

ORG – 072 v.1.1

Advocacy & Sector Engagement

# Human Rights, Gender Equity & Disability Inclusion Policy

Global

Policy Owner: Executive Director - Advocacy & Sector Engagement

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## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to affirm the commitment of The Fred Hollows Foundation (**The Foundation**) and its related entities to upholding the universal principles of Human Rights, particularly Gender Equity and Disability Inclusion, throughout all its business practices in the achievement of its vision to see a world in which no person is needlessly blind or vision impaired.
- 1.2 The objectives of this Policy are:
  - 1.2.1 To provide a clear position, consistent messages and a coordinated approach to the achievement and promotion of Human Rights across The Foundation.
  - 1.2.2 To set the principles and standards of Human Rights, Gender Equity and Disability Inclusion against which The Foundation will hold itself accountable.
  - 1.2.3 To provide guidance to staff of The Foundation and its partners in the adoption of procedures and practices to achieve adherence to these principles and standards.
  - 1.2.4 To provide The Foundation's clear position on Human Rights, Gender Equity and Disability Inclusion to guide communication to all external stakeholders.

## 2. SCOPE

The Foundation acknowledges there are many sites of marginalisation and inequity affecting the realisation of Human Rights around the world, including the right to health. This Policy addresses Human Rights generally and specifically identifies Gender Equity and Disability Inclusion as priorities in accessing eye health services, however, The Foundation remains committed to addressing other sites of inequity hindering access to eye health in the countries we work, dependant on the local context.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

**Disability** is an evolving concept resulting from the interaction between persons with impairments and broader attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

**Disability Inclusion** in an international development context recognises that, like all members of a population, people with disability are both beneficiaries and agents of development. A disability inclusive approach to effective development seeks to identify and address barriers that prevent people with Disability from participating in, and benefiting from, development.<sup>2</sup>

**Gender** refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women, boys and girls.

**Gender Equity** means going beyond equality of opportunity to recognise that women and men have different needs, preferences and interests and in order to achieve a fair distribution of the resources and benefits of development, certain people, depending on their Gender identity or biological sex, may require differential treatment. This, at times, may mean that it is necessary to target one demographic specifically in order to help them overcome barriers that specifically affect them.

**Human Rights** covers a range of civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms that are widely held to be essential prerequisites for people's enjoyment of a life based on the centrality of human dignity. Human Rights apply equally to all people regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, residence, sex, Gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, displacement, caste, poverty, class, language, or any other status including indigeneity.

## 4. BACKGROUND

### 4.1 Human Rights, Gender Equity and Disability Inclusion

Disability and Gender both impact the extent to which an individual is able to enjoy their Human Rights, and recognition of this must guide all development activities. As the rate of development increases, there is a risk that marginalised population groups, including women and people with Disability, may be left behind, unless there are explicit mechanisms within development initiatives to ensure they are included.

The relationship between Human Rights, Gender, Disability and development is complex. Both women and people living in poverty are more likely to have or acquire a disability over the course of their life, and the majority of the world's poor are women. Women are disproportionately affected by all treatable and preventable conditions that cause blindness, and the vast majority of women living with blindness are also living in poverty.

Gender-based marginalisation can further compound issues associated with disability status, and vice versa. This can result in cascading marginalisation in which women with disability are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion and economic disadvantage.

Marginalisation due to Gender or Disability can limit the effectiveness of The Foundation's work and prevent The Foundation's programs from being accessed by those who need them most. Acknowledging and working to overcome these barriers to eye health services must be a key priority within The Foundation's mission to end avoidable blindness.

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<sup>2</sup> [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. \*Development for All 2015 – 2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program\*](#)

## 5. LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The Foundation is required to adhere to the human rights based regulations of the countries in which The Foundation has offices and programs. The Foundation also acknowledges the relevant international treaties and conventions:

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(1948\)](#)
- [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(1966\)](#)
- [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(1966\)](#)
- [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination \(1965\)](#)
- [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(1979\)](#)
- [Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(1984\)](#)
- [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(1989\)](#)
- [Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work \(1998\)](#)
- [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(2006\)](#)
- [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights \(2011\)](#)

## 6. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

6.1 The Foundation upholds:

- 6.1.1 Respect for and protection of internationally recognised Human Rights including civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, the right to development and the rights of Indigenous peoples;
- 6.1.2 Universality of the right to health—all individuals are equally entitled to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health, including eye health, irrespective of their income or socio-economic status;
- 6.1.3 The importance of strong national health and development systems as the foundation for an individual's ability to enjoy their right to affordable, accessible and acceptable eye health; and
- 6.1.4 Indivisibility and interdependence of Human Rights—the right to health and to enjoy the highest attainable standard of eye health is inextricably linked to other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as the realisation or deprivation of the right to health and eye health will impact on an individual's ability to realise and enjoy their full Human Rights.

6.2 The Foundation recognises the importance of:

- 6.2.1 Respect for difference and acceptance especially of persons with Disability as part of human diversity and the inherent dignity, individual autonomy and independence of the person; and
- 6.2.2 Full and effective participation and inclusion in society and equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of a person's Gender, intrinsic capacity or functional ability, or any other factor; and
- 6.2.3 Respect for the evolving capacities of children with Disability and respect for the rights of children with Disability to preserve their identities; and
- 6.2.4 Achieving Gender Equity and the Inclusion of people with Disability across all aspects of society is an essential part of achieving sustainable development and ensuring no one is left behind.

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### References

## 7. COMMITMENTS UNDER THIS POLICY

The Foundation applies these guiding principles across all aspects of its work to achieve a world where no person is needlessly blind or vision impaired through the following commitments.

### 7.1 Governance

The Foundation will:

- 7.1.1 Comply with all national and international regulations that translate international Human Rights principles and conventions to protect Human Rights in the countries in which The Foundation operates.
- 7.1.2 Respect the relevant codes of conduct and voluntary standards internationally and in the countries in which The Foundation operates, that promote Human Rights and the rights of women, children, people with Disability, Indigenous peoples and the vulnerable and marginalised.
- 7.1.3 Ensure that The Foundation's internal global and divisional policies are consistent with the principles of Human Rights, Gender Equity and Disability Inclusion.

### 7.2 Strategic approach

The Foundation will:

- 7.2.1 Include and address the needs of vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged communities in its programs, projects and partnerships to promote universal health coverage for eye health and strengthen national health and development systems.
- 7.2.2 Review its programs, projects and internal operations for consistency with the guiding principles outlined in this Policy and Related Policies (see document control for related policies).
- 7.2.3 Ensure that relationships with and portrayals of the individuals, families and communities with which The Foundation works are respectful of their dignity, culture, diversity, identity and privacy.

### 7.3 Programming

The Foundation will:

- 7.3.1 Commit to applying the principles of this Policy across the program management cycle including to program planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
- 7.3.2 Consider supporting programs that address the underlying causes of avoidable blindness including those influenced by discrimination on the basis of sex, Gender identity or sexual orientation, age, Disability, ethnic minority or by being a member of a marginalised or vulnerable group.
- 7.3.3 Adopt a participatory approach to programming to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of projects to ensure their perspectives are understood and considered.

### 7.4 Partnerships

The Foundation recognises that there may be instances of Human Rights not being upheld in many of the countries in which it works, including in Australia. The Foundation's approach is to positively influence through our work and in partnership with agencies that support The Foundation's vision and employs a process of due diligence to ensure that appropriate partnerships are entered into. The Foundation recognises and encourages communication, transparency and accountability between

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partners as vital to ensuring that Human Rights are respected and protected within the programs supported by The Foundation and more broadly within the countries where we work. All potential partners should have written policies, or a willingness to progress towards developing policies, on aspects of practice including Human Rights and Inclusive Practices (e.g. Gender and Disability).

## **7.5 Private Sector relationships**

The Foundation expects private sector contractors, suppliers, and organisations to adhere to relevant labour laws, child protection and anti-discrimination regulations and standards. The Foundation's Global Procurement Policy provides guidance on the principles that underpin our private sector contracted relationships. Where possible, The Foundation will use its relationships with the private sector to encourage best practices for Gender equality, equal employment opportunity and access to services for people with Disability.

## **7.6 Advocacy**

The Foundation will promote eye health as integral to the enjoyment of Human Rights including the right to health, education, and labour force participation. The Foundation will advocate for Gender Equity as a particular strategic focus and may on a case-by-case basis, advocate for broader Human Rights reforms at the global level or in a particular country.

## **7.7 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

As a particular group identified in The Foundation's strategic plan, The Foundation will:

- 7.7.1 Ensure that its work to promote the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people respects their freedom to choose to engage with The Foundation, to participate in decision-making and to have control over how they engage with The Foundation
- 7.7.2 Support the meaningful and appropriate recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution of Australia and promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider Australian community.

## **7.8 Recruitment**

The Foundation will:

- 7.8.1 Support employment opportunities for local people within the countries where we work.
- 7.8.2 Support equal employment opportunities by ensuring recruitment methods attract the widest pool of suitably qualified applicants and have selection processes which are merit based, non-discriminatory and enable us to appoint the most appropriate person to the role.
- 7.8.3 Ensure recruitment policies are transparent and well documented to enable monitoring, evaluation and continual improvement.
- 7.8.4 Maintain recruitment practices which reflect positively on The Foundation's brand, protect our reputation, prevent conflicts of interest and continually reinforce the value we place on integrity.

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## **8. RESPONSIBILITIES & ACCOUNTABILITIES**

### **8.1 Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

- 8.1.1 The CEO is responsible for ensuring this Policy is upheld and will ensure progress in relation to Human Rights, Gender Equity and Disability Inclusion is included in standard reporting to the Board.
- 8.1.2 The CEO will ensure the Board is informed of any concerns relating to Human Rights, Gender Equity or Disability Inclusion that may present risk to The Foundation and its staff, beneficiaries, volunteers, partners, reputation, operations or other activities.
- 8.1.3 The CEO will hold relevant Divisional Directors accountable to this Policy.

### **8.2 Policy Owner**

- 8.2.1 The Policy Owner is responsible to ensure primacy with contemporary trends and norms relevant to this Policy and will update this Policy as required.
- 8.2.2 The Policy Owner will be responsible for addressing any issues arising in relation to this Policy and will be the point of contact for all staff for any issue of contention.
- 8.2.3 The Policy Owner will inform the CEO of any issues of risk to The Foundation and will record any issues on the organisation risk register.

### **8.3 Divisional Directors**

- 8.3.1 The Chief Operating Officer will promote the existence of this Policy to all staff.
- 8.3.2 Divisional Directors will ensure Foundation and divisional procedures, practices, plans and operations align with this Policy and that all relevant staff members are aware of, and understand, this Policy and their responsibilities under it. Divisions are encouraged to put in place procedures to implement the principles set out in this Policy. However, this Policy will prevail to the extent of any ambiguity or inconsistency between this Policy and those procedures.
- 8.3.3 Divisional Directors are responsible for monitoring and responding to any Human Rights based risk or concerns arising within The Foundation's business activities. The Divisional Director will seek the advice of the Policy Owner on issues of contention.

### **8.4 All staff of The Foundation**

- 8.4.1 All staff will understand and apply the principles and commitments required under this Policy.
- 8.4.2 All staff are responsible for identifying and responding to any Human Rights based risk or concerns arising within The Foundation's business activities. Any matters of contention will be reported to the Divisional Director.

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## 8.5 All associated stakeholders

All associated stakeholders operating with or on behalf of The Foundation are responsible to understand and abide by the principles and relevant commitments under this Policy and to advise the primary contact point within The Foundation of any issues that may arise.

## 9. MONITORING

- 9.1 A report on the implementation of this Policy will be submitted to the Board every two years across The Foundation's business activities, including the countries in which we work. The Policy Owner is responsible for compiling this report and submission to the CEO.
- 9.2 This Policy will be reviewed every three years and the Policy Owner is responsible to undertake this review.
- 9.3 The Operations Division has oversight for all Governance and Operational Policy and will ensure the Policy is listed on the Policy Register and provide support to ensure monitoring and reporting obligations are met.

## CONTROL OF DOCUMENTATION

<b>Document Number</b>	ORG-072		
<b>Document Name</b>	Human Rights, Gender Equity & Disability Inclusion Policy		
<b>History</b>	This Policy is a consolidation and refresh of: ORG-009 Disability-Inclusive Development Policy; ORG-11 Gender Equality & Development Policy; ORG-12 Human Rights & Development; and relevant elements of ORG-047 Recruitment Policy.		
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<b>Related Policies</b>	ORG-003 Safeguarding People Policy; ORG-069 Procurement Policy and other policies of The Foundation that may be relevant from time to time.		

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### References