TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

BRAC GENDER POLICY
Vision

Just, enlightened, healthy and democratic societies free from hunger, poverty, environmental degradation and all forms of exploitation based on age, sex, religion and ethnicity.

Mission

BRAC firmly believes and is actively involved in promoting human rights, dignity and gender equity through poor people’s social, economic, political and human capacity building.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rationale for BRAC’s Gender Policy</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Goal</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Objectives of the Gender Policy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Principles</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Organisational Measures</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Organisational Commitment</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Awareness and Capacity Development</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Organisational Culture</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Accountability</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Organisational Development</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Expected Output Will Include</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Programme-Related Measures</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Programme designing, planning and implementation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Advocacy &amp; Networking</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Information, Education and Communication</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Expected Output Will Include</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Roles, Accountability, Ownership and …</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX 1: Glossary of Terms</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX 2: Women’s Position in Bangladesh</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX 3: BRAC’s Gender Approach Timeline</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCV</td>
<td>BRAC Culture and Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMT</td>
<td>Executive Management Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAAC</td>
<td>Gender Awareness and Analysis Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAF</td>
<td>Gender Analysis Frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED</td>
<td>Gender Equality and Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEDT</td>
<td>Gender Equality and Diversity Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFP</td>
<td>Gender Focal Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GJ&amp;D</td>
<td>Gender Justice and Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>Gender Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRC</td>
<td>Gender Resource Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTT</td>
<td>Gender Trainers Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GQAL</td>
<td>Gender Quality and Action Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRD</td>
<td>Human Resource Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JD</td>
<td>Job Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFA</td>
<td>Logical Framework Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGN</td>
<td>Practical Gender Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGI</td>
<td>Strategic Gender Interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHarE</td>
<td>Sexual Harassment Elimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STDs</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAW</td>
<td>Violence Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>Village Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPOG</td>
<td>Gender Policy Operational Guideline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAC</td>
<td>Women’s Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As an NGO committed to empowering the poor, women in particular, BRAC has played an important role in Bangladesh's many achievements in bridging the gender divide, including the achievement of gender parity in primary education and the increase of female participation in secondary education. While the increased participation of women in economic and social activities has now become distinctly visible across all walks of life, Bangladesh still has a long way to go in achieving true gender equality.

As an organisation, BRAC continues to focus its interventions towards women and endeavors to adopt in all its practices a gender-sensitive approach that takes into account the inequalities prevalent in society. Towards this end, in 1997, BRAC adopted a Gender Policy with the aim of achieving gender equality in a systematic manner both within the organisation and in its scope of work. The policy provides the necessary guidelines for ensuring gender equality in the organization's activities. After ten successful years, BRAC’s Gender Policy has been reviewed in the face of new challenges in order that it can contribute more precisely and effectively towards gender equality in a changed landscape.

Gender equality is a sensitive issue which requires commitment from every level of the organisation and the integration of gender-perspective into all activities. It is my sincere hope that each and every BRAC staff member will make their best efforts to implement the Gender Policy.

I appreciate the contributions of the Gender Justice & Diversity (GJ&D) section of HRD in leading the policy review process. I believe that the distinctive gender integration features of this policy will be very effective and provide a great level of support to all staff. I conclude with the hope that this policy will help all BRAC staff to become more gender-sensitive, contribute further to achieving gender equality in all their work and ensure a gender-friendly work environment.

Fazle Hasan Abed
Founder and Chairperson, BRAC
Gender equality is the goal: gender mainstreaming is the strategy.
Mainstreaming – What does it involve?

1. Understanding the policy environment – what is the legislative and institutional context?
2. Consulting men and women, boys and girls, special care must be taken to ensure that women’s and girl’s needs are articulated.
3. Assessing gender differences and inequalities in roles, responsibilities, needs, constraints and access to opportunities and resources.
4. Disaggregating data by sex.
5. Setting explicit gender equality objectives.
6. Developing gender equality indicators to measure progress.
7. Supporting gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation system.
8. Drawing together good practice and lessons learned and sharing these with partners.
10. Promoting positive images of women and men and avoiding stereotypes.
11. Using gender sensitive language in all communications.
CEDAW includes articles on the elimination of discrimination in public life, civil status, education, employment, healthcare and other aspects of social and economic life.

MDGs also cover the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.
1. Rationale for BRAC’s Gender Policy

BRAC, the largest southern NGO, provides and protects the livelihoods of an estimated 110 million people with its development interventions in Asia and Africa. BRAC’s comprehensive approach combines economic development interventions such as microfinance with interventions in health, education and social development as well as human rights and legal services, linking all programmes strategically to counter poverty.

Since its inception in 1972, BRAC recognized women as the “change agents” within the family and community and realized that they play a vital role in ensuring their family’s health, nurturing their children's education and, subsequently, ensuring the sustainability of their households. BRAC also realized that on a day to day basis, women’s mobility, decision-making capability and access to resources were being controlled by men. In order to achieve gender equality, redistribution of power through economic, social and political empowerment was necessary. BRAC has therefore placed focus on the empowerment of women through all its interventions, directing the majority of its programmes towards them.

In 1997, BRAC adopted a Gender Policy in order to eliminate discrimination against women and influence organizational change in the prevailing patriarchal social system which encouraged inequality. The policy experienced significant achievements in helping transform the perception of women’s role in society and encouraged understanding of the experiences of minority groups, especially women, within the organisation and in its scope of work.

After a decade, the Gender Policy has been reviewed in order to incorporate past experiences and new national and international milestones. Thirty-eight policy review workshops organized at different levels of the organisation have brought about a renewed attitude towards the policy, generated numerous important ideas and identified several gaps. By addressing these gaps and incorporating recommendations generated through the workshops, a new, simpler and more definite Gender Policy has been developed and a friendly operational mechanism is introduced.
2. Goal

BRAC aims to be responsive and to promote gender equity and equality within the organisation and ensure that all its programmes, intervention activities and research serve the needs and interests of women and men equally and work to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

3. Objectives

- To provide the right direction and guidelines to all BRAC staff in policy-making, formation and planning, designing and implementation of development programmes/projects in a gender sensitive manner;
- To create a congenial work environment within BRAC which enables women and men to work together in a equitable, effective and mutually respectful manner.

4. Principles

- **Gender equality is key to sustainable development**: Poverty and gender inequality are interrelated – one exacerbates the other. Due to gender discrimination within all levels of the social system, women are especially vulnerable to and the worst affected by poverty. On the other hand, women’s poverty enhances the poverty of the whole family and affects the sustainability of the family, as women play a vital role in their family’s education and health. BRAC will therefore continue to promote gender equality and prioritize women’s issues, focusing on gender equality as a central issue in all its development activities.

- **Gender equality involves both women and men**: It is impossible 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.

- **Empowerment of women has always been a major focus of BRAC**: Women’s empowerment is a human rights issue and key to achieving gender equality. BRAC 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 BRAC is determined to establish this kind of enabling atmosphere within the organisation.

• **Start from within:** Unless a development agency practices the values of gender equality within itself, it cannot bring effective changes in the society through its programmes. Therefore BRAC is committed to take forward all possible measures to establish gender equality within the organisation.

## 5. Organisational Measures

By approving the reviewed Gender Policy, BRAC’s Executive Management Team has agreed to allocate the resources necessary and establish a line of accountability for the implementation of the policy. Management has also agreed to assign relevant personnel to examine other policies operational within the organisation in order to ensure consistency with the gender policy.

BRAC will take the following specific measures to create a gender friendly environment within the periphery of the organisation:

### 5.1 Organisational Commitment

• Organisational commitments must be demonstrated through putting in place a comprehensive gender policy that will translate into practice at all levels

• All policies and procedures will be revised in accordance to the gender policy

• BRAC aims to reach a female staff recruitment ratio of 30% by the year 2012. To achieve this target, BRAC will offer flexible terms and conditions and other benefits to encourage women to join and build their careers with BRAC

• The Human Resource Division (HRD) as well the individual programmes will analyze the gender ratio of their staff prior to any recruitment and take appropriate steps to achieving gender balance

• Interview panels will be formed with equal representation of men and women and must be friendly to female candidates. Interviews will include gender-related questions to assess candidate’s knowledge, ideas and attitudes regarding gender issues
• Training, exposures and other opportunities will 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 will be used for performance development of female staff

5.2 Awareness and Capacity Development:

• Gender awareness training has continuously been provided to all staff in order to encourage development of correct attitudes
• All staff will be equipped through training with the appropriate skills necessary for gender integration in their respective programmes
• Gender perspective will be integrated into on-going and future training programmes
• Dialogue on gender issues will be facilitated among male staff through workshops and seminars, in order to encourage a positive attitude towards women’s empowerment
• Awareness will be developed on the effects of HIV/AIDS and other STDs on women and men’s role in their transmission

5.3 Organisational Culture

• All programmes and departments will strictly implement the Sexual Harassment Elimination (SHarE) Policy and take adequate measures to ensure staff awareness of the policy
• The Sexual Harassment Elimination (SHarE) & Staff Relations Section will monitor the implementation of the SHarE policy and provide necessary assistance to the programmes
and departments. The SHarE & Staff Relations Section will provide counseling to victims of sexual harassment.

- Open discussion on gender based discrimination and violence against women will be encouraged in order to create a 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, will be fully considered.
- Evidence of gender-bias at both individual and institutional levels will be challenged and special efforts made to recognize achievements of female staff.
- Due importance will be given to the voice of women and other socially discriminated groups in all planning and decision-making processes.
- Awareness will be created among male staff about the objectives of paternity leave and they will be encouraged to the provision accordingly.

5.4 Accountability

- Gender Equality & Diversity (GED) Team is in action to introduce accountability and ownership among staff. The team will analyze the progress of the Gender Policy Monitoring mechanism and the Gender Policy Operationalisation Action Plan in all departments and programmes. The GED team will be accountable to the EMT and receive necessary technical assistance from the GJ&D section.
- Supervisors will be encouraged to play a strong role in the gender-mainstreaming process and to incorporate the concept in all activities, ranging from staff appraisals to programme monitoring.
• To ensure staff accountability in implementing the gender policy, specific actions are to be included in the Job Descriptions (JD) which will be assessed and evaluated during staff appraisal

5.5 Organisational Development

• To ensure effective implementation of the gender policy, BRAC will conduct internal gender audit of all programmes and departments in order to identify gaps and take necessary action
• BRAC will conduct annual surveys to monitor attitude changes among staff and take action according to findings
• An Operation Plan will be developed to ensure proper implementation of the gender policy in which monitoring indicators will be established

6. Expected Output Will Include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endorsement of Gender Policy by EMT</th>
<th>EMT and GED teams monitor progress of implementation of gender policy, with the help of monitoring indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender Policy translated to Bangla and distributed to all staff</td>
<td>Gender Audit performed and action plans, developed from audit, also implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All policies and procedures revised in accordance with gender policy</td>
<td>Gender issues included in all the staff JDs and staff activities evaluated continuously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff sensitization on gender issues enhanced</td>
<td>Increased participation of staff (esp. male staff) in gender-related activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work environment improved for both women and men (as indicated in climate survey)</td>
<td>Sexual harassment dealt-with in a swift, fair and effective manner, reducing occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female representation in EMT increased</td>
<td>30% female staff ratio reached</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Programme-Related Measures

7.1 Program designing, planning and implementation

BRAC will focus on the following areas in order to ensure that all development programmes and projects contribute towards gender equality:

- Incorporate gender equality measures into all project design documents and tools and at all stages of project life-cycle, including planning and implementation
- Develop Gender Analysis Frameworks (GAF) and checklists as tools to assist staff in integrating gender issues into programmes

The framework will focus on issues of:

- Equal social and economic benefits in terms of secure livelihoods, human development and dignity for both women and men in the target population
- Equal participation, decision-making, and influence of women and men in project, household and community structures
- Solidarity and collective action by community members to reduce gender discrimination, exploitation and violence against women and girls
- Equal participation and influence of women and men in local governance structures
- Increased and equal access for women and men to life management education required for secure livelihoods and personal development

- Develop capacity of staff in using gender analysis framework and assigning relevant persons to ensure gender policy implementation at programme level
- Incorporate gender strategic planning for programmes and projects in consultation with all stakeholders, especially women, using GAF
- On-going projects will be reviewed and revised as and when necessary, to ensure compliance with gender policy guidelines
- Clearly incorporate gender issues in Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) for all programmes and projects
- Design implementation strategies to take into account existing gender relations and attempt to redress inequalities
• Devise mechanisms for promoting women’s participation in decision making processes at all levels and in all spheres – project, programme, community, and family
• Ensure equal access to technology related activities for women and develop necessary mind-set to encourage women’s participation in technical matters
• Include resources in monitoring to assess the effectiveness of programmes in addressing gender issues
• Address the issues and special needs of adolescents in BRAC Programmes
• Explicitly acknowledge women’s workload, responsibilities and contributions to family and community
• Emphasize and ensure male participation in addressing violence against women
• Incorporate gender as an essential component in project evaluation, analysis and research
• Ensure that documentation including reports and communication materials are gender-friendly and responsive
• Apply degree of gender sensitiveness as a criteria for partner selection
• Share and ensure impact of knowledge gained from programmes such as the Gender Quality Action Learning (GQAL) (initiated by the GJ&D Section) in all programmes
7.2 Advocacy & Networking

- BRAC will actively participate in local, national, regional and international level networks promoting gender equality
- Through these networks, BRAC will undertake advocacy initiatives for the formulation and implementation of policies promoting gender equality
- BRAC will support women’s organisations that are working to eradicate physical, mental or emotional violence against women and also encourage men involvement eliminating this type of violence
- BRAC will extend support to all organisations working for women’s empowerment and accept and adopt knowledge and best practices from them
- BRAC will establish partnerships and network with organisations having gender expertise for project implementation, training or technical assistance

7.3 Information, Education and Communication

- Visual materials and campaigns should continuously emphasize more to target women specifically and the message should address women’s as well as men’s interests and concerns
- BRAC will continue to ensure that promotional messages will be disseminated, highlighting women’s empowerment
- Use positive messages, illustrations or presentations to highlight expected gender and parenting roles, as opposed to the stereotypical gender roles, that are interchangeable among women and men
- Disseminate/distribute information communication materials to both women and men throughout the organization

7.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Gender sensitivity will be ensured in monitoring mechanisms and subsequent processes that measure participation, outcome and changes for both women and men
- Project/programme information will be collected in a sex-disaggregated manner to provide gender-specific information and gender responsive qualitative analysis of the collected data will be emphasized
- All reports, studies and the evaluation of BRAC’s core programs should highlight gender issues in their findings.
8. Expected Output Will Include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender issues incorporated into all programmes and prioritised in discussions and training</th>
<th>Monitoring indicators and logframes of all programmes reviewed to incorporate gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender analysis framework developed and staff capacity built-up for its use</td>
<td>Issues and special needs of adolescents addressed in programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender issues specifically mentioned in the purpose and output parts of the LFA of all projects</td>
<td>Gender given high priority in all research activities and publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant person assigned to coordinate gender policy implementation process at programme level</td>
<td>Significant role played by BRAC in the advocacy of women’s right issues at the national level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence Against Women (VAW) given high priority in all programmes and men’s movement successfully initiated regarding violence against women</td>
<td>Qualitative achievements on gender issue highlighted in programme analysis and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot programmes on women empowerment initiated by GJ&amp;D section and resulting knowledge utilized</td>
<td>All programmes following the GPOG action plan to ensure gender policy implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Roles, Accountability, Ownership and Resources to Implement the Gender Policy

Each and every staff member of all BRAC programmes, projects, divisions and departments share the responsibility of successfully implementing the gender policy and every individual will be held accountable. Supervisors should play a strong role in ensuring the application of appropriate steps for gender- mainstreaming by their teams.

Every BRAC staff member should make all necessary efforts to study the Gender Policy and become fully acquainted with its guidelines. The policy will be available to all staff in both Bengali and English versions.

Adequate resources and appropriate institutional arrangements are crucial for gender mainstreaming across the organisation. The roles and resources available in administering and supporting policy implementation are outlined below:

**Gender Equality and Diversity Team (GEDT)** – The GEDT team, consisting of programme directors and their representatives, will play an advisory role in the policy implementation process. The team will be responsible for creating ownership and accountability over the policy among staff and also follow up on the Gender Policy Monitoring mechanism and the GPOG Action Plans of all programmes and departments. The GEDT team will be reportable to the Executive Management Team and will develop annual workplans that define the steps for policy implementation.

**Gender Justice and Diversity (GJ&D) Section** – The GJ&D section is the unit primarily responsible for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the Gender Policy and providing any technical assistance required at different levels of the organisation. The section will also lead the process of developing indicators and frameworks and under the guidance of the Gender Equity and Diversity Committee (GEDT), develop a corporate action plan for policy implementation. The GJ&D section will be reportable to the Director, HRD and its staff will consist primarily of gender specialists.

**Gender Focal Point (GFP)** – A Gender Focal Point team consisting representatives from each programme, project, division, department and unit in the organisation will be formed which will work closely with the GJ&D section to incorporate the gender policy into the respective programme.
The GJ&D Section will provide the necessary capacity building for the GFP team to enhance their capacity to provide leadership in gender integration. The GJ&D section will also guide the team, using the Gender Policy Operational Guideline, in developing and implementing action plans.

**Gender Trainer Team** - The GJ&D Section will work to enhance the capacity of the members of Gender Trainer Team of BRAC Training division which will facilitate Gender Training/workshops/discussions for staff.

**Gender Analysis Frameworks** – A gender analysis framework will be developed, with technical assistance of an external gender expert, to be used for interventions, proposal design, ongoing programme reviews and research.

**Gender Policy Operationalisation Guidelines (GPOG)** – The GPOG will be developed to assist staff in incorporating the policy into their respective programmes.

**Annual Action Plan** – The GJ&D section will develop an action plan that outlines steps for policy implementation while each programme and department will develop an annual perspective action plan in accordance with the GPOG, with overall progress being monitored by the EMT.

**Resource Allocation** – The EMT will allocate the necessary resources to implement the gender policy across all levels of the organisation.
ANNEX 1

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 and 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 behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Gender Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming focuses 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 interests 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 in income generating activities, resources, responsibilities and opportunities.
Gender Awareness

Gender awareness is the recognition and understanding of the differing needs, interests and priorities of women and men and the different contexts, opportunities and constraints faced them as a result of their gender.

Practical Gender Needs

Practical Gender Needs are the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in society. PGNs do not challenge, although they arise out of, gender divisions of labour and women’s subordinate position in society. PGNs are a response to immediate perceived necessity, identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and often inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, health care and employment.

Strategic Gender Interests

Strategic Gender Interests (SGIs) are identified by women as a result of their subordinate social status and tend to challenge gender divisions of labor, power and control and traditionally defined norms and roles. SGIs vary according to their particular contexts and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women’s control over their bodies.

Gender Analysis

Gender analysis is a systematic way of looking at the different impacts of development, policies, programmes and legislation on women and men that entails, first and foremost, collecting sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive information about the population concerned. Gender analysis can also include the examination of the multiple ways in which women and men, as social actors, engage in strategies to transform existing roles, relationships, and processes in their own interest and in the interest of others.
Women in Bangladesh continue to remain highly disadvantaged in terms of the standard of human development. Their inferior status in society is due to low literacy rates, unbalanced wage rates, low life expectancy and, most importantly, the lack of access to economic, social and informational resources. Their disadvantaged situation is a direct consequence of not only this lack of access to resources but also, more importantly, the patriarchal ideologies, cultural values and attitudes prevalent in all levels of Bangladeshi society. The patriarchal ideology predominantly influences and demarks the division of labor where work is allocated on the basis of sex, both within the four walls of the home and at the workplace.

Women’s participation in a job or career is often significantly different from that of men. A part of that difference results from external conditions such as the double responsibility of home making and child care as barriers to opportunity, together with prevalent misogynist attitudes and behaviors. Sexism affects not only women’s personal lives but is also reflected in all public institutions, including the workplace, social arena and formalised in laws and customs.

In patriarchal social systems such as Bangladesh’s, men possess more power and have greater access to social, economic and informational resources than women. As a consequence of this power and privilege, men in these types of societies are able to attain positions that allow them to shape policies and systems which give rise to further imbalance. To understand this imbalanced distribution of power and privilege, there is a need to examine how it came into being, how the oppression of women by men is related to other forms of social oppression and to develop strategies to eradicate it. This means redefining societal norms, eliminating bias in institutional structures and legal frameworks and working for political commitment toward such changes. And it is of primary importance to organise women in protest against undue subordination.

It is of great irony that in most societies and organisations, members of the dominant group define overall purpose, values and procedures in such a way as to acquire direct control over decision-making processes. The non-dominant groups are then forced to fit in to established practices and culture. In such cases, it is now time to take the necessary steps correct these imbalances and inequalities so that everyone, despite differences in gender, religion, or social background, has equal choice and access to opportunities.
ANNEX 3

BRAC’s Gender Approach Timeline

BRAC is patronising gender equality through the empowerment of women and the transformation of gender relations within village households and communities as well as the organisation itself. In the late 80’s, BRAC directed all its policies and programmes toward achieving gender equality through sustained interventions that targeted women’s basic needs and strategic interests such as health care, legal education, access to credit and gender awareness and training.

This kind of commitment involves long term strategic planning and BRAC, as an advocate for social change, is constantly pioneering new ways to engage women and encourage their participation in the development process with the ultimate goal of empowering them economically, socially and politically. In this process, it is essential that men and women work collectively, developing partnership in implementing institutional and social change.

BRAC has adopted specific programmes and projects to empower rural women over the years. A timeline of the relevant programmes and projects are as follows:

**Year 1973**
- Women Village Organisation formed in Sulla Project

**Year 1975**
- Jamalpur Women’s Project commenced

**Year 1980**
- Oral Re-hydration Therapy training delivered door-to-door to 13 million rural mothers by specially recruited female staff. These female staff pioneer in Bangladesh as field staff and they directly contributed in women mobility in rural Bangladesh

**Year 1985**
- 70% female enrollment policy adopted for Non-Formal Primary Education Programme
- Credit and income generation programme for disadvantaged women initiated

**Year 1986**
- Non-traditional income generating projects introduced to mainstream women into development
- Greater number of female staff recruited

**Year 1987**
- Programme initiated to provide legal education to women VO members
- Income Generation for Vulnerable Group Development (IGVGD) programme initiated, targeting ultra poor women exclusively

**Year 1991**
- Women’s Health & Development Programme started.
- Women’s Advisory Committee (WAC) formed to help identify and redress barriers to effective participation by women in organisational activities
• A one-day course called "Men & Women in Partnership Development" launched based on WAC recommendations

**Year 1992**
• Workshop on gender research conducted
• Circular on values and gender aspect of community living drafted by WAC
• BRAC introduced 2 (two) days of desk-work for female field staff to cope with menstrual discomfort
• Gender Consultation held with all senior BRAC staff
• Gender Awareness Analysis Course (GAAC) introduced for all BRAC staff
• Organisation and program gender analysis started

**Year 1993**
• Program revisited field work time of considering gender role.
• Policy of affirmative action adopted and decision taken to allocate motorcycles to female staff six months earlier than male staff

**Year 1994**
• Conduct Gender Needs Assessment Survey at staff level
• Strategic planning meeting of BRAC Gender Training Programme leads to comprehensive Gender Programme
• Research Division held a major workshop on Gender Analysis to develop gender analytical framework and build the capacity of the researchers to incorporate gender concerns in every field of research
• Policy to promote women rapidly to management positions adopted

**Year 1995**
• The Gender Quality Action Learning (GQAL) Programme launched to improve staff relations and quality of BRAC programmes.
• UNICEF’s Meena Project (relating to gender issues of female children) launched through BRAC
• The Gender Resource Center (GRC) established to disseminate gender related information to all staff and initiate ongoing dialogue on gender
• A “women only” recruitment policy adopted

**Year 1996**
• Senior management took part in gender training
• An eight-month leave without pay introduced for women staff members, in addition to a three-month, paid, maternity leave
• BRAC values were redefined on the basis of gender perspective
• BRAC culture and values (BCV) launched

**Year 1997**
• Gender training for VO members introduced
• Subsidized crèche for children of BRAC staff set up at the BRAC Head Office in Dhaka
• BRAC contributed in national women development policy of Bangladesh GOV
• Gender sensitisation vision, mission and strategic implementation were introduced
• First Gender Policy of BRAC developed

**Year 2000**
• A pilot of GQAL VO program launched through GQAL team of training division.
• Adolescent development programme launched with almost 100% girls
• Started APON/LSB course for adolescent boys and girls
Year 2001
  - GQAL with VO initiated jointly with training division and RED

Year 2002
  - Maternity leave increased to four months from three months

Year 2003
  - BRAC senior management granted expectation list to improve female staff retention
  - Needs assessment on sexual harassment

Year 2004
  - First policy for sexual harassment elimination developed

Year 2005
  - Sexual Harassment Elimination (SHarE) Unit established
  - Introduced seven-days paternity leave.
  - BRAC code of conduct reformulated

Year 2006
  - GQAL VO launched in STUP area with VO members in 2 districts
  - GEDT (Gender Equality Diversity Team) team formed

Year 2006
  - Gender policy revisited
  - Monkhuile Kotha Bola Forum established
  - Gender trainers team initiated