



## **Samarthya's Policy on Gender**

**Samarthya**  
**At. Post. Kader Tal. Omerga Dist.**  
**Osmanabad**  
**Maharashtra - India**  
**maha.samarthya@gmail.com**

## **About Samarthya:**

Samarthya Kalyankari Sanstha (Samarthya) is a grass root voluntary organisation started by the youth from marginalised community in 2008.

Samarthya works on quality education, women empowerment, citizenry rights and community development in Omerga blocks of Osmanabad district of Maharashtra, India. The initiative was gradually formalised to act professionally and systematically on the issues of de-notified and nomadic tribes communities.

## **Our Aims:**

- To raise and maintain Samarthya as an organization committed to building a society for all based on the principles of truth, justice, freedom, equality in solidarity with the poor, marginalized and vulnerable sections of society such as de-notified nomadic tribes, dalits, tribals, minorities, women and children.
- To promote quality education for marginalised children resulting in social transformation based on transparency, accountability, pluralism, equity, justice, peace and respect for all.
- To promote women leadership to participate in the socio-cultural-economical-educational and political spheres actively.
- To eradicate caste based discrimination and ensure social equality and cohesion.
- To achieve our objectives in partnership with like-minded organizations and individuals.
- To enhance the capacity of our human resources in terms of integrity, attitude and orientation.

## **Our Vision:**

"We envision a society where de-notified nomadic, dalits, tribals, minority communities and women, live with dignity, have equal opportunity and social and economic justice."

## **Our Mission:**

"Samarthya firmly believes and is actively in promoting human rights, dignity and gender equity through marginalised people's social, economic, political and human capacity building."

## 1. Rationale for Samarthya's Gender Policy:

Samarthya was started by the group of youth, led by a woman who faced all kinds of odds emanated from the societal structure. The intervention set in addressing the issues demonstrated encouraging results, thanks to the women who have been forefront in leading gamut of activities. Hence, Samarthya recognises women as the "change agents" within the family and community and realised that they play a vital role in ensuring family's wellbeing of a family, it also realises that mobility, decision-making capability and access to resources are being controlled by men. In order to achieve gender equality, redistribution of power through education, economic, social and political empowerment is necessary. Samarthya has therefore underlines the importance of empowerment of women through all its interventions, directing the majority of project activities towards them.

In 2010, Samarthya adopted a Gender Policy in order to curb discrimination against women and influence organisational change in the prevailing patriarchal social system which encourages inequality. The policy experiences achievement in helping transform the perception of women's role in community and encouraged understanding of the experiences of women within the Samarthya and in its scope of work.

## 2. Goal:

Samarthya aims to be responsive and to promote gender equity and equality within the organisation and ensure that all its interventions serve the needs and interests of women and men equally and work to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and ensure sustainable development.

## 3. Objectives

- To create a congenial work environment within Samarthya which enables women and men to work together in a equitable, effective and mutually respectful manner.
- To provide the right direction to all Samarthya staff in policy-making, formation and planning, designing and implementation of activities in a gender sensitive manner.
- To support women and girls in the realisation of thier full human rights

- To reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over resources and benefits of development

#### 4. Principles:

Samarthya's Policy on Gender Equality is rooted in the following principles:

- **Gender equality is key to sustainable development:** Poverty and gender inequality are interrelated - one exacerbate the other. Due to gender discrimination within all levels of the Indian social system, women are especially vulnerable to and the worst affected by poverty. On the other side, women's poverty enhances the poverty of the whole family and affect the sustainability of the family, as women play a vital role in their family's development. Samarthya will therefore continue to promote gender equality and prioritise women's issues, focussing on gender equality as central issue in all its development activities.
- **Gender equality involves both women and men:** It is not possible to achieve gender equality through the singular efforts of women. It is imperative that men's level of understanding is also developed so that they can adopt the necessary mindset and the willingness to contribute equally to achieving gender equality.
- **Addressing differences:** Achieving gender equality requires the recognition that every activity affects women and men differently. Women and men have different perspectives, needs, interests, roles and resources and those differences may also be reinforced by religion, caste, class or age. Policies and projects must address the difference in experiences and situations between and among women and men.
- **Empowerment of women has always been a major focus of Samarthya:** Women's empowerment is a human rights issue and key to achieving gender equality. Samarthya is therefore committed to women's empowerment through all its activities.
- **Gender friendly work environment:** A gender-friendly work environment is a precondition to achieving gender equality in the workplace and Samarthya is determined to establish this kind of enabling atmosphere within the organisation.
- **Starts from within:** Unless a development agency practices the values of gender equality within itself, it cannot bring effective changes in the community through its activities.

Therefore Samarthya is committed to take forward all possible measures to establish gender equality within the organisation.

## 5. Organizational Measures:

By approving the Gender Policy, Samarthya's Trustee have agreed to establish line of accountability for the implementation of the policy and ensure consistency with the gender policy.

Samarthya will take the following measures to create a gender friendly environment within the organisation.

### 5.1 Organisational Commitment:

- Samarthya should demonstrate commitment through putting in place a comprehensive gender policy that will translate into practice at all levels.
- All activities and procedures will be revised and designed in accordance to the gender policy.
- Samarthya aims to maintain 50% female staff by offering terms and condition suitable to motivate women to retain.
- The HR policy of Samarthya should analyse the gender ratio and take appropriate steps to achieving gender balance.
- Interview panels should be formed with equal representation of men and women and must be friendly to female candidate. Interviews will include gender related questions to assess candidate's knowledge, ideas and attitudes regarding gender issues.
- Training and exposures should be provided to female staff in order to enhance their competency and improve their abilities to assume senior positions.
- At least 30% of staff development funds should be utilised for performance development of female staff.

### 5.2 Awareness and Capacity Development:

- Gender awareness training has to be undertaken to correct attitudes.
- All staff should be equipped through training with the appropriate skills necessary for gender integration in the their respective programmes.

- Dialogue on gender issues should be facilitated among male staff through workshops to encourage a positive attitude towards women's empowerment.
- Awareness should be developed on the effects of HIV/AIDS and other STDs on women and men's role in their transmission.

### **5.3 Organizational Culture:**

- Committee Against Sexual Harassment (CASH) should also be formed to redress grievances of both male and female staff. Should take adequate measures to ensure staff awareness on this. The committee will provide counseling to victim of harassment.
- Open discussion on gender discrimination and violence against women will be encouraged in order to create gender-friendly working environment.
- Special needs of female staff, such as maternity leave, flexibility during pregnancy, post-partum and lactation period and issues related to travel time and work hours, should be fully considered.
- Evidence of gender bias at both individual and organizational levels should be challenged and special efforts made to recognize achievements of female staff.
- Due importance should be given to the voice of women and Dalit groups in all planning and decision-making process.
- Awareness should be created among male staff about the objectives of paternity leave and they should be encouraged to the provision accordingly.

### **5.4 Accountability**

- The special efforts should be made analyse the progress of the Gender Policy implementation.
- Team should take effort in gender-mainstreaming process and to incorporate the concept in all activities.

### **5.5 Organisational Development:**

- Samarthya shall conduct internal gender audit of all activities to identify and gap and take necessary action.
- Samarthya will conduct annual surveys to monitor attitude changes among staff and take action according to findings.
- An operation plan shall be developed to ensure proper implementation of the gender policy in which monitoring indicators will be established.

## 6. Expected Output will include:

Endorsement of Gender Policy by Trustee	Monitoring progress of implementation of gender policy with the help of monitoring indicators.
Gender Policy translated to Marathi and distributed to all staff	Gender Audit performed and action plans, developed from audit also implemented.
All activities and programmes revised in accordance with Gender Policy.	Gender issues included, evaluated continuously.
Staff sensitisation on gender issues enhance	Increased participation of staff especially male staff in gender related activities.
Work environment for both men and women.	Sexual harassment dealt with in swift , fair and effective manner, reducing occurrence.



## **Glossary of Terms:**

### **Gender:**

Gender refers to socially constructed roles played by women and men that are assigned on the basis of sex. Gender is used as a means to distinguish similarities and differences between women and men without direct reference to human biology but rather to the behavioral patterns expected of women and men their cultural reinforcement. These roles are usually specific to a particular area and time.

### **Gender Equity**

Gender Equity is the principle and practice of fair and equitable allocation of resources and opportunities for females and males - a stage in the process of achieving gender equality. In order to ensure fairness, measures must be taken to compensate historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field.

### **Gender Equality:**

Gender Equality entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

### **Gender Mainstreaming:**

Mainstreaming focusses on the institutions, policies and programmes that have a broad impact on setting the conditions under which communities, households and individuals function. It seeks to ensure that these institutions, policies and programmes respond to the needs and interest of women as well as men and distribute benefits equitably between women and men. Finally, it seeks to redress the existing disparity between women and men income generating activities, resources, responsibilities and opportunities.