



**THE SALVATION ARMY**  
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

# **GENDER EQUITY**



INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

**POLICY**

Policies to direct the work of The Salvation Army

## Policy statement

The Salvation Army believes men and women, girls and boys should not be discriminated against because of their gender. The Salvation Army believes all people are created in the image of God and deserve the same opportunities.

Salvation Army community development programmes will promote gender equity, value the similarities and the differences between men and women, boys and girls, while appreciating and enriching the varying roles all people play to create and sustain a more just world.

The Salvation Army recognises that women and girls have been often excluded in communities but when they are active participants in decision making—at all levels—community development initiatives are more likely to succeed. The Salvation Army will work with partner agencies, communities and organisations to promote the gender equity for women and girls as well as men and boys.

### Background Information

Concepts of gender can affect the way in which both men and women are perceived, the opportunities they have and the treatment they receive.

Gender equality is the equal valuing in society of both the similarities and the differences between men and women, and the varying roles they play.

Gender equity means being fair to men and women. Equitable treatment is therefore not always equal treatment as this would not yield equal results. Historical and social disadvantages mean that specific action will sometimes be necessary to enhance the status of women.

According to recent United Nations statistics women and girls remain the most vulnerable members of society; disadvantaged in employment, health and education provision and victims of extreme violence and oppression. Women are also often discriminated against by religious practices and traditions.

Evidence shows that development indicators improve significantly when women make an equal or greater contribution than men. In fact 'when women and men have equal opportunities and rights, economic growth accelerates and poverty rates drop more rapidly for everyone.' Of equal importance is the social and spiritual contribution women often encourage within their families and communities, resulting in the building of more stable, peaceful and productive societies.

## Principles - Biblical and Theological Background

The Salvation Army's position is based on the belief that female and male are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and should be valued equally. Therefore, women and men, boys and girls needs must be considered at all stages of planning and implementation.

The New Testament emphasises the equality of all people in the kingdom of God. 'There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28 (NIV)).

During his life on Earth Jesus led the way in showing equality and respect for women in society.. He included women in his teaching (Luke 8:1-5) and healing (Luke 13:10-14) and built relationships with women when other people excluded them. Remarkably, in a male dominated world the message of the resurrection was announced first to women (Luke 24: 5-12).

Jesus viewed all people as individuals able to make a contribution and commitment to the building of God Kingdom. He bestowed dignity on women where they were repressed and assumed to be inferior. Jesus' approach to women appealed to the kingdom norm of equality in Christ and is the guide post for the Salvation Army in their community development and mission support.

## Practical responses

In the course of its operations, and within resource constraints, The Salvation Army is committed to gender equity through the following practical responses:

1. The Salvation Army will continue to work as an advocate and champion for men and women and girls and boys in both the local and international arena.
2. In order to fulfil the development principles The Salvation Army continues to focus on the programmes that:
  - a. Improve access to education for men and women, girls and boys.
  - b. Educate both girls and boys through Salvation Army schools and youth programmes.
  - c. Improve primary healthcare and particularly maternal and child health.
  - d. Combat violence within the family by working with both men and women.
  - e. Support community-based empowerment and self-help groups including micro finance initiatives—acknowledging and respecting the role of men within the family and community.

- f. Community and faith based groups offering counselling, rehabilitation and life skills for both men and women.
3. The Salvation Army will ensure women are an integral part of the planning, administration, implementation and evaluation of development programmes.
4. Affirmative action is sometimes required to address the needs of a specific group (women, girls, boys men) in gain equity as both contributors to and beneficiaries of development. The Salvation Army offer programmes that specifically address the needs of that group The requirement for non-discrimination based on gender extends to all areas of development within the Salvation Army around the world.
5. The Salvation Army will offer practical training and education to families on the importance and value of both girls and boys.
6. The Salvation Army will invest in women and maternal health in hospitals, clinics and health education programmes.
7. In line with international law The Salvation Army promotes the human rights of women and strongly opposes all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation.

## **Reference and Resource documents**

International Social Justice Commission—'Jesus and Justice' paper (Web reference)

UN Global Strategy for Women and Children's Health. Further details can also be found on [www.un.org/womenwatch](http://www.un.org/womenwatch)

Declaration of Alma-Ata, International Conference on Primary Health Care, Alma-Ata, USSR, 6-12, September 1978

Universal Declaration of Human Rights