



SLARi

SIERRA LEONE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE GENDER POLICY



SLARI Gender Policy

1. Background

The **Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI)** consists of seven research centres, each tasked with advancing agricultural research across various value chains. Given the essential roles that women play throughout the various agricultural value chains, including food production, processing, marketing, household food preparation, and seed conservation, SLARI recognizes the necessity of integrating both women and men into its research, innovation, and capacity-building programs. Furthermore, SLARI's longstanding reputation for credible research and international partnerships compels it to uphold global commitments to gender equality and cultural diversity. This inclusiveness will enhance the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of SLARI's research-for-development efforts.

2. Purpose and Scope

This Gender Policy sets out SLARI's commitments and responsibilities in promoting gender equality, aligned with the organization's core values. It serves as a framework to guide conduct, decision-making, and program development.

Gender mainstreaming is the process of incorporating gender perspectives and promoting equality across all policies, programs, budgeting, and monitoring frameworks. It is globally recognized as a fundamental component of sustainable development, human rights realization, and inclusive growth. Mainstreaming gender involves more than empowering women and girls, it requires an institutional shift that ensures both women's and men's experiences, needs, and perspectives are reflected in every aspect of SLARI's work.

This policy aims to:

- Ensure fair and equitable participation of women and men in all SLARI operations.
- Integrate gender across SLARI's research programs and workplace culture.
- Guide interactions with stakeholders, including farmers, partners, and collaborators.

This policy is applicable to all SLARI staff, stakeholders, collaborators, and partners.

3. Policy Statement

SLARI acknowledges that **gender equity and equality** are essential for achieving sustainable development outcomes across Sierra Leone's agricultural value chains. The institution is

committed to integrating gender considerations throughout its operations; from planning to execution, including monitoring and evaluation in both the workplace and field-based research activities.

This policy is grounded in the following principles:

- Enhancing staff awareness and understanding of gender issues.
- Respecting the diverse values and cultural backgrounds of all stakeholders.
- Promoting gender equality in partnerships and stakeholder engagements.
- Recognizing the additional barriers faced by women with disabilities in agriculture.
- Acknowledging the interconnection between gender inequality and poverty.
- Embracing and respecting diversity in identity and association, including ethnicity and religion.

4. Policy Implications

This gender policy will be embedded in SLARI's organizational culture, systems and operations, across five key areas: **Leadership, Accountability, Culture, Capacity, and Programs**, as adapted from Barclay & Dicker (2014).

4.1. Leadership

Leadership commitment is fundamental to successful gender mainstreaming. Without strategic support from leadership, efforts to achieve gender equality are unlikely to be sustained.

SLARI leadership will:

- Develop and implement a clear strategy for achieving gender equality.
- Ensure women's representation in leadership and decision-making roles.
- Demonstrate consistent commitment to gender-responsive policies and practices.

4.2. Accountability

Gender-sensitive accountability requires that all decisions are reviewed through a gender lens, ensuring they address the needs and interests of both women and men.

SLARI will:

- Integrate gender equality standards into performance assessment at all centres.
- Allocate adequate financial and human resources to implement gender policy.
- Publicly reporting progress toward gender equality commitments.

4.3. Culture

Sustainable gender mainstreaming must be reflected in SLARI's values, policies, systems, and day-to-day practices.

SLARI will:

- Foster a workplace that is inclusive, fair, and equitable to both women and men.
- Encouraging open dialogue on gender issues among all stakeholders.

4.4. Capacity

Effective gender mainstreaming depends on the organization's technical capacity and ongoing staff development.

SLARI will:

- Appoint or train gender focal person across its research centres.
- Make gender mainstreaming a shared responsibility for all staff.
- Contribute to the national gender capacity development agenda.

4.5. Programs

All SLARI programs and projects must be designed and implemented with gender considerations in mind.

SLARI will:

- Apply gender-sensitive approaches in program design and delivery.
- Ensure active participation of both women and men in all project phases.
- Using gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

5. Implementation

This Gender Policy will be fully integrated into SLARI's operational and research frameworks. It will guide day-to-day activities, strategic planning, and partnerships. The policy will be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

6. Monitoring and Review

SLARI's administration will oversee the implementation of this policy across all departments and programs. Any revisions to the policy must be approved by the Director General (DG).

7. Key Concepts and Definitions

7.1. Gender

Gender refers to the social and cultural roles, behaviors, and expectations associated with being male or female. It extends beyond biological differences to encompass identity, expression, and social experience.

Components of Gender:

1. **Gender Identity:** One's internal understanding of their gender (e.g., male, female).
2. **Gender Expression:** How individuals express their gender through appearance and behavior.
1. **Gender Roles:** Culturally defined roles and behaviors expected of individuals based on their gender.
3. **Gender Stereotypes:** Oversimplified and often inaccurate beliefs about gender characteristics.
4. **Gender Orientation:** Emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction influenced by gender identity and expression.

Other Key Terms:

1. **Sex:** Biological differences that define males and females.
2. **Gender Equality:** Equal treatment and opportunities for all genders.
3. **Gender Equity:** Fairness in treatment, which may require different approaches to achieve equal outcomes.

4. **Gender Mainstreaming:** Integrating gender considerations into all levels of decision-making.
5. **Intersectionality:** Understanding how gender interacts with other identities (e.g., race, disability) to influence experiences and opportunities.

8. Why Gender Matters

Understanding gender helps to:

1. **Promotes Equality:** Helps address systemic disparities between men and women.
2. **Empowers Individuals:** Supports personal development through respect for identity and expression.
3. **Improves Well-being:** Addresses gender-related health and social challenges.
4. **Fosters Inclusion:** Creates environments that embrace diversity and strengthen community resilience.

9. Conclusion

SLARI is committed to fostering a gender-inclusive institutional culture and research agenda. By addressing gender as a cross-cutting issue and embedding gender equality into all aspects of research, programming, and organizational culture, SLARI aims to create a more inclusive and impactful agricultural research system that benefits all Sierra Leoneans.