



Baltimoretax
Lifeline, Health &
Learning Foundation

GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

1. Policy Statement

Baltimoretax Lifeline, Health and Learning Foundation ("BLHL Foundation") is committed to advancing gender equality and social inclusion as fundamental components of responsible and sustainable development. The Foundation acknowledges that exclusion, discrimination, and unequal access to opportunities undermine institutional effectiveness and diminish the impact of development initiatives. As a fiduciary steward of public and donor resources, BLHL Foundation incorporates gender equality and inclusion across its governance, operations, partnerships, and program implementation. The Foundation asserts that all individuals, irrespective of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, physical ability, or socio-economic status, are entitled to dignity, equal opportunity, and fair treatment within the workplace and throughout its programs. Discrimination, exclusion, and harmful practices are strictly prohibited.

2. Purpose and Scope

This Policy establishes the standards through which BLHL Foundation promotes equality, removes barriers to participation, and achieves inclusive development outcomes. The Policy applies to the following core areas:

- Governance and leadership structures.
- Recruitment, employment, and workplace practices.
- Program design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Partnerships, procurement, and grant-making.
- Communications and public representation.

3. Guiding Principles

BLHL Foundation's approach to gender equality and inclusion is based on the following guiding principles:

Equality of Opportunity: All individuals are entitled to equal access to employment, services, and participation in decision-making.

Equity and Fairness: The Foundation may implement proportionate measures to ensure fair outcomes in the presence of structural barriers.

Non-Discrimination: Unfair treatment based on identity, status, or circumstance is strictly prohibited.

Participation and Voice: Affected populations must have meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions that influence program outcomes.

Dignity and Respect: All interactions must uphold the inherent dignity of both individuals and communities.

Do No Harm: Programs must avoid increasing inequality, exposing individuals to risk, or perpetuating harmful norms.

4. Gender Equality

4.1 Gender Equality in Governance and the Workplace

The BLHL Foundation is dedicated to promoting gender-responsive governance and ensuring equal employment opportunities. Decisions regarding recruitment, compensation, advancement, and training are determined by merit, competence, and role requirements, with equal pay for equal work as a fundamental principle. The Foundation seeks balanced gender representation at all staffing and leadership levels and systematically monitors trends to prevent structural imbalances. The workplace prohibits sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination, and stereotyping. Marital status, pregnancy, or family plans are not considered in recruitment or employment decisions. Where feasible, the Foundation implements practical workplace measures to support professional participation across genders, including lawful maternity and paternity leave, flexible work arrangements, and respectful accommodation of caregiving responsibilities.

4.2 Gender Equality in Programs

All programs are required to integrate a gender perspective that aligns with their scope and risk level. Prior to implementation, programs assess the influence of gender roles, power dynamics, and social norms on access, participation, safety, and outcomes. When disparities are identified, program designs incorporate measures to address and mitigate these barriers. Programs aim for equitable participation of women and men unless a targeted approach is warranted by the context. Interventions must avoid reinforcing harmful stereotypes or excluding individuals based on gender identity. Where relevant, programs include measures to reduce the risk of gender-based violence and establish referral pathways to appropriate support services.

5. Social Inclusion

5.1 Inclusive Development Commitment

BLHL Foundation recognizes that individuals may face exclusion due to disability, physical challenges, age, displacement, poverty, ethnicity, religion, or other intersecting factors. Programs are designed to reduce barriers and enhance access for groups experiencing systemic disadvantage. Context-specific analyses inform prioritization to ensure both relevance and safety. Inclusion initiatives comply with applicable laws and community contexts, upholding dignity and non-discrimination.

5.2 Accessibility and Participation

The Foundation is committed to enhancing physical, communication, and programmatic accessibility. This includes reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities and physical challenges, age-sensitive approaches for youth and the elderly, and culturally appropriate delivery methods. Program designs are informed by consultation with affected communities, and corrective actions are taken when exclusion is detected through monitoring data.

6. Protection from Harm

BLHL Foundation maintains a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and other forms of abuse within its operations and programs. Risk assessments are conducted as necessary, and preventive measures include staff training, codes of conduct, secure reporting channels, and referral systems. Reports of misconduct are managed confidentially, promptly, and in accordance with safeguarding protocols. Retaliation against complainants is strictly prohibited.

7. Data, Monitoring, and Accountability

To assess progress, BLHL Foundation collects and analyzes data disaggregated by sex, age, disability status, physical challenges, and other relevant categories, when appropriate and ethically permissible. Program performance frameworks incorporate gender and inclusion indicators. When disparities are identified, program teams develop and implement corrective actions. The Board of Trustees receives regular updates on gender and inclusion performance for oversight.

8. Partnerships and Procurement

BLHL Foundation requires all partners, vendors, and sub-grantees to adhere to principles of equality and non-discrimination. Procurement and partnership decisions are made in a fair, transparent, and merit-based manner. Where feasible, the

Foundation encourages engagement with diverse and inclusive enterprises while maintaining integrity and value for money.

9. Capacity Strengthening

All staff members receive orientation on the principles of gender equality and inclusion. Program teams may participate in specialized training relevant to their roles. As the Foundation expands, internal capacity for effective inclusion across all operational areas will be enhanced.

10. Governance, Reporting, and Review

Management is responsible for implementing this Policy and allocating sufficient resources for its integration. The Board of Trustees maintains oversight and periodically reviews progress. This Policy is reviewed at least every two years or earlier if required by regulatory or donor standards.