

# Bedari's Gender Strategy

A guideline for Bedari towards Gender Mainstreaming

**Bedari**

**Contents**

Chapter 1: Introduction ..... 3

    1.1: Gender issues in Pakistan (including issues, emerging context actions taken, main stakeholders, legislation etc)..... 3

    1.2: Brief about Bedari..... 4

    1.3: Bedari’s Position on Gender Mainstreaming:..... 4

Chapter 2: Gender Strategy of Bedarii ..... 5

    2.1 Mainstreaming Gender in the Organization/Workplace..... 5

    2.2 Mainstreaming Gender with Partner Organizations and Communities ..... 7

    2.3 Mainstreaming Gender through Structural Reforms ..... 7

Chapter 3 Conclusion ..... 8

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1: Gender issues in Pakistan**

Pakistan is the sixth most populous country of the world. Almost half of population comprises women. Like many other developing countries, Pakistan also has its own share of gender issues, Women suffer discrimination and violence. Long stints of dictatorship, weak political leadership and worldwide economic crises during the last few decades have adversely affected the status of women in Pakistan, where women were already living in a subordinate situation. The progressive efforts advanced by both the Muslim Family Ordinance of 1961 and the later Constitution of 1973 (which were respectively meant to ensure women's rights in divorce, inheritance, and polygamy, and prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex), were curtailed by Zia Regime in 1979 and the passing of the Shariat Bill and Hudood Ordinances. The situation deteriorated further by rapidly spreading extremism, and weak governance. As a result Pakistan stands at 145th place (out of 187 countries) in the 2011 Human Development Index, 115<sup>th</sup> out of 146 countries on Gender Inequality Index. Pakistan is ranked in 133rd place in 2011 Global Gender Gap index (out of a total of 135 countries with data).

The Constitution of Pakistan upholds the principles of equal rights and equal treatment of all persons. During last few years, the government has passed a few pieces of legislation to promote gender equality including the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 and the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act, as well as amendments to the PPC to address acid violence against women.

Women experienced serious difficulties in accessing assistance after natural disasters like earthquake 2005 and flood 2010, due to culturally imposed restrictions on their mobility and increased vulnerability to gender-based violence. Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1996. In practice, however, women are subjected to systematic discrimination. Women still have limited access to education, employment and health services. Lack of government resources, high poverty and low levels of literacy all contribute to the fact that very few women are aware of their rights, while also complicating the implementation and enforcement of reforms intended to improve their situation. The Optional Protocol of CEDAW has yet to be ratified hence limiting women's right to demand justice from international institutions in case all local remedies failed .

The whole situation mentioned above demands for organized efforts by civil society to raise awareness about legislation on the one hand and to work with the state departments to make effective legislation and their effective implementation on the other.

Bedari is among those civil society organizations which raise voice against any discrimination and mobilize local communities to do the same. Bedari would like to develop the gender strategy to ensure gender mainstreaming in all its actions, policies and programs.

The next section elaborates Bedari as organization, geographical locations and its key focus areas of work.

## **1.2: Brief about Bedari**

Bedari is working for women's rights in Pakistan. Bedari's mission is to promote equal rights of all (including women, men, boys and girls) in the society through capacity building, education and advocacy.

Bedari has contributed in raising awareness on women and girls' rights and gender issues. It has highlighted disparities towards marginalized group of society and launched advocacy campaigns on women and girls' human rights issues by organizing events, theaters, puppet shows, talks, training, workshops and seminars and conferences. It has conducted all these activities alone as well as through alliance or partnerships with other like minded organizations. All individuals have a personal capability of achieving a positive change in them and Bedari acts as a catalyst and facilitator of this process of change. We as an organization aim to achieve empowerment through the individual, the group, and then society.

Bedari does not believe in a helper/helpee approach. It creates an environment of mutual support. A community organization like Bedari should be run by the community and not by some 'personalities'. The group focus and the process of institutionalizing strategies and efforts are crucial. Bedari, which works towards sustainability in every effort, has chosen a gradual process towards change, as opposed to carrying out a lot of activities. We believe in quality above quantity. Bedari aims to target all groups irrespective of any class, gender, socio-economic, status, etc. Bedari works towards changing our condition and adopting strategies according to the particular group we are working with and in this way reach out to everyone.

## **1.3: Bedari's Position on Gender Mainstreaming:**

Bedari believes that sustainable and effective change can only be brought through active participation of men and women, boys and girls in all stages of change process. State needs to bring legislative reforms and an affirmative action to ensure inclusion of women and girls in the development process. Bedari joins this struggle along with other civil society organizations and lobby with state departments for required changes in the existing laws and for making new laws.

Bedari takes this belief along during policy development, planning and implementation of its programs in communities. Bedari urges to ensure gender sensitive policies for its staff, for partners and for the beneficiaries of its varied programs. Moreover, Bedari is committed to build the capacity of its partner NGOs/CBOs/Networks to ensure gender mainstreaming in letter and spirit.

All the programs and projects of Bedari ensure gender sensitivity in its planning, implementation and evaluation.

## **Chapter 2: Gender Strategy of Bedari**

This strategy document is developed for Bedari staff and partners and serves the purpose of a reference document for planning, implementing and evaluating any program or project in any area. Participatory approach has been followed while developing this strategy. Two members from each Field offices and 4 from Head office of Bedari participated in developing this strategy. The information and suggestions have been then compiled by manager women rights and advocacy who is custodian of this document on behalf of Bedari. The document is then shared with senior management team and the comments have been incorporated. The finalized document is then signed and approved by Chief Executive.

The strategy offers a direction towards making all initiatives to be gender sensitive. Looking at the programs of Bedari, the strategy is designed under following broader areas;

1. Mainstreaming Gender equality in the Organization/Workplace
2. Mainstreaming gender equality in its project and programs
3. Mainstreaming Gender equality in Networking and Alliance Building

### **2.1 Mainstreaming Gender Equality in the Organization/Workplace**

Mainstreaming gender at workplace is the first step in order to achieve the results in programs and projects. Bedari will follow the following strategy to mainstream gender at workplace.

#### **1. Gender Equal Team Composition**

Bedari is an equal opportunity employer. A special effort is made to bring almost equal number of women at all levels including senior management. In case there are lesser women at some specific cadre, some vacancies will be specified for women only.

#### **2. Gender Sensitive Hiring**

- The advertisement will clearly say 'gender sensitive/aware' in the section of Required Qualities'
- The hiring committee/interviewer will include at least one woman to assess the gender sensitivity of the interviewee and to provide conducive environment to women candidates.
- While checking the references of a candidate, the questions related to gender sensitivity will also be included in the reference form.

#### **3. Promotion and Benefits based on Gender Sensitivity**

All promotions and benefits will be measured using gender lens. A specific section will be included in the evaluation form to measure the employee's commitment to gender equality. The index will

include question related to changes in her/his beliefs and attitudes and efforts s/he made to mainstream gender equality.

#### 4. Gender Sensitive Policies and Systems

Bedari is committed to ensure gender sensitive policies and their effective implementation. The gender policies include but are not limited to,

- i. Gender Policy
- ii. Anti Harassment Policy
- iii. Equal Opportunity Policy

In order to get these policies implemented, **Gender Core Group (GCG)** consisting of equal number of men and women from Bedari team has been formed. GCG includes staff from admin, finance, monitoring and program depending upon their easy access to all staff and convenience of staff especially women to talk to them. Main responsibility of GCG is to monitor overall implementation of gender policies, provide support to other team members in understanding the issues and facilitating them to the right channels in case of any complaint.

Inquiry Committee is crucial for addressing the complaints of sexual harassment. There is zero tolerance against sexual harassment and inquiry is conducted in the light of Anti Harassment Act 2010. Inquiry committees shall be established in all Bedari offices and specific trainings will be conducted for inquiry committees on clarity of the issue and on conducting an objective inquiry.

#### 5. Training and Capacity Building

In order to ensure effective implementation of Bedari's programs, it is necessary to have well informed, gender sensitive staff at the first place. HRD in collaboration with Senior Gender Specialist will design and conduct a training need assessment. A training will be designed based on the assessment report and a training calendar for all staff will be established. The gender training will be mandatory for all staff.

**Gender Core Group** is formed with the spirit of making work environment and all programs to be gender sensitive in letter and spirit. GCG Comprises of people who are easy to talk to for most of the Bedari staff. GCG is responsible to review the existing policies and providing recommendations using gender lens, observe day to day work environment and provide support to the team to make it more gender sensitive, highlight any gender sensitive behavior and suggest improvements, review Bedari programs using gender lens.

GCG members also organize orientation sessions on international and national laws related to women.

GCG meets at regional level fortnightly to discuss the gender issue while the national GCG including representation from all regions communicate through emails. A GCG newsletter will be developed to share different regions' best practices in terms of gender mainstreaming.

## **6. Conducive Work Environment for Women**

Bedari commits to provide conducive work environment for women. Human Resource policy covers this issue through providing specific services to women (for example, Creche for infants, flexible travel policy for women in special needs, maternity leaves etc.). Moreover code of conduct against sexual harassment is part of the policy so that a harassment free work environment can be ensured.

### **2.2 Mainstreaming Gender Equality in its Project and Programs**

Gender equality will be ensured in projects and programs through two way approach.

#### **1. Gender equality in Projects and Programs**

Bedari ensures gender equality in all its programs and projects. As a strategy, each project proposal being submitted to the donors will be reviewed by the gender focal person or gender core group. All the activities planned in the programs and projects will ensure equal participation of men and women at all levels starting from planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Gender Core Group will play its role in looking at the gender aspects of implementation. Specific team of men and women will be ensured in monitoring and evaluation department so that gender dynamics of each program and project can be ensured. The MIS system will provide gender segregated data to have an idea about gender equality and to take timely actions for getting the gaps addressed.

#### **2. Specific Projects and Programs on Gender equality**

Gender unit will be established to initiate specific projects on addressing gender disparities in the society. Bedari through its civil society networks and partner organizations will address the issues like gender based violence and empowerment of women in political, social and economic spheres. Specific project aiming to address gender based violence and discrimination will be submitted different donors. Networks with the organizations providing psychosocial support to the violence survivors will be developed in order to strengthen referral system in all the program districts.

### **2.3 Mainstreaming Gender through Advocacy and Lobbying**

Pakistan is a patriarchal society, therefore policies, laws and establishment structures do not support gender equality. Therefore policy and structural reforms are crucial to address gender disparities in the society. Bedari joins hands with other organizations to advocate for legal and structural reforms. In order to bring gender sensitive reforms, following strategy has been followed and will be followed in future.

1. Networking with Likeminded organizations: Networking and collaboration will be encouraged with likeminded organizations for advocacy and lobbying purposes. A gender focal person having an experience of working on the issues will be one of the core positions of Bedari staff to ensure this networking. Moreover GCG members at field offices level will ensure this

networking and a collaboration mechanism will be defined among GCG members to further strengthen the cause.

2. Review of existing laws using gender lens: Bedari will engage experts to review the existing laws, suggest amendments and to develop advocacy and lobbying plan to make necessary changes.
3. Engaging district level activists: District level networks will be engaged to build pressure on the state for bringing required changes in laws and policies at all levels. In the scenario of 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, provincial level networks are crucial to bring change. Bedari will get engaged with likeminded organizations to build alliances for joint lobbying. District Steering Committees (workers of different political parties) will be engaged to take the movement within party's internal agenda so that women's rights issues become main priority of each political party. The DSC members will also play role of monitoring the parties whom they represent.

### **Chapter 3 Conclusion**

The strategy is developed to provide guideline to Bedari staff in order to implement its programs in a gender sensitive manner. The strategy is a living document and can be reviewed based on field experiences. However, the document will only be reviewed after having a concrete reason to do so.

By having a gender strategy, Bedari has proved itself to be committed towards gender mainstreaming in letter and spirit. The gender strategy will enhance the initiatives of the organizations to be compatible with international standards of gender sensitivity.