

HALO MEDICAL FOUNDATION, INDIA



GENDER POLICY

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Term description

HMF- Halo Medical Foundation
Staff Members- HMF's staff member only

Declaration

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Background

Halo Medical Foundation (HMF) is a non-government organization operating in central India for more than two decades. HMF evolved from "HALO," a health movement initiated in the 1980s by a group of socially aware medical students of Government Medical College based in Aurangabad, India. The Health and Auto Learning Organization (HALO) movement focused on health and development issues of marginalized communities of Maharashtra. After the devastating earthquake of September 1993 in Osmanabad district of Maharashtra, HMF accelerated rural health projects through the village health worker (VHW) model. The VHW is the central core of HMF and has been acknowledged at the national level for designing the ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) program in the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). The twenty-year old organization implemented a variety of programs for marginalized communities, pregnant women, children, government healthcare workers, farmers and young people. HMF practiced equitable holistic healthcare approach in all public health programs implemented by the trust. Subsequently, HMF gathered rich experience while working in health education sector, community awareness initiatives and designed variety of campaigns for public welfare. The trust received sponsorships from North America, Europe, Asia, and is closely working with the State and Central Government authorities the country.

Present Projects

HMF operates in Osmanabad and Sholapur districts of Maharashtra covering a population of 200,000, which involves young people, pregnant women, married couples, school/college students and government healthcare workers. The organization is running a multispecialty hospital for the rural population, a nursing institute and a science center, which are major parts of HMF's long-term programs. Moreover, HMF implements a women empowerment project in 35 to 40 villages of Osmanabad district (involves Tuljapur and Lohara blocks mainly) with the support of a Switzerland based donor and also implements the Anemia Control Program in these villages involving adolescent girls and pregnant women with the support a USA based donor. Simultaneously, HMF works with the sponsorship of the government to implement Community Based Health-Monitoring (CBHM) program in 60 villages, which aims to strengthen the existing government healthcare structure.

In Sholapur city, HMF functions in about 50 urban slums focusing to develop leadership skills and supports maternal and newborn health needs. In one of the most deprived blocks of Sholapur district, HMF is implementing a 'Gender Equity' project in 20 villages with the assistance of United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), which was a recent success of the trust. Additionally, the organization implements CBHM in 15 villages in Sholapur district. The following table provides an overview of HMF's activities.

Overview of HMF's on-going projects

No	Location	Program	Involved components	Staff*
1	HMF operates in Tuljapur and Lohara blocks of Osmanabd district	Janki Hospital	Hospital serves as a secondary care referral unit for nearby villages and receives accidents cases.	15
2		Rural Science Centre	The science center connects to 30-35 schools and provides infrastructure and training to school students.	3
3		Nursing School	Nursing school trains 20 students a year and provides scholarship and government funded support.	3
4		Women Empowerment with the support from Switzerland	Project involves 35-40 villages and focuses on issues of domestic violence and supported by the HMF counseling services.	7
5		Community Based Health Monitoring	This operates in 60 villages to strengthen the existing government structure by involving 6 primary health centers.	2
6		Anemia Control Program	The project covers about 35-40 villages and aims to investigate risk factors of anemia among adolescent girls and pregnant women. Subsequently, the project provides trainings, education material and investigation support to participants.	3

7	Sholapur city, Sholapur district	Community leadership program	This involves 50 slums of Sholapur city and aims to develop leadership to improve maternal and newborn health within the slums.	4
8	Akkalkot block of Sholapur district	Community Based Health Monitoring	This operates in 30 villages to strengthen the existing government structure by involving 3 primary healthcare centers.	5
9		Men for Equity	The gender equity program operates in 20 villages and is a major contributor in HMF's success of 2013.	4

HMF is runs nearly 250 women self-help groups (Sanjeevani Mahila Bachat Sangh: Sanjeevani Self Help Group Confederation) in Osmanabad district and invests in efforts to involve community in variety of projects outlined above. HMF receives support from consultants in program management and operation. Additionally, HMF receives support for maintenance and events from staff members, volunteers and students. The outlined details are subject to change with changes in staff, project structure, duration and funds.

*subject to change with change in project, funds and employment

HMF's Vision

- ☐ Tackle health issues of rural and urban poor with a gender and rights-based approach
- ☐ Support women and local leadership in delivering and implementing healthcare systems
- ☐ Identify and implement public health projects for pregnant women, newborn and adolescent girls
- ☐ Conduct women empowerment project to support marginalized communities
- ☐ Support young people to improve their health outcomes
- ☐ Establish a healthcare model which gives accessibility and affordability for people from all social classes of society
- ☐ Address community health needs with a holistic healthcare approach to make public health systems functional and accountable

HMF's Values

- Equality and Equity- HMF identifies health problems embedded within the socio-eco-political conditions and strives to address a variety of discrimination issues and invest skills to improve the health of all.
- Participation – HMF believes in improving capacity and skills of people to understand community health issues and attempts to build a healthcare network.
- Democratic Process –HMF practices a high level of transparency and provides opportunity to every member of the organization to voice differences and care for diversity enhancing participation and to contribute to achieve the trust's objectives.
- Commitment- HMF supports community health needs and attempts to involve underprivileged communities in all programs. Through this process, the trust maintains its credibility and accountability.

Framework for Gender Policy

The gender policy is necessary because inequalities between women and men are deep rooted and manifest in various forms, particularly in Indian culture. It is necessary to be constantly aware of these inequalities and act whenever required. The gender policy serves two purposes; first, to declare HMF's focus on gender equity, and second to continue HMF's accountability considering gender equity practices on the premises and in the field area. HMF believes that providing an enabling atmosphere to the staff in gender sensitization, skill training and education are concrete pillars to implement gender equity in accordance with the organization's commitment to human rights and the Constitution of India.

Policy Development Process

HMF conducted a discussion at the head office with staff in the year 2013 to contribute to developing the policy. HMF shared the policy document with trustees and external partners and received suggestions for the same. We acknowledge support obtained for the development of policy from Dr. Shubhangi, Mr. Subhas, Dr. Shashikant and Dr. Kranti.

Objectives

- To explicitly state the HMF's commitment towards gender equity
- To provide a primary framework to develop gender related agenda
- To provide a framework for effectively integrating gender concerns in the organizational agenda and policy domain
- To create equitable opportunities and enabling environment for women and men working at HMF
- To promote pro-women representation and participation in decision making at the administrative and program level

Elements of gender policy

Gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female in a particular social setting at a particular point in time. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learnt during behavior socialization processes. It is noteworthy that these factors are context specific and changeable. In most societies, there are inequalities between women and men in activities undertaken or accessing resources and administration control. A classic example of gender-based discrimination could be evaluating a number of women participating in the decision-making in the organization as well as opportunities provided to participate in the process. Gender is a part of the broader socio-cultural context, with influence of factors such as class, caste, religion, race, ethnic group and age. Adopting gender perspective means to reduce disadvantages suffered by women and purposefully create enabling environment and spaces for them to overcome the same and help men to understand that this is must for gender equality. HMF aims to minimize or reduce the gap by implementing the gender policy in office premises and the field area. HMF also promises a periodic review of the policy and will conduct necessary evaluation, if required in the future. It is important to state that the gender policy will be sensitive and equitable wherever necessary to the community of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ). The subsequent section outlines policy terms.

Staff Representation

- We aim to recruit women and men, wherever feasible, on an equitable basis ensuring numerical balances at the decision-making level in the trust.
- We aim to ensure equal opportunities for women staff members for personal growth, promotion, training, and simultaneously will provide equitable working conditions.
- We also aim to establish equitable representation and participation of women and men in the HMF core group, board of trustees and in various functional committees of the trust.

Workplace

- HMF promises to provide a safe and secure workplace for women staff, free from any type of harassment. The Internal Complaints Committee will look into specific concerns, if observed.
- HMF will provide healthy and friendly work environment where both women and men can enjoy work and actively participate in day-to-day tasks. This includes providing flexible working hours and allowing working from home especially for women, wherever possible, if requested.
- HMF will provide secure transport facilities when women work late hours (after 7 pm) and will ensure security measures along with minimum basic facilities for women staff members traveling for organizational work during late evening or night (after 7pm).
- HMF will review the organizational structure, functioning methods, and problems in relation to gender imbalances, if occurred among staff members, and then aim to work promptly to address the same.

Project Field

- HMF will promote special opportunities for women staff members during project field activities. The trust shall make special efforts to create opportunities for women staff to make presentations in the field area, which involves delivering public speeches, campaign leadership, field management and support services.

- If HMF establishes any group at the field level or in a project area, the group will have balanced distribution of men and women.
- HMF believes in allotting tasks based on skills and employee's preference, avoiding any type of gender discrimination.
- The trust promises to conduct special skill-building workshops to promote women participation in project implementation processes.
- The trust promises to conduct gender equity workshops and trainings at regular intervals, whenever required.
- The trust promises to raise awareness on gender issues in the community in project area.

Staff capacity building

- Facilitating staff capacity, building processes and trainings to enhance perspectives and conceptual clarity on Gender issues (*for all the staff members*). It will be an important component of the induction program.
- Ensuring that all trainings (internal and external) are facilitated by the organization are gender-sensitive. (a) Training content/methodology/mode of facilitation (b) Logistics part - time/location of venue/crèche facilities/other logistics/first-aid kit
- Conducting gender trainings for both women and men; and facilitating participation of women in all the field level meetings and trainings.

Organizational Policies and Systems

- All HR systems and policies will be pro-gender and responsive.
- Incorporating and explicitly mentioning gender sensitivity as an essential element in the tasks or job profiles in all terms of reference including external consultants.
- Initiating and building advocacy about gender balance and making efforts to integrate gender concerns in development programs.

Staff Benefits

- ☐ HMF will practice all other policies designed by the trust equally for women and men staff members such as human resource policy, organization conduct guidelines and health/safety policy.
- ☐ HMF has incorporated maternity and paternity benefits through the human resources policy.
- ☐ HMF shall provide equal access to staff members for the use of electronic equipment such as computer, camera, LCD projectors or fax machines.

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