Cowater International's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy
Last Reviewed: 1 May 2022

1   Purpose and Scope

In many parts of the world, women and girls are denied access to resources, participation in decision-making, and their human rights, impacting them, their families, and their communities. Individuals and sections of society who experience poverty or are marginalized on the basis of sex, gender identity, disability, age, religion, race, ethnicity, economic status, or other aspects of identity are also vulnerable to being denied their human rights.

Cowater International ("Cowater") recognizes that gender equality and social inclusion enables the development of healthier, more prosperous societies, in which women, men, girls, boys and non-binary people from a diversity of backgrounds can thrive. As a result, Cowater is firmly committed to advancing gender equality and social inclusion and preventing and addressing all forms of discrimination. This includes the empowerment of women, girls, and non-binary people and challenging harmful gender stereotypes, norms and roles, including through the engagement of men and boys, in the interests of achieving equitable outcomes. This Policy defines Cowater's explicit commitment to supporting gender equality and social inclusion across its projects and operations.

This policy applies to all employees and contractors, and is to be included in all employee and contractor manuals and contracts.

2   Definitions

Contractor:	Anyone who has a contractual relationship with Cowater, including project staff, consultants, associates, etc.
Employee:	Any individual employed by Cowater and who specifically works out of a Corporate/Hub location.
Gender Equality:	Gender equality means that women, men, girls and boys enjoy the same status and have equal opportunity to realize their full human rights.
Marginalized Groups:	Individuals and sections of society who experience poverty and/or are marginalized based on disability, race, ethnicity, gender identity, religion and/or other aspects of identity.
Non-binary Individuals:	Individuals with a gender or sexual identity that is not defined in terms of traditional binary oppositions such as male and female or homosexual and heterosexual.
Social Inclusion:	Social inclusion is a process of improving the terms for poor and marginalized individuals and groups to take part in society and benefit from development opportunities.

3   Policy Goal

Cowater's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy aims to support the achievement of equality between women, men, girls, boys, and non-binary individuals irrespective of sex, gender, disability, age, religion, race, ethnicity, economic status or other intersectional factors.

4   Policy Objectives

The objectives of the policy are:

- To ensure the integration of gender equality and social inclusion considerations across policies, projects and operations;
- To promote a gender-equitable and socially inclusive organizational culture; and,
- To re-affirm and strengthen Cowater's commitment to equal rights for women, men, girls and boys, free of all forms of discrimination.

5   Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy are:

1. Women and men are equal partners in the sustainable development of their societies.
2. Gender equality and social inclusion are essential to the full realization of human rights.
3. A deliberate and consistent effort is required to eliminate systemic discrimination against women, girls and marginalized groups.
4. An approach to addressing gender equality based on the intersection of different identities (race, gender, sexual orientation) and forms of exclusion will strengthen approaches employed.
5. Women, men, girls and boys all have an important part to play in challenging institutions and mindsets, including gender stereotypes, which perpetuate gender inequality.

6   Guiding Organizational Strategies

1. Promote and maintain a positive, respectful organizational culture that values diversity and ensures equity for all employees and contractors, free of all forms of discrimination.
2. Incorporate a gender perspective in organizational policies & practices, including human resources.
3. Develop and nurture in-house gender equality expertise.
4. Offer capacity development support to permanent employees in Cowater's global offices on gender equality and social inclusion and their operationalization on projects.
5. Ensure a common understanding among staff and consultants of Cowater's commitment to gender equality and social inclusion by embedding Cowater's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy in all Field Operations Manuals and employee and contractor's contracts.
6. Establish accountability mechanisms to monitor the status of gender equality and social inclusion within organizational practices and programming, including through staff performance reviews.

7 Guiding Program Strategies

7.1 Planning

1. Include a gender equality and social inclusion specialist or gender focal point in project teams and offices.
2. Carry out gender-sensitive recruitment, striving for representation of women and diverse groups.
3. Provide gender equality and social inclusion training to project staff and partners to establish a common approach to integrating gender equality and social inclusion considerations into projects.
4. Incorporate gender equality and social inclusion perspectives in policy/planning processes and documents, using a participatory approach with multiple stakeholders.
5. Systematically allocate project resources to implement gender equality, social inclusion and women's empowerment interventions, and obtain gender expertise.

7.2 Implementation

1. Systematically integrate gender equality and social inclusion as cross-cutting themes across projects. This involves considering the needs and capacities of women, men, girls and boys, including the most vulnerable groups, in the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives.
2. Use gender equality and social inclusion analysis as a tool across projects to identify the differentiated impact and opportunities of project interventions, based on the different needs, capacities, roles and responsibilities of women, men, girls and boys, including the most vulnerable groups.
3. Strive to adopt gender-transformative approaches that contribute to long-term social change leading to gender equality and social inclusion.
4. Actively engage men and boys in challenging discriminatory gender norms and attitudes.
5. Engage relevant influencers, such as traditional and religious leaders, health care workers, educators, community leaders and organizers to address gender inequality.

7.3 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

1. Design, implement, and regularly monitor gender equality and social inclusion strategies as part of a project's results-based management approach.
2. Collect, analyze, and use sex- and age-disaggregated data and support partners to do the same in all initiatives to establish good practices and inform programming decisions.
3. Perform gender equality risk assessments and develop mitigation and response strategies.
4. Monitor and evaluate gender equality and social inclusion initiatives and outcomes and re-align approaches as necessary to achieve gender equality and social inclusion objectives.
5. Document and share learning gained through project experience to develop effective approaches and inform evidence-based advocacy in support of gender equality and social inclusion.
6. Monitor for potential family or community backlash in response to women, men, girls or boys engaging in activities outside of their traditional gender roles.