an obligation to perform at least 25% of her/his routine tasks as stated in job description.
- Review organizational policies, guidelines, documents and planning in line with this Gender Policy; monitor and evaluate departmental projects and programmes to assess whether they are consistent with gender policy.

- Ensure that project provide and use gender disaggregated data in their routine work; facilitate to identify key indicators for measuring the progression towards gender equality with MEL and prioritize key concerns and initiate action-oriented research relevant to gender mainstreaming; tools and techniques preparation.
- Liaise and consult with civil society, community and local government as well as local network for legal support to resolve social dispute.
- Maintain regular contact and communication with the SCO-B partners (e. g plan, report, meeting minutes).
- Ensure annual budget will be developed and approved.
- Co-ordinate gender training of all stakeholders' level within organization to ensure that gender is integrated into all aspects of the work; facilitate awareness-raising and confidence-building among women at all levels; ensuring that the environments of all training sessions are gender friendly. Ensuring that numbers of participants in training are selected as per the participants' selection criteria.
- Organizing quarterly coordination meeting of gender team to solve all gender related problems which are reported in the routine report from unit office focal point.

**Outcomes:**

- Key project personnel, and in particular strategic and operational managers, will be skilled in conducting a gender analysis in household, community and institutional level for participatory planning identifying gender gap.
- Women and men will have equal rights and also they have access to public health services. They will get the access to other services.
- Women and men will have equal opportunity to participate and contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of the society.
- Women's rights will be seen as human rights.
- Government, NGO, civil society and other stakeholders will work together to develop an enabling environment in which the goal of gender equality can be attained.

**Reporting:**

- Ensuring that all the documents, best practices and outcome reporting will be prepared by the focal point of unit office. Focal point must be gender responsive to observe any problem at UP or community level.
- In semester focal point will update the ED and or the Gender Committee regarding implementation status of the outcomes of activities related to gender of the project and ensure the outcomes level reporting.
- Good practices and experiences on GEM will be identified and shared among partners and results and changes in terms of gender equality will be documented.

## Annex-4: Gender in ARBAN

### 1. Background

ARBAN's development processes respect cultural values; utilise local knowledge and resources and strengthen participatory governance. ARBAN are working in the sector of primary health care, rural water supply and sanitation, livelihood, women rights along with hygiene and education as the predominant entry point in the community, ARBAN has also the experience of providing technical support in various sectors such as disaster preparedness and response etc. All the sectors are integrated with community, LGIs, and government stakeholders of different level and have the maximum opportunity to focus on elimination of gender disparity and establish gender mainstreaming.

### 2. Perspective

ARBAN recognises that roles in society may be unfairly divided along gender lines, causing gender disparity in development outcomes and so nurtures gender awareness in programme design, management and operation. Gender awareness is an understanding of the socially determined differences between women and men based on learned behaviour that influence the ability to access and control resources.

### 3. The Guiding Principles

- Gender equality (equality does not mean that women become the same as men) and mainstreaming should be considered as a cross-cutting issue of all projects, programmes;
- Women's empowerment will be central to achieving gender equality within the pro-poor and disadvantage communities;
- Ensuring the equal representation of women and men at all levels of the decision-making structures of Communities, Local Government, Government Institution and facilities, Partners as well as in ARBAN structures;
- Facilitating quality services more accessible to women and men;
- Taking urgent measures to prevent and deal with the increasing levels of violence against women; and
- Disseminate information and materials in respect of the human rights of women.

### 4. Strategy

Gender analysis helps to raise questions, analyze information, and develop strategies to increase women's and men's participation in and benefit from programmes. ARBAN uses gender analytical framework (GAF) to analyse social tasks done by men and women and their influence over; opportunities to get GO/NGO service; participation in social work; decision making; control of resources and to analyse household level tasks done by men and women (In-house activities, income generating activities and decision making).

ARBAN considers gender issues during the design phase to ensure:

- Gender disaggregated impact and output indicators are integrated into the logical framework.
- Women participate during planning, implementation and decision making.
- Training of stakeholders in gender awareness.

- Specific budgetary provision for women in plans.

Participatory approaches within a structured implementation cycle are used to empower client and service providers alike. Gender aware Implementation strategies/actions have been developed at each step of different project according to the project design and implementation. As mentioned, ARBAN has several projects focusing on different area which are cross cutting to some extent. The generic approaches and practice are to ensure the following objectives

1. Improve the understanding of gender differences in water resource management, health, education, livelihood, human rights, climate change and its impact and other related issue and way to address the gender disparity.
2. Plan, implement and monitor all activities in light of gender analysis framework.
3. Develop intervention and strategies to adopt to address the specific needs and interest of women and girls.

## 5. Process

Gender Expertise to:

- Provide ongoing advice on gender issues for action by the implementation team.
- Formulated a GAF according to project to encourage dialogue and change at community and UP level.
- Develop a user manual on GAF in light of project design and activities.
- Orient all personnel involved in implementation on the use of GAF.
- Review documents, materials and implementation processes from a gender perspective.

### Annex-5: References

1. Article 10, 19(2), 28(2) and 28(4); Constitution of Bangladesh
2. Five years Plan of Government of Bangladesh
3. Gender Policy 2000, CARE Bangladesh
4. Gender Policy 2016, Ministry of Environment and Forests
5. Gender Policy 2011, Dhaka Ahsania Mission
6. Gender Policy 2007, BRAC, Bangladesh

### Annex-6: Acronyms/Abbreviations

ARBAN	:	Activity for Reformation of Basic Needs
CBO	:	Community Based Organisation
CRP	:	Community Resource Person
ED	:	Executive Director
GAF	:	Gender Analytical Framework
GEM	:	Gender Equality Mainstreaming
GO	:	Government Organisation
LGI	:	Local Government Institution
M&E	:	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	:	Non-Government Organisation
PCM	:	Project Cycle Management
SMT/M	:	Senior Management Team/Meeting
UP	:	Union Parishad