



AKTION AMAZONAS

GENDER EQUALITY & GENDER POLICY

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKAM	Aktion Amazonas
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
Rio+20	UN Conference on Sustainable Development
UN	United Nations

1. Introduction: Gender & Equality in Development Cooperation

Gender equality has long been a cornerstone of Denmark's development cooperation. Denmark's current development strategy, *The World 2030*, adopted in 2017, identifies gender equality as one of its four strategic objectives. This strategy emphasizes promoting human rights, democracy, and gender equality, with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls. Gender equality is recognized as essential for achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Similarly, **gender and equality are central to AKAM's work** in development cooperation. We emphasize the distinct roles women and men play in natural resource management and household economies, their differing knowledge, priorities, and access to resources, and the importance of ensuring women's equal access to improved livelihoods, decision-making processes, capacity development, and advocacy.

While this gender-focused approach has been a natural and intuitive part of AKAM's engagements in South America, the organization recognizes the importance of formalizing this perspective. **AKAM has developed a Gender Equality and Gender Policy** to consolidate its gender-balanced approach and enhance its impact. Achieving gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also critical to the effectiveness of activities, the achievement of objectives, the measurement of impact, and AKAM's credibility as an organization.

The Gender Equality and Gender Policy underscores AKAM's commitment to integrating a gender perspective into its programmatic and operational structures. It aligns with national and international legislation and incorporates recommendations from leading international organizations (UN, IUCN, SDG). The policy establishes a framework for mechanisms that facilitate implementation and adaptation to diverse national contexts, ensuring gender equality remains a key driver of sustainable development in AKAM's work.

2. Background: Gender and Equality in AKAM's Work

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, and relationships ascribed to women and men, shaping their interactions and opportunities. Gender mainstreaming is an internationally recognized strategy for promoting gender equality, designed to ensure that the concerns and experiences of women and men are integral to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development policies and programs. For AKAM, gender is an essential concern that must be explicitly prioritized, budgeted for, implemented, monitored, and evaluated to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Globally, gender mainstreaming has often fallen short due to a lack of specific objectives and measurable indicators. Recognizing these challenges, AKAM's **Gender Equality and Gender Policy** takes a more impact-focused strategic approach. This policy ensures that gender considerations are embedded in the formulation, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation of all activities, reflected in concrete goals, success indicators, and targeted actions.

AKAM acknowledges that gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential for environmental conservation and sustainable development. Indigenous women receive particular attention due to their dual marginalization as both women and indigenous people. Addressing these layers of inequality aligns with AKAM's commitment to advancing equitable natural resource management, inclusive growth, and community resilience.

2.1. Gender Challenges in AKAM's Areas of Work

Achieving gender equality remains a contentious issue in many of the countries where AKAM operates. Cultural resistance, limited resources, and systemic inequality present significant barriers to achieving meaningful gender equity. Partner organizations often lack the capacity to implement effective gender mainstreaming, while women themselves may lack the knowledge or resources to claim their rights or fully benefit from interventions. Arguments rooted in "cultural traditions" are commonly used to justify resistance to gender equality initiatives.

According to recent data from the **UNDP Gender Inequality Index (2023)**, many South American countries face significant gender disparities in reproductive health, education, labor market participation, and political representation. Violence against women also remains pervasive in the region, often normalized by traditional values and patriarchal norms.

3. Policy Goals

3.1 General Goal

The goal is to establish a gender perspective and link key guidelines and action lines to ensure that all AKAM's policies, programs, and activities are inclusive and beneficial to all individuals equally, thereby contributing to gender equality.

3.2. Rationale for the Policy

Aktion Amazonas identifies the gender perspective as a key factor in the development of projects, conservation programs, and sustainable development concerning nature and the changes occurring within it. People are considered holistically, with a focus on

sustainable inclusion and social justice for everyone the foundation interacts with. It is vital for Aktion Amazonas to internalize the concept of gender, its implications, and dimensions in workplace and social contexts, and to work towards an institutional gender culture that fosters equitable relations and opportunities, creates fair conditions, equality, non-violence, respect for gender identity, and eliminates discrimination.

3.3. AKAM's Focus and Strategic Actions

AKAM is committed to focusing on areas where it can make a tangible impact on gender equality:

1. **Knowledge and Capacity Building:** Providing training for partners and stakeholders to effectively integrate gender considerations into their work.
2. **Empowerment:** Supporting women's leadership and participation in community decision-making processes.
3. **Advocacy and Involvement:** Collaborating with partners to advocate for women's rights and creating platforms for gender-equitable engagement in natural resource management.
4. **Monitoring and Impact Assessment:** Developing specific gender-focused indicators to measure progress and outcomes in AKAM's programs.
5. **Internal Integration:** Integrating gender-sensitive policies, procedures, processes, and interactions across the organization.
6. **Project Design and Implementation:** Establishing gender-sensitive guidelines for the design, development, implementation, and monitoring of projects.
7. **Promoting Gender Awareness:** Encouraging attitudes and competencies among all team members that support gender equality and equity.

While AKAM acknowledges that addressing structural inequalities may exceed the immediate scope of its interventions, the organization remains committed to prioritizing the integration of gender concerns as a cornerstone of its development and conservation work. By empowering women and strengthening community capacity, AKAM seeks to contribute to lasting, equitable solutions that benefit both people and the environment alike.

4. National and International Legal Framework

This policy is framed within applicable national legal provisions, including those in Bolivia, Peru, and other countries where AKAM operates, along with the international agreements and conventions ratified by these nations. These provisions range from the Constitution, laws on gender identity, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination legislation, to specific laws like the Integrated Law to Guarantee Women a Life Free from Violence, laws concerning older adults, decrees, and other provisions related to gender equality. Additionally, the policy aligns with international treaties and frameworks, such as the **Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, the **1995 Beijing Platform for Action**, the **UN Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20)**, the **Millennium Declaration**, the conclusions of the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**, and the **Gender Plan of Action under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**. These documents and frameworks have been integrated into national and international laws and policy papers, many of which are followed up with concrete actions at the national level to advance women's rights.

In 2024, AKAM aligns with these international commitments and continues to work towards ensuring gender equality in conservation and development efforts across South America, particularly within indigenous and rural communities. We aim to promote the rights of women and men and make sure they are respected and prioritized within these initiatives.

5. Terminology

The terms used in implementing this policy include but are not limited to: gender equality and equity, sustainability and conservation, discrimination, and gender-based violence. These concepts are central to the implementation and success of AKAM's work in empowering communities and promoting gender-sensitive approaches in our projects. Additional concepts and terms may evolve as part of our strategy, depending on the local context and the specific challenges faced by the communities we work with.

6. Gender is its context

One of the first questions in any gender equality process is to ask: what are we trying to achieve, and what knowledge do we need to achieve our goals in the specific context? Women and men are shaped not only by their gender but also by broader societal, cultural, and environmental factors, as well as their age and social status. Understanding gender in its context requires examining how women and men are traditionally involved in specific livelihood activities or decision-making processes at the community level. It also involves understanding how these roles align with the objectives of a particular

intervention, as well as how national policies can influence and potentially transform these roles.

At AKAM, we emphasize that development interventions are about change. These interventions challenge traditional roles, facilitate discussions about gender roles between women and men, and introduce activities that may be new to specific communities. Our goal is to engage communities in transforming their social structures to support gender equality in sustainable development efforts.

7. Gender and Natural Resource Management

Mainstreaming gender in natural resource management is grounded in a rights-based approach, where gender equality is seen as a fundamental human right. Additionally, there are compelling reasons for mainstreaming gender in resource management: it improves efficiency, efficacy, and the long-term sustainability of natural resource management efforts.

Women are often the primary caretakers of children and can significantly influence the education of future generations toward sustainable practices. In the context of natural resource management, studies, including the **UN-REDD Program's Business Case for Mainstreaming Gender in REDD+** (2011), confirm that women and men have differentiated knowledge, uses, and access to forests. Women, in many regions, are the primary users of forests and have specific roles and rights related to these resources. Their unique knowledge and responsibilities influence their experiences differently than those of men, which is why their rights to land and forest resources need to be explicitly recognized.

The unique role of women in protecting and managing forests — as well as ensuring their equal access to and control over resources — is essential for effective and equitable ecosystem restoration and conservation. These shifts may take time, but women's involvement in decision-making processes related to natural resource management and conservation is crucial for long-term sustainability.

At AKAM, we see the importance of integrating gender equality into resource management initiatives. Our approach ensures that both women and men have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, contributing to more effective and sustainable conservation efforts. These inclusive processes lead to greater likelihood of sustained changes in how natural resources are used and managed, ensuring that the needs of all community members are addressed.

8. Values and Principles of the Policy

8.1 Values

Aktion Amazonas considers itself an advocate for values such as **social responsibility, ethics, respect, acceptance, non-violence, sensitivity**, and others. These values form the foundation of our commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable communities, ensuring that gender equality and human rights are prioritized in all our projects and initiatives. By embracing these values, AKAM strives to contribute to a just society where every individual has the opportunity to thrive without fear of discrimination or violence.

8.2 Principles

The following principles guide the organization's gender policy:

- **Justice:** We are committed to promoting fairness and ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, have access to equal rights, opportunities, and resources.
- **Equal Opportunities:** We advocate for and work toward creating an environment where both women and men, especially in indigenous and rural communities, have equal access to opportunities for social, economic, and political advancement.
- **Non-violence and Non-discrimination:** We reject all forms of violence and discrimination, working to build communities where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, free from gender-based violence and bias.
- **Inclusivity:** We strive to create inclusive environments where all individuals, irrespective of gender, social status, or background, are included in decision-making processes and have their voices heard.
- **Equity:** We focus on ensuring that resources, opportunities, and benefits are distributed in a way that addresses existing inequalities, ensuring a fair distribution of benefits and support to those who need it most.
- **Interculturality:** We recognize and respect the diversity of cultures within the regions we serve, including the perspectives and traditions of indigenous communities. This intercultural approach is essential to addressing gender issues in ways that are contextually appropriate and sensitive to local customs and practices.
- **Respect for Human Rights:** We are committed to upholding and advocating for human rights, ensuring that gender equality and the rights of women, men, and other marginalized groups are respected and protected in all our initiatives.

9. Focus Areas for Gender Mainstreaming & Empowerment

As an organization working on natural resource management and conservation in South America, AKAM recognizes the importance of addressing gender equality as a core element of sustainable development. While AKAM's capacity to address structural causes of gender inequality and discrimination may be limited in some contexts, the organization focuses its efforts on five key areas that can foster positive change:

1. Knowledge of Gender Roles in Natural Resource Management and Household Economies

- AKAM emphasizes understanding the distinct roles that women and men play in natural resource management, household livelihoods, decision-making processes, and community life. Recognizing the diverse knowledge, priorities, and access to resources of men and women helps guide interventions that are both effective and equitable.

2. Capacity Building of Partners and Stakeholders, Including Local Women

- It is essential to equip partners, stakeholders, and local women with the knowledge and tools needed to enhance gender equality in natural resource management. Training and capacity-building activities ensure that these actors can advocate for gender equality and implement strategies effectively in their communities.

3. Empowerment of Women to Participate in Decision-Making

- Empowering women, both individually and in groups, is critical for their active participation in decision-making processes at all levels. AKAM works to build women's leadership, support their participation in community governance, and promote their engagement in activities that affect their livelihoods and environments.

4. Involvement of Both Women and Men in Program Activities

- Gender equality requires the equal involvement of both women and men in program activities. AKAM ensures that both genders are included in all aspects of project design, implementation, and evaluation. By recognizing and valuing the contributions of both women and men, AKAM fosters more sustainable and inclusive community outcomes.

5. **Advocacy for Gender Equality and Women's Rights**

- Advocacy for gender equality is central to AKAM's work. The organization seeks to empower local communities, especially women, to advocate for their rights and needs. This includes promoting women's access to resources, participation in decision-making, and recognition of their rights in national and international policy contexts.

9.1. Knowledge: Gender Analysis in Natural Resource Management

Gender analysis is a foundational element for gender mainstreaming within AKAM's programs. It provides the data and insights needed to inform gender-responsive policies and actions. This analysis involves collecting sex-disaggregated data, interpreting this data through a gender lens, and ensuring that all interventions are designed to be inclusive and equitable. The gender analysis process helps identify differences in gender roles, activities, needs, and access to opportunities, ensuring that both women and men benefit from development initiatives.

Activity: Conduct baseline gender studies and gender analysis at the start of all projects in local communities to gather necessary data for targeted interventions.

9.2. Capacity Building: Training for Gender Mainstreaming

To ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated throughout AKAM's projects, the organization provides training to staff, partners, and stakeholders. This training covers a wide range of topics, from gender analysis methodologies and strategies to specific gender-related issues in natural resource management and conservation. By building the capacity of all involved actors, AKAM fosters a shared understanding of gender equality and equips them with the skills necessary to address gender issues effectively.

Activity: Organize gender training workshops and field training with partners and local stakeholders to promote the integration of gender considerations into every aspect of program implementation.

9.3. Empowerment: Strengthening Women's Voices and Leadership

Empowering women is crucial for fostering gender equality in AKAM's target regions. The empowerment process involves providing women with the knowledge of their rights, access to resources, and opportunities to step outside traditional roles. AKAM supports the formation of women's groups, promotes women's participation in community and policy decision-making, and helps them build networks with other women's organizations to strengthen their collective voice.

Activity: Facilitate training sessions for local women on their rights, empower them to form and strengthen women’s groups, and support their participation in networks for advocacy and capacity building.

9.4. Involvement: Ensuring Equal Participation of Women and Men

At AKAM, both women and men have equal rights to participate in development processes. The organization works to challenge traditional gender roles that limit women’s participation in decision-making. By raising awareness and building understanding about the complementary roles of men and women in natural resource management and community development, AKAM helps communities embrace more inclusive, equitable approaches to sustainable development.

Activity: Promote awareness campaigns and workshops to ensure that both women and men understand their respective roles and contributions to sustainable resource management and community development goals.

9.5. Advocacy: Promoting Gender Equality in Policy and Practice

AKAM supports advocacy efforts that promote gender equality both at the local and national levels. Advocacy activities focus on influencing decision-makers and building awareness about the importance of gender equality in natural resource management and conservation. AKAM empowers local women to participate in advocacy processes and provides them with the tools to raise their voices in policy discussions and media platforms.

Activity: Strengthen the capacity of local women to advocate for gender equality, facilitate their access to advocacy channels, and support their involvement in local, regional, and national policy debates.

10. Strategic Steps Towards Gender Mainstreaming at AKAM

AKAM envisions a series of strategic steps for effectively mainstreaming gender across all its development and conservation initiatives. These steps will ensure that gender considerations are integrated into every aspect of the organization's work, promoting equality and empowerment for all involved, particularly women and marginalized groups.

1. **Integrating Gender into Program Development:** Gender considerations will be specifically addressed in the program development process, ensuring that activities for gender mainstreaming and empowerment are reflected in budgets, outputs, and indicators.
2. **Gender Analysis and Baseline Studies:** Conducting baseline gender studies in local program areas will provide contextualized knowledge and data essential for developing and implementing informed, gender-focused actions.
3. **Training for Staff and Stakeholders:** Staff, partners, and stakeholders will be trained in gender mainstreaming, with a focus on the empowerment of women and the integration of gender-sensitive practices into everyday operations and strategies.
4. **Formulating Specific Activities for Women's Empowerment:** AKAM will design and implement specific initiatives aimed at increasing equal participation and the empowerment of women within communities and the organization.
5. **Gender Integration in Monitoring and Evaluation:** Gender will be systematically addressed in monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure that the impact of gender-sensitive approaches is continuously assessed and improved.

These steps are expected to yield the following major results:

- A defined number of activities explicitly targeting women and promoting their empowerment.
- Gender equality recognized as a cross-cutting issue in all interventions.
- Partners and stakeholders equipped with the capacity to work toward gender equality.
- Women well-informed about their rights and empowered with the capacity and resources to realize them.

10.1. Application of the Gender Equality Policy

At AKAM, gender equality is central to achieving our mission of sustainable development and forest conservation. For the gender perspective to be effective, it must be integrated across all internal policies related to human resources, internal processes, programs, and projects, as well as the broader organizational culture.

This policy applies to all individuals leading, working with, or collaborating temporarily or permanently with the organization, in accordance with the specific needs and requirements of each project or initiative.

To ensure the effective implementation and ongoing evaluation of this policy, AKAM's Program Team will monitor progress, assess compliance, and make necessary adjustments to ensure that the gender equality policy is fully integrated and operational across all activities.

10.2. Conclusions

AKAM commits to sharing and implementing this Gender Equality Policy with all partners and stakeholders. The policy will be periodically reviewed and updated based on new lessons learned, field experiences, and evolving best practices in gender equality. By doing so, AKAM will continue to strengthen its commitment to gender equality and empower women and communities as key drivers of environmental sustainability and conservation.