

**THE SEEDOO INITIATIVE FOR
CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**



GENDER POLICY

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1. Introduction

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and a powerful driver for better health outcomes globally. The Sedoo Initiative for Children with Special Needs-SECHILD recognizes 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. This becomes very challenging and almost impossible if the woman is disabled or challenged. On a day to day basis, abled bodied women's mobility, decision-making capability and access to resources were being controlled by men not to mention those with disabilities. SECHILD has therefore placed focus on the empowerment of women most especially those with disabilities through all her interventions, directing the majority of her counselling and support programmes towards them. The organization has adopted a Gender Policy in order to eliminate discrimination against women most those with challenges and influence organizational change in the prevailing patriarchal social system which encouraged inequality.

SECHILD puts gender equality and disabled people in the center. The organization believes that poverty and social justice cannot be overcome until all people have equal rights and opportunities. The organization recognizes that women and girl children and all disabled people are over-represented amongst poor and marginalized people. Addressing this inequality and injustice is a priority for SECHILD. The organization also recognizes that these situations will not be addressed successfully unless the attitudes and behaviours of both women and men change. Consequently, SECHILD seeks to support work that addresses gender and disability inequalities and the contributing attitudes and behaviours, appropriately engages both women and men in the development process and promotes gender equality, justice and empowerment throughout the development cycle.

Through this policy, SECHILD commits to ensuring that gender equality and disabled people are able to participate as fully as they choose is fully incorporated in all the organization's work both as a universal human right and an end in itself, as well as a means to overcome poverty and social injustice more effectively. Working with others, SECHILD seeks to promote equal realization of dignity and human rights for all genders and ages, and the elimination of poverty and injustice.

2. Scope

This SECHILD Gender represents the organization's commitment to take a cohesive and coordinated approach to gender equality and disability inclusion. The policy includes three core principles and commitments against which all parts of SECHILD will be held accountable. The scope of the Policy is to:

- Define and communicate clear commitments and consistent messages within SECHILD and with others
- Continue to strengthen efforts to promote gender equality and disability inclusion in our organization, increasing SECHILD's integrity and credibility amongst Donors, partners and allies as a leader in the gender equality space, in both programming and advocacy
- Establish commitments for SECHILD' development and humanitarian programming and the organization
- Enable SECHILD to work as an organization and with others building on each other strengths, experience and lessons learned

3. Focus

The Sedoo Initiative for Children with Special Needs- SECHILD aims to reduce inequality within and among communities by empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all, including persons with disabilities. By promoting gender-responsive and transformative programming, the organization will not only reach the vulnerable children/adolescents with special needs, individuals with disabilities and communities but also contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 5 of gender equality and the empowerment of

women and girls. SECHILD is committed to increasing the advocacy and the promotion of human rights coverage by supporting families with access to gender-related barriers to accessing support programmes, services and promoting equity of access for all genders to special educational services and related health services that respond to their different needs. SECHILD's gender policy recognizes that overcoming gender-related barriers and ensuring equal access between genders is a key factor to expanding support to individuals living with disabilities and reinforcing health systems. The policy is:

- Focusing primarily on identifying and addressing underlying barriers faced specifically by children with special needs, adolescents living with disabilities, their parents, caregivers and health workers.
- In the specific pockets where they exist, overcoming differences in programme coverage between girls and boys.
- Encouraging and advocating for women's and girls' with disabilities full and equal participation in decision-making related to health programmes and wellbeing.
- Overcoming gender-related barriers faced primarily by caregivers, health workers and adolescents who are central to reaching support services and discriminated children, individuals and families:
- Keeping top the gendered needs of caregivers at the heart of counselling intervention and support programme service delivery. Women are often the primary caregivers and face multiple barriers to accessing support and health services.
- Transforming gender roles by highlighting the importance of engaging men in caregiving to promote positive health seeking behaviours for both themselves and their families.
- Seeking to recognize the difference in the needs of all genders in the health workforce to ensure their ability to work safely and effectively. The 70% of the world's health care workers are female, yet only 25% of global health leaders are women.
- Reaching adolescents with disabilities with support programmes amongst others, creating positive experiences and building an enabling environment for a lifetime of health-enhancing

behaviours for adolescents and their future children. Adolescents provide a unique opportunity to be gender-transformative, as it is during this period that cultural and societal norms are developed

- Providing the right direction and guidelines to all SECHILD staff in policy-making, formation and planning, designing and implementation of development programmes/projects in a gender sensitive manner
- Creating an amiable work environment within the organization which enables women and men to work together irrespective of disability in an equitable, effective and mutually respectful manner.
- Integrating, mainstreaming, consulting men and women, boys and girls and ensuring that women's and girls' with disability's needs are articulated.
- Assessing gender differences and inequalities in roles, responsibilities, needs, constraints and access to opportunities and resources.
- Disaggregating data by sex, disabilities and all
- Setting explicit gender equality objectives
- Developing gender equity and integration indicators to measure progress
- Supporting gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation system
- Drawing together good practice and lessons learned and sharing these with partners.
- Building alliances with likeminded partners and encouraging coordination.
- Promoting positive images of women and men with disabilities and avoiding stereotypes.
- Using gender sensitive language in all communications. Eliminating discrimination in public life, civil status, education, employment, healthcare and other aspects of social and economic life.

4. SECHILD-Gender Policy

In order to enact these principles, SECHILD will fulfil the following commitments and ensure that they are monitored, evaluated and reported on as part of SECHILD's responsibility of transparency and accountability.

- Incorporate participatory gender and disability inclusion data disaggregated by sex, age, and other relevant diversity factors to inform actions across the program/project cycle.
- Engage men and boys in support of gender equality and women's empowerment when in line with programming and/or organizational objectives.
- Identify potential programming risks throughout the program/project cycle and take steps to do no harm and mitigate unintended consequences of backlash and gender-based violence, regardless of sectoral focus.
- Ensure evaluations and reviews do no harm, are participatory and assess progress towards gender equality and disability inclusion outcomes.
- Ensure that they document best practices and challenges, and create mechanisms for cross-learning within communities, within SECHILD and with partners.
- Ensure all our policies and practices are developed with a gender lens. Report on gender and diversity balance in staffing and governance structures along with average pay levels. Implement targeted strategies to redress any evidence of gender inequality in gender and diversity balance and pay levels.
- Recruit and retain staff and volunteers with a commitment to gender equality; build staff and partner capacity and skills in gender equality and diversity, and ensure all annual operating plans, job descriptions and performance plans reflect SECHILD's commitment to gender equality.
- Regularly report to program participants, Donors and the public on progress on gender equality and disabled persons inclusion and in SECHILD's work.

- Take all measures to prevent and respond to all forms of sexual harassment and violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse of children and vulnerable adults and disabled persons, promote staff awareness, training, and effective systems for reporting and monitoring.
- Ensure external education, fundraising, advocacy and communications respect and uphold our commitment to social justice, gender equality and disability inclusion including being respectful, using inclusive and positive language and images and avoiding stereotypes with particular attention to those based on gender and ethnicity.

5. Associated Policies

This policy is complementary to the set of standards of behaviour that all SECHILD employees and volunteers are required to adhere to in the organization's Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics and any further codes or related policies defined by SECHILD Members, Partners, Applicants and Country Office. In order to effectively promote gender equality, girls' rights and disability inclusion, SECHILD shall:

- Design implement, monitor and evaluate quality gender transformative and inclusive development and humanitarian programmes to influence. Implement long-term strategies of social norm change to end injustice, challenge unequal power relations and address the root causes of discrimination;
- Integrate gender equality and disability inclusion measures that align to and complement the work that SECHILD does with her values and behaviours into the organization's business process and conduct of work. SECHILD does not tolerate practices that result in gender-based or disability-based discrimination, exclusion or inequality based on gender or other forms of identity or disability;
- Strengthen and build partnerships that promote respect for gender equality, diversity and disability inclusion. Engage partners in joint approaches to promote gender equality, girls' rights, and disability inclusion;

- Strengthen and scale up efforts to influence decision makers at all levels to embrace gender equality, girls' rights and disability inclusion;
- Mobilize and dedicate the appropriate/necessary human, technical and financial resources in line with and to meet commitments to gender equality, girls' rights and disability inclusion; and
- monitor and evaluate all SECHILD's work from the perspective of achieving gender equality, girls' rights, and disability inclusion, in order to improve the quality of the organization's programme and influencing work, contribute to continuous learning, provide an evidence base to inform decisions, and ensure accountability to the people SECHILD works with and for.

6. The underlying principles

The underlying principles shall be hinged on the following principles:

- ✓ **Gender discrimination:** Due to gender discrimination within all levels of the social system, women are especially vulnerable to and the worst affected by disability. On the other hand, women's disability enhances the challenge of the whole family and affects the sustainability of the family, as women play a vital role in their family's education and health. SECHILD shall continue to promote gender equality and prioritize women's issues, focusing on gender equality as a central issue in all her development activities.
- ✓ **Gender equity:** It is impossible to achieve gender equity 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 equity.
- ✓ **Empowerment of women:** This has always been a major focus of the organization: Promoting the rights of women with disabilities is key to achieving gender equity. SECHILD is therefore committed to women's empowerment through all her programmes.

- ✓ **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
- ✓ **Staff development:** At least 45% of staff development funds will be used for performance development of female staff with emphasis on those with disabilities

7. Terms and definitions

Disability

Disability is the interaction between an impairment and barriers in an environment – that is, that it is barriers (physical, attitudinal, systemic, or environmental) which may limit those with an impairment from being fully included in society. The term “persons with disabilities” is used to apply to all persons with disabilities including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers, hinder the full realization of their rights as well as their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Diversity: Diversity acknowledges that each individual is unique. It means recognizing, accepting, celebrating and finding strength in individual differences such as gender, age, nationality, race, ethnicity, ability, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

Empowerment: Empowerment is a strategy to increase girls’ agency over their own lives, and their capacity to influence the relationships and social and political conditions that affect them. Lack of power is one of the main barriers that prevent particularly girls and young women from realizing their rights. This can be overcome by a holistic and sustainable strategy of empowerment, involving girls, boys, and young people in changing gender norms to the benefit of all. **Gender-based empowerment:** Focuses on promoting simultaneous change in: norms, attitudes and behaviours; social and economic resources and safety nets; as well as policy frameworks and budgets. It is a core strategy of SECHILD’s work in promoting gender equality and inclusion. While empowering girls and young women is key in promoting their rights, it is also essential to engage boys and young men as partners and co-beneficiaries in the realization of gender

equality. Gender norms and stereotypes often privilege boys and young men; however, their behaviours and decision-making are also constrained and shaped by rigid social and cultural expectations. SECHILD believes that men and boys can play an important role in overcoming gender inequality and discrimination both as power holders and as beneficiaries of change.

Exclusion: Exclusion is the process that prevents certain individuals or groups from fulfilling their rights. Exclusion is caused by inequality in the distribution of resources and power, by inequality in the value assigned to different groups, and by the social norms that perpetuate these differences. These causes are interlinked and compound each other. It is most often those that are not valued whose rights are not realized. For example, girls, boys and youth with disabilities are often stigmatized and not valued; schools are not designed to be accessible and teachers are not adequately trained which means that their specific needs are not addressed and subsequently their right to an education is denied. SECHILD with the understanding of how intertwined the roots of different forms of exclusion are shall work committedly towards addressing the root causes of exclusion in improving the opportunities available to girls, boys, youth, in particular those who are vulnerable and excluded, including children with disabilities, who are excluded on the basis of the social groups they identify with or are associated with, as well as respecting their dignity. SECHILD shall be intentional about processes that bring people in a meaningful manner with terms for individuals and groups to take part in society and to fully enjoy their rights.

Gender Equality: Gender equality means that all persons, regardless of their gender, enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy the same level of respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices. Gender equality does not mean that women and men, or girls and boys are the same. Women and men, girls and boys, and individuals with other gender identities have different but related needs and priorities, face different constraints, and enjoy different opportunities. Their relative positions in society are based on standards that, while not fixed, tend to

advantage men and boys and disadvantage women and girls. Consequently, they are affected in different ways by policies and programmes. SECHILD's gender equality approach is geared towards the understanding of these relative differences and intersecting identities, appreciating that they are not rigid and can be changed. While designing strategies, policies, programmes and services SECHILD believes that it is important to keep these differences and intersecting identities in mind when. Ultimately, promoting gender equality is transforming the power relations between women and men, girls and boys and individuals with different gender identities in order to create a more just society for all. SECHILD's strategy to achieve gender equality is gender equity. The organization's gender equity approach is the deliberate process of being fair in order to produce equal and measurable outcomes.

Gender Justice: SECHILD is intentional about the rights of women, men, girls and boys. The organization believes in gender justice and the ending of inequalities between females and males, which results in women's and girls' subordination to men and boys. The organization holds that girls and boys, women and men have equal access to and control over resources, the ability to make choices in their lives, as well as access to provisions to redress inequalities, as needed.

Commitment to Gender Justice: SECHILD is committed to gender justice and has taken a position against gender discrimination, exclusion and gender-based violence. The organization focuses on the responsibility to be held accountable to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including of girls and women.

Girls' Rights: Girls as a cohort represent one of the largest excluded social groups and it is worse with those with disabilities. Many face significant barriers to rights simply because they are female and disabled. SECHILD shall effectively support girls but more those with disabilities to achieve equality. SECHILD holds firmly that girls' rights are human rights and securing the rights of girls with disabilities is the critical social justice that should be considered top.

Inclusion: SECHILD with the understanding of how intertwined the roots of different forms of exclusion are shall work committedly towards addressing the root causes of exclusion in improving the opportunities

available to girls, boys, youth, in particular those who are vulnerable and excluded, including children with disabilities, who are excluded on the basis of the social groups they identify with or are associated with, as well as respecting their dignity.

SECHILD shall be intentional about processes that bring people in a meaningful manner with terms for individuals and groups to take part in society and to fully enjoy their rights.

8. Awareness and Capacity Development

Gender awareness training has continuously been provided to all staff in order to encourage development of correct attitudes. Staff are equipped through training with the appropriate skills necessary for gender integration in their respective programmes. And in order to encourage a positive attitude towards women's empowerment, SECHILD shall develop capacity of staff in using gender analysis framework and assigning relevant persons to ensure gender policy implementation at programme level and in corporate gender strategic planning for programmes and projects in consultation with all stakeholders, especially women, using:

- Devise mechanisms for promoting women with disabilities 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 SECHILD's 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 Advocacy and Networking
- SECHILD will actively participate in local, national, regional and international level networks promoting gender equality
- Through these networks, SECHILD will undertake advocacy initiatives for the formulation and implementation of policies promoting gender equality
- SECHILD will support women's organizations that are working to eradicate physical, mental or emotional violence against women and also encourage men involvement eliminating this type of violence
- SECHILD will extend support to all organizations working for women's empowerment and accept and adopt knowledge and best practices from them
- SECHILD will establish partnerships and network with organizations having gender expertise for project implementation, training or technical assistance Information, Education and Communication
- Visual materials and campaigns shall continuously emphasize more to target women with special needs specifically and the message shall address women's as well as men's interests and concerns
 - a. SECHILD will continue to ensure that promotional messages will be disseminated, highlighting women's with disabilities empowerment
 - b. 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

9. Organizational Culture

Open discussion on gender based discrimination and violence against women will be encouraged in order to create a gender-friendly working environment. Disabilities, lactation period, and issues related to travel time and work hours, will be fully considered. SECHILD

places high importance on the voice of women and other socially discriminated groups in all planning and decision-making processes. Awareness will therefore be created among male staff about the objectives of paternity leave and they will be encouraged to the provision accordingly

Accountability: 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 and to ensure staff accountability in implementing the gender policy, specific actions are to be included in the Job Descriptions which will be assessed and evaluated during staff appraisal.

10. Organizational Development

SECHILD will ensure effective implementation of the gender policy. The organization will conduct internal gender audit of all programmes and departments in order to identify gaps and take necessary action. The organization 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

11. Development Programmes

SECHILD will focus on the areas that ensure all development programmes and projects contribute towards gender equity and give Priority to projects that:

- endorse and promote the rights of women and girl children;
- endorse and promote the rights of all people with disabilities;
- actively and equitably involve women and disabled persons in determining development objectives, planning activities and assessing results;
- expand women's social and economic opportunities, resulting in improved livelihood security, health outcomes, access to higher education and improved well-being;
- expand disabled persons social and economic opportunities, resulting in improved livelihood security,

- health outcomes, access to higher education and improved well-being
- address violence and abuse towards women and disabled persons;
- increase women's and disabled persons roles as decision-makers in family, community, society and organizational governance;
- oppress women, disabled persons (or any other marginalized group); and,
- do not marginalize men and boys, but seek their appropriate participation in projects intended to address the situation of women and girls.
- promote culturally appropriate community-driven responses that challenge cultural values and practices that 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 with disabilities
- Increased and equal access for women and men with disabilities to life management education required for secure livelihoods and personal development.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

All SECHILD's staff members and volunteers, regardless of function or location, are **responsible** for the implementation of the requirements outlined in this policy.

13. Implementing SECHILD's Gender, Disability and Equality Policy

It is estimated that more than one billion people in the world experience some form of disability. The average prevalence rate in the female population 18 years and older is 19.2 per cent, compared to 12 per cent for males, representing about 1 in 5 women. Women and girls with disabilities face systemic marginalization and attitudinal and

environmental barriers that lead to lower economic and social status; increased risk of violence and abuse, including sexual violence; discrimination as well as harmful gender-based discriminatory practices; and barriers to access education, health care, including sexual and reproductive health, information and services, and justice as well as civic and political participation. This hinders their participation on an equal basis with others. The Gender Policy is developed to ensure a more systematic approach to strengthen the inclusion of the rights of women and girls with disabilities in SECHILD's efforts to achieve gender equality, empowerment of all women and girls, and the realization of their rights.

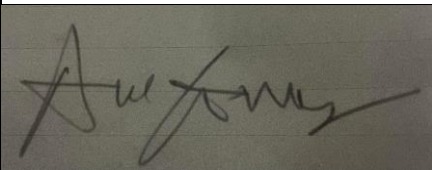
14. Policy Update

The Gender Policy shall be reviewed and updated annually

Version	Date	Author	Summary
1.0	June 5 th 2022	The Sedoo Initiative for Children with Special Needs- SECHILD	Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and a powerful driver for better health outcomes globally. The Sedoo Initiative for Children with Special Needs-SECHILD recognizes 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. This becomes very challenging and almost impossible if the woman is disabled or challenged. On a day to day basis, abled bodied women's mobility, decision-making capability and access to resources were being controlled by

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Document Approval

Version	Date	Approved by SECHILD Board of Trustees
1.0	June 5 th 2022	The Sedoo Initiative for Children with Special Needs-SECHILD
		
		Barr. Aver Gavar-Chairperson