



AIMPO's Policy
ON GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

April 2020

I. Introduction

AIMPO is an umbrella of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Rwanda to promote sensitive and specific nutrition actions. In 2014, 79 Civil Society Organizations in the fight against malnutrition in Rwanda endorsed the establishment of the Alliance, and was legally registered in June 2016. This late registration was caused by the AIMPOglobal model which required not Civil Society Alliance's across countries to register since they were considered as simple movements to scale up nutrition but this contradicted the national laws of Rwanda. Thus, with guidance from the Government, AIMPO leadership took steps to legally register in accordance with the laws in Rwanda.

The primary purpose of the AIMPO is to strengthen the coordination between nutrition actors, through tracking results and aligning strategies, programs and resources of its members with country plans to eliminate all forms of Malnutrition.

AIMPO also believes that collaborating with partners to implement programmes with shared nutrition goals, and collectively mobilize resources to effectively scale up nutrition, with a core focus on empowering women and children is an effective approach to addressing malnutrition. Since establishment, AIMPO has helped facilitate a rich and concerted knowledge exchange among member CSOs using other AIMPOumbrellas in other countries as a foundation for sharing and learning. Guided by this exchange, more practical guidance and support is envisioned to be generated to help inform the paths Civil Society Organizations they choose to take.

This Alliance approach, since then has helped raise awareness about the vital importance of nutrition as a universal move; one that is integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to have a world without hunger and malnutrition.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, nutrition has increasingly gained attention as a powerful tool in the battle against malnutrition. In the face of global threats – including economic challenges and climate change – strategies to eliminate malnutrition are frequently being adopted to enable populations better adapt to the shocks and stresses these global changes bring.

With malnutrition remaining one of the greatest and most urgent global challenges, maximizing the positive impact of policies, programmes and projects on nutrition outcomes becomes an imperative. The aim, therefore, must be to design and coordinate their implementation.

It is for this reason that, in 2014, thanks to a start-up grant from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF)-coordinated by the World Food Program (WFP), Rwanda Offices- the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)-Civil Society Alliance was established. The primary purpose of AIMPO was to strengthen the coordination between nutrition actors, through tracking results and aligning

strategies, programs and resources of its members with country plans to eliminate all forms of Malnutrition.

As part of its strategic objectives, AIMPO works to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of effective accountable national multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral policies and plans for scaling up nutrition. With this aim, AIMPO encourages and facilitates coordination among all Civil Society actors, ensuring alignment of their strategies, programmes and resources with national nutrition priorities

It is widely acknowledged that gender equality and social inclusion essentially contribute to eradicating poverty and Malnutrition which contribute to the Country economic growth. Thus, gender equality and social inclusion are important means for achieving AIMPO's aim of strengthening the coordination between nutrition actors, through tracking results and aligning strategies, programs and resources of its members with country plans to eliminate all forms of Malnutrition with a focus on empowering women and children is an effective approach to addressing malnutrition.

AIMPO's policy on gender equality and social inclusion is based on a systemic view and points towards an approach that is compatible with, and reinforced by, the private sector and market development. Partnerships are the main vehicle to implement the present policy and to achieve gender equality and social inclusion in our interventions.

While gender equality itself is one dimension of social inclusion, this policy on "gender equality and social inclusion" recognizes that gender is a highly structure-determining category which then has differentiated impacts on people according to their ethnic identity, social position, sexual orientation, disability, among other things. In combining gender equality with social inclusion issues, AIMPO prevent bypassing vulnerable and disadvantaged groups because of an exclusive focus on gender, and at recognising that women and men are highly heterogeneous groups that can be grasped only in relation to other dimensions of social differentiation, inequality and exclusion.

This policy links up to the economic focus of AIMPO, but AIMPO firmly believe that besides its economic rewards, gender equality and social inclusion have a moral and ethical "raison d'être" in and for themselves.

This policy builds the basis for a gender implementation guideline and the tools that will be used to implement it.

2. Objectives and Definitions

Gender Equality

Gender refers to the socially constructed differences between men and women, such as gender roles, perceptions, norms and behaviours which result in power relations between men and women.

Gender equality “refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.”ⁱ It refers to equality not only in terms of access, but importantly also, to equality in terms of agencyⁱⁱ and rights. Gender equality means that, de jure and de facto, one’s rights, opportunities, agency and recognition are not dependent on being born male or female. Women and men should, however, not be understood as homogenous categories, since behind gender categories lie highly heterogeneous social groups. Nevertheless, in certain socio-cultural contexts, men and women face barriers to access or enjoy socially valued goods or services because of the ascribed gender roles. This creates social and cultural barriers for some genders, despite individual possibilities. Attention must be paid beyond practical needs of each gender and Take into account strategic needs – requirements to improve the position of women and men regarding each other in a given societyⁱⁱⁱ – which are a precondition for gender transformation.

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is defined as “the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society—improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity.”^{iv} The terms on which individuals or groups participate in society often depends on their social status which is based on many different dimensions (gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, ethnic identity etc.). AIMPO look at these dimensions from the perspective of an intersectional approach, which starts from the premise that various identities intersect with each other and in their combination contribute to experiences of oppression or privilege.^v Social exclusion is created by structures of inequality which are expressed through the denial of opportunities, unequal income-generating prospects and unequal participation in political, civic and cultural life and leads to discrimination, stigma and reduced agency.^{vi} Social inclusion and an intersectional approach force us to approach the SDGs in an integrated way by recognising the cumulative nature of social exclusion since those left behind in relation to one SDG also tend to be left behind on others (Kabeer 2011: 1).^{vii} Without social inclusion, social justice cannot be achieved.

Objectives

AIMPO’s aim of promoting gender equality and social inclusion is to achieve:

- Equal access to resources (economic, social, cultural), assets (skills), economic opportunities, and political/public representation.

- Equal agency regarding decision-making power over income, time, workload, and leadership.
- Equal rights to ownership, mobility, income, and political participation.
- Positive impact on gender norms, roles, institutions, social recognition, reduction of violence and well-being.

Achieving these aims in our understanding depends on:

- Market-driven and occupational skills
- Access to assets, services and resources including social networks
- Ability to make and act on decisions
- Control over resources, profits and time (including the distribution of house chores and care work)
- Gender norms and roles that are based on equality, including social recognition
- Public and private institutions that aim at gender equality
- Market system with growth opportunities
- Laws and regulations that recognise equal rights of women and men, as well as access to legal services, advice on work issues, harassments and rights

3. Principles

AIMPO integrates the gender lens as part of the organization, in gender mainstreamed projects and gender-specific projects. Social inclusion is being mainstreamed in the organization and all of its projects. In all these areas, AIMPO relies on the following principles:

- AIMPO recognizes gender equality and social inclusion as prerequisites for sustainable development, economic growth, and social justice.
- To be effectively mainstreamed, gender equality and social inclusion needs to be part of the organizational culture and depends on the commitment of all staff and the whole management.
- To implement the policy on gender equality and social inclusion, sensitivity, reflection and specific competencies are needed, which need to be acquired through continuous training and transparent organizational culture.
- We recognize that gender and various forms of exclusion are highly complex fields which need thorough understanding as they intersect with multiple dimensions of marginalization and discrimination.
- AIMPO acknowledges gender equality and social inclusion as a human rights issue that includes non-negotiable norms and rights and recognizes that gender, social and cultural norms, roles, obstacles and opportunities are context-specific.

- Gender equality and social inclusion can only be achieved by a combined effort of actors within a system. We recognize that strong partnerships with organizations, institutions, and qualified professionals are needed to achieve gender equality and social inclusion.
- AIMPO RWanda recognize gender transformation as a means to create employability, income and jobs, to reduce the risk for violence and increase decision-making power and well-being.

4. Implications

AIMPO commits to the following 7-point agenda to ensure gender equality within the organization, and in its projects:

I. Gender-equal and diversity-driven internal policies and practices

AIMPO ensures that its internal policies and practices are gender-equal and inclusive. In particular, this includes HR, security, communication policies and practices and budgeting. AIMPO therefore:

- Expect from all our staff and volunteers to uphold the policy on gender equality and social inclusion and consider this in recruitment and promotion.
- Train staff, Board Members and Volunteers at Head Office, regional office and all project teams in being sensitized for gender issues and diversity.
- Aim at achieving workforce diversity, a gender-balanced middle and senior management team (40% women or men) and seek to reduce gender inequalities in hiring and payment.
- Seek for a balance between work and family life for AIMPO employees and volunteers.
- Invest in capacity-building of gender focal points and gender advisors.
- Regularly report on gender and diversity issues within the organization. Thematic advisors together with communities of practice lead the institutional process of defining, collecting and analyzing gender-related internal data.
- Promote that project and communication materials are prepared in a gender-equal way.

2. Gender and context analysis in Programmes/projects

Local norms, inequalities and power dynamics need to be kept in mind when designing projects. This means that norms, barriers and obstacles as well as the intersection of different types of discrimination, disadvantage, and opportunities need to be firmly understood at the outset of a project (e.g. intersectionality between gender, ECD, Nutrition and WASH, religion, poverty, etc.). Each project will include resources for a thorough context analysis that explores gender and diversity and recognize the heterogeneous needs, interests and obstacles of women and men in the field of Nutrition interventions. The analysis identifies vulnerable and excluded groups and delves into the reasons for their exclusion and vulnerability regarding access, agency and rights. Context analysis is being conducted and aligned with a systemic perspective, which means that opportunities, obstacles, access, agency, participation, norms, regulations and services are considered. A gender analysis is being conducted either separately, or as part of the baseline assessment and produces quantitative as well as qualitative data. Results of the gender analysis feed into the planning of interventions, result chains, the definition of indicators and monitoring and measurement instruments, and the selection of strategic partners.

3. Strategic partnerships

AIMPO creates strong strategic partnerships with organisations that have a common understanding of gender equality and social inclusion. Complete with qualified professionals, they are anchored in the systems AIMPO work with, reinforce positive outcomes and impacts social and economic empowerment and enhance structural change and policy debates. AIMPO identifies potential partners, develops targets, conducts due diligence processes and provides tools and instruments for partners who are vehicles in creating gender-positive impact. In addition, AIMPO trains and sensitises project service partners to guarantee high quality in gender equality and social inclusion outcomes.

4. Affirmative activities

Experience has shown that in some cases, projects need to consider specific affirmative actions and tailor products for certain target groups. This means that in some cases measures of equity need to be taken to achieve equality.^{viii} These are specific incentives, interventions and products for vulnerable or excluded groups in the particular context of the programme, even if they are not the primary target of the programme's interventions. To design such specific action, AIMPO apply a life-cycle approach and are sensitive towards local cultural norms. Our work is based on a human-rights based approach and affirmative action's aim at gender transformation and follow as a minimum requirement, the principle of "do no harm".

5. Involving the community

AIMPO works closely with actors on community, regional, state level and international. Men and boys explicitly need to be engaged in gender equality issues and women socio-economic empowerment interventions.

6. Equal participation of men and women

AIMPO designs projects in a way that they enable equal participation of men and women in project activities and project benefits are distributed equally to men and women. In addition, AIMPO analyze and integrate, as part of our adaptive project management, the way “how” specific groups participate and what the impact of the project on the relation between men and women is. To create gender-positive and transformative outcomes and impacts, projects must consider affirmative actions regarding access to resources, opportunities and rights that are aligned with our project goals and activities.

7. Gender-sensitive monitoring, reporting and evaluation

Sex-disaggregated data are crucial to monitor projects and to measure outcomes and impacts regarding gender-equality. AIMPO collect sex-disaggregated data in all our projects for all indicators at all levels and aim at further disaggregation based on social status. In addition, AIMPO measure change with quantitative and qualitative indicators defined by each project. Based on reporting regarding gender and social exclusion AIMPO continuously adapt our project interventions and document our experiences.

References

i See UN Women Training Centre:

<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=g&sortkey=>

ii Agency refers to the power to make and act on decisions (see <https://thepalladiumgroup.com/news/Beyond-Income-Measuring-Womens-Economic-Empowerment>) Policy on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

iii See European Institute for Gender Equality : <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1397>

iv See « Inclusion Matters » of the World Bank : <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion>

v 5 See: « Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice », *Women's Rights and Economic Change*, 2004:

<http://www.intergroupresources.com/rc/Intersectionality%20-%20a%20Tool%20for%20Gender%20&%20Economic%20Justice.pdf>

vi 6 See « Leave no one behind », *UN Economic and Social Affairs*, 2016 :

<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/Leave%20no%20one%20behind%20RWSS%202016%20II.pdf>

vii 7 See “MDGs, Social Justice and the Challenge of Intersecting Inequalities”, Naila Kabeer, 2011:

<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/Kabeer%20Challenge%20of%20intersecting%20inequalities%20short.pdf>

viii Equity refers to the principle that is based on the idea of moral equality and that all counts in the moral calculus when dealing with different people (Jones, 2009: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4577.pdf>). It means “treating people with equal concern and respect (Dworkin, 1983); and that the notion that alike cases should be treated as alike, with similar benefits (or burdens) to be enjoyed (or suffered) by similar people.” (ibid:13).