



NAC GENDER POLICY

"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance."

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General

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INTRODUCTION

The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) is committed to advancing gender equality as a core value and operational necessity. Our work is grounded in fundamental, universal, and equal rights for women and men, girls and boys. In the context of continuous and increasingly invasive restrictions for women and girls in Afghanistan, we will do as much as we can, for as long as we can, for Afghan women. In these complex and shifting times, we follow our Ethical Guidelines and Commitments, and adapt our modalities to uphold meaningful participation, safety, and dignity. Our approach builds on NAC's long-standing presence, dialogue-based conditionality, and community trust, with particular focus on women's rights and inclusion.

COMMITMENT

NAC's commitments under this policy are to:

- **Protect and promote women's equal rights** in all NAC programmes and operations, consistent with international standards and Afghan law, where compatible with those standards.
- **Ensure women's representation** at all levels of NAC governance and management, and across technical and support functions; women will always be represented in NAC.
- **Provide meaningful work with room to develop:** recruit, retain, train, and promote women; invest in mentoring, leadership pipelines, and skills development as a goal in itself – retaining women's competence in Afghanistan.
- **Never replace women with men, because they are women.** If access is constrained, we adjust the operating model rather than substituting men for women.
- **Use safe, practical adaptations** to uphold women's participation (e.g., converting our international staff house to a rehabilitation centre where women can work; deploying senior male leadership to buses transporting female staff to deter harassment).
- Principles and procedures for are developed for women to be accompanied with male guardians/ *mahram's* when needed to perform their duties. ie while traveling to field.
- **Leverage digital tools** to expand women's access to information, services, learning, and decision-making where physical presence is restricted.
- **Operate through principled dialogue** to keep services open for women and girls, embedding gender equality within community-accepted solutions and local monitoring.
- **Apply zero tolerance for corruption** and ensuring safeguarding, whistleblowing, and accountability mechanisms are accessible, trusted, and survivor centred.

DEFINITIONS

- **Gender equality:** equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for people of all genders.
- **Meaningful participation:** women's safe, informed, and influential engagement in decisions that affect them (not tokenism).
- **Do no harm:** designing and delivering programmes that prevent, minimise, and mitigate risks to women and girls.

PRINCIPLES

1. **Rights-based and context-aware**

Women's equal rights are foundational and non-negotiable; approaches are adapted to the local context through dialogue and community acceptance to sustain access and impact.

2. **Participation over substitution**

We will not replace women with men. Where restrictions arise, NAC will re-design delivery (hours, sites, escorts, safe transport, remote/digital modalities) to keep women present and active.

3. **Safety, dignity, and inclusion**

NAC proactively addresses harassment, mobility barriers, and digital and financial access gaps; women's safety measures (e.g., vetted transport, safe spaces, confidential reporting) are integral, not add-ons.

4. **Capability retention**

Retaining and growing women's competence is an outcome in itself; NAC invests in continuous professional development, peer networks, and advancement pathways.

5. **Evidence and accountability**

Gender results are defined, measured, and reported; communities, especially women, inform monitoring, learning, and course-correction.

OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

NAC will:

A. **STAFFING, LEADERSHIP, AND CULTURE**

- Maintain gender representation targets at organisational, departmental, and project levels with annual reporting.
- Ring-fence posts where women's presence is essential (e.g., health, case management) and prohibit male substitution for these roles.
- Provide flexible work arrangements, safe transport solutions, on-site childcare where feasible, and psychosocial support.

B. **SAFE ACCESS AND ADAPTATION**

- Sites and modalities: use women-only spaces, community-accepted locations, staggered schedules, home-based, and hub-and-spoke models to maintain women's access under the restrictions.
- Transport and protection: organise vetted transport; enforce codes of conduct with sanctions.
- Digital inclusion: deploy secure digital platforms for learning, reporting, and participation. Budget for data, devices, and digital literacy.

C. **PROGRAMMATIC GUARANTEES**

- Education, health, and livelihoods programmes must include clear women's participation and leadership milestones, with contingency plans to sustain access during shocks.
- Use community-based monitoring and women's groups to track access, safety, and quality; activate third-party monitoring where needed.
- Embed market-relevant skills, placement support, and enterprise services for women to translate training into income and leadership.

D. **ETHICAL COMPLIANCE AND SAFEGUARDING**

- Enforce NAC's Ethical Guidelines, Anti-Corruption Policy, and Whistleblowing mechanisms; ensure women can report safely and confidentially, with survivor-centred handling and protection from reprisals.

- Train all staff, partners, and suppliers on gender, PSEAH, safeguarding, digital security, and bystander duties; include gender clauses and performance requirements in partner and vendor agreements.

PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

- Advocate consistently for women's rights to education, health, work, mobility, and participation, and for safe, enabling environments for female staff and beneficiaries.
- Use dialogue-based conditionality to keep space open for women and girls in programmes and workplaces; seek pragmatic, locally negotiated solutions without losing sight of equal rights.
- Collaborate with communities, religious and traditional leaders, and women's organisations to co-design protective adaptations and to normalise women's public roles.

MONITORING, REPORTING, AND LEARNING

- **Key indicators** include: women's recruitment, retention, and promotion rates by level; training uptake rate; safe-access incidents reports; digital participation metrics, beneficiary access and satisfaction data - disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and location.
- **Feedback and complaints:** multiple safe channels (e.g., in person, phone, email, suggestion box) in relevant languages; timely responses and transparent follow-up, in line with NAC Whistleblowing and Anti-Corruption procedures.
- **Reviews:** semi-annual internal reviews; lessons inform adjustments and are shared with staff, partners, and donors.

GOVERNANCE AND REVIEW

The Secretary General and Country Director are accountable for policy implementation. Department heads, and project leads, are responsible for operationalising this policy and reporting on results. This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if the context or law materially changes.