

THE SWALLOWS IB GENDER POLICY

Adopted 2011-03-13

The Swallows India Bangladesh (The Swallows IB) Gender policy is developed to state our standpoint in the gender debate¹ and to provide guidelines for the organization's work in Sweden, India and Bangladesh on the internal, partnership and activity level. A gender policy is important to adhere to in all parts of the organization, from the work performed at the offices and in the partner organizations, to the planning of the programmes and activities.

Gender is socially constructed and determined and it refers to the roles, responsibilities, needs, interests and capacities of both men and women. Gender should be separated from the term sex which is biologically determined. Prescribed gender roles dictate the status of men and women in the society and therefore often cause the marginalisation of women. Women usually do not participate in decision making processes to the same extent as men do, also, they do not access resources and opportunities as to the same extent as men, which affect their opportunity to lead a fulfilling life and contribute to the development of society. Gender equality means that the rights of the women and men are equally adhered to and that the status of men and women is equal. Further, it entails that women and men enjoy the same access to human development, including the freedom to make choices for themselves. Gender inequality is therefore one of the underlying causes of poverty and gender equality is crucial because women play an important role in society, empowerment of women strengthens the development of the society as a whole and is necessary for sustainable development.

The Swallows IB is primarily working with a rights based approach for better living conditions for marginalised groups and gender issues have a prominent role in our work. Women and girls are usually more vulnerable and marginalized than men and boys due to the patriarchic norms and values in the society and this is why a special focus should be put on women and girls in the work for development. Women and girls from the marginalized groups often experience intersectional discrimination because they are women and belong to a minority/poor/rural/immigrant/racial/tribal or other group that is not recognized and discriminated.

The Swallows IB is a gender-sensitive organization in all respects. Our vision, mission, objectives and strategies adopt the concept of gender as it is described above and are liable to ensure and promote gender equality on the ideological and practical levels. The core values of The Swallows IB are solidarity and sustainability and gender equality is an intrinsic element of both of them. Whether within household, community, societal or transnational level, real solidarity is only possible when gender equality is prevalent. Development and democracy is sustainable and has long-term results only when all society members, men and women are equally participating, sharing responsibility and gaining equally from the processes.

¹ The Swallows IB has also a sexual orientation policy and therefore this document does not emphasize separately the transsexual, gay and lesbian rights and equal opportunities.

The Swallows IB's mission is related to the work performed in Sweden, India and Bangladesh. Gender awareness is equally important in all our activities, from the information work in Sweden, to the programmes in South Asia. However, for the work with gender issues to be effective, there is a need for taking the context into account. Whereas in Sweden the gender inequality manifests more in the statistics of employment positions and unequal salaries, commercialized images of femininity and immigrant women's issues, in India and Bangladesh these are added by problems like violence, rape, sexual harassment and limited access to education and livelihood. It is not to say, however, that North or South is more apt to particular gender problems, since they all stem from the problem of patriarchy itself. Rather, The Swallows IB is concerned with the mere sensitivity for the cultural, social, political, etc. context, which should be taken into account when fighting against gender inequality.

Guiding principles

- Gender equality and equity as well as the empowerment of women and girls are central aspects of The Swallows IB's work.
- Equal representation of women and men should be aimed for in all aspects of the organizational work.
- Men and women should benefit equally from all programme interventions.
- All Swallows IB's staff as well as people reached by the Swallows IB's interventions and partner organizations should be aware of and follow the Swallows IB's gender policy.
- The Swallows IB should be an organization known for applying gender equality in all aspects of its work.

Strategies

- Develop a gender policy and introduce it in all parts of the organization.
- Ensure that all people involved in the Swallows and its programmes are aware of and follows to the policy.
- Recognizing the empowerment of women and girls in all activities carried out by the organization.
- Ensure that men and women are equally involved in all activities carried out by the organization.
- Gender equality must be one of the criteria when choosing and working with the partner organizations.
- Men and boys should be included in the empowerment of women, since it is key to reach gender equality.