



Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy

POLICY BRIEF - 2023

Introduction

The Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA) considers gender equality and social inclusion as a cornerstone for not only food security but also an equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic and social development. This Gender Equality and Social Inclusion policy demonstrates CCARDESA's commitment to gender mainstreaming in its programmes, projects and activities while aligning all these to the regional and international gender related conventions and development goals. In mainstreaming gender in agricultural programmes, it is critical to understand that women and men experience life differently, they have different needs, priorities, opportunities, concerns and that various development interventions affect them differently.

CCARDESA places great importance on matters of women, youth and other social groups. It is because of this, that CCARDESA has dedicated 'Women, Youth and Social Inclusion' as one of its key thematic areas in its Long-term Strategic Plan and Medium-term Operational Plan. Despite CCARDESA having programmes which have elements of gender mainstreaming, the organisation has not had an overarching policy to guide systematic gender mainstreaming across its interventions. The need for a comprehensive gender policy for CCARDESA is evident – GESI issues are integral to agricultural research and development as well as the achievement of the objectives, aims, mission and vision of CCARDESA.

The Policy will provide CCARDESA with a framework to guide its efforts in achieving its goals in gender equality and social inclusion. Furthermore, the policy will serve as a guide for the staff at CCARDESA as well as those from various partners in agricultural research institutions of Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states to ensure an equitable society where men, women, youth and other disadvantaged groups contribute and benefit from agricultural development without leaving anyone behind.

Situation Analysis

The population in the SADC Member States is estimated to be 345.2 million as of 2018 with a growth average of 2.5% annually and women constitute more than half of the population. The region had a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$721.3 billion in 2018 which had grown by nearly 42% from US\$508.7 billion in 2008 (SADC: 2021). It has been revealed that the region's women provide 80 to

90% of agricultural labour in subsistence agriculture and 70% in cash crop production (Gosling et.al:2020). Despite that, gender inequalities still persist in the region with women and girls being the worst affected in relation to access to productive resources, legal rights among others (SADC: 2014a). The majority of women working in the agriculture sector receive a disproportionately low share of income compared to their male counterparts. It is estimated that the rural wage gap between men and women in some Member States is up to 60% and in some cases, women go unremunerated for their agricultural work on family farms (SADC 2020b). According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), if we tackle the gender inequalities endemic in agrifood systems and empower women, the world will take a leap forward in addressing the goals of ending poverty and creating a world free from hunger (2023).

Recent United Nations estimates indicate that Africa has the youngest population in the world, with 70% of Sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 30. Youth are vital players in agricultural transformation and food systems and action is needed to enhance agricultural investments by and with young agro entrepreneurs (SADC: 2014a). Unfortunately, youth are the most affected by high unemployment and economic exclusion and the SADC region is grappling with rising levels of unemployment amongst youth, which stood at 25.1 per cent on average in 2017 (SADC: 2020). It is well known that women, youth and other social disadvantaged groups are the most affected by the negative impacts of climate change and this is why CCARDESA, and other regional partners are implementing initiatives aimed at promoting Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) in the region. However, out of 242 CSA initiatives implemented in the SADC region that CCARDESA reviewed only 28.1% of them had incorporated a gender equality and social inclusion lens (CCARDESA, 2021).

Policy Objectives

1. To promote demand driven agricultural technology generation, dissemination and adoption in the region that responds to the needs of both men and women.
2. To reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over resources for agricultural productivity and food and nutrition security.
3. To build climate resilience and reduce the risks on the agricultural production systems for the benefit of both male and female farmers.
4. To empower women, youth and vulnerable people in order for them to make a meaningful contribution in agricultural value chains.
5. To facilitate exchange of GESI related information and knowledge between and among all stakeholders for learning, evidence-based policy making, advocacy efforts within the agricultural sector.
6. To strengthen human resource capacity for CCARDESA and Agricultural research for development (AR4D) institutions in GESI during the design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of projects.

Policy Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of this policy are anchored on a set of regional instruments which recognize gender equality and social inclusion as integral parts of policies, programmes, projects, activities, processes and institutional mechanisms to which CCARDESA is fully committed. The principles include Stakeholder engagement, capacity building, Transparency, Equity, Technology and Innovation and Sustainability.

Thematic Areas

Thematic Area 1: Agricultural Productivity and Food and Nutrition Security

Thematic Objective: To achieve increased agricultural productivity and food and nutrition security, with a special focus on smallholder farmers and priority commodities.

The following are the interventions for this thematic area:

- **Gender equality and social inclusion in agriculture** – Agricultural Research for Development institutions to include research focusing on increased agricultural productivity and food and nutrition security for all social groups in communities.
- **Gender equality and social inclusive analytical research** – actors to conduct gender analytical research to assess the adoption rates, effectiveness and impact of the existing agricultural technologies, innovations and management practices.
- **Gendered and inclusive sectoral interventions** - Agriculture has a high multiplier effect, which means that agricultural investments can generate high economic and social returns therefore, there is need to apply gender lens to interventions that create linkages with other sectors.
- **Gender responsive and inclusive nutrition sensitive agriculture** - women are charged with the responsibility of not only production of household food crops but also with preparation. Therefore, the inclusion of female farmers in nutrition sensitive agricultural programmes is critical.

Thematic Area 2: Resilience to Emerging Agricultural Risks: Environmental, Climate Change and Transboundary Pests and Diseases

Thematic Objective: To increase the resilience of smallholder farmers to climate change and reduce the risks in their production systems through a cross-sectoral approach.

The following are the interventions for this thematic area:

- **Gender responsive research that integrates indigenous knowledge** – CCARDESA and AR4D institutions will engage in participatory action research involving all smallholder farmers recognizing them both as sources and consumers of knowledge.
- **Gender and social equality - equitable resilience capitals** – There will be deliberate strategies aimed at establishing gender equality and social inclusion in ownership, control of, and access to social, physical, financial and human capitals which will enhance resilience to climate change.
- **Promotion of diversified livelihoods and gender sensitive climate adaptation options** - CCARDESA and other value chain actors will use a gender resilience lens and advocate for transformation towards consideration of other livelihood and climate adaptation options. These include income generation through improved livestock breeds, honey from apiculture, fish from aquaculture among others.
- **Effective information and communication on environmental natural resource use and climate change** – CCARDESA will promote gender sensitive early warning systems that provide climate and disaster information to different categories of farmers in a language that they can understand.

Thematic Area 3: Commercialization of the Agricultural Sector and Market Access

Thematic Objective: To increase commercialization of the smallholder agricultural sector and improve their access to good markets.

The following are the interventions for this thematic area:

- **CCARDESA and AR4D to accelerate efforts for ensuring greater equality in a continuum of land rights and access to credit.** CCARDESA will work with public and civil society organisations to ensure equitable land rights amongst female and male smallholder farmers. CCARDESA will create partnerships with micro finance institutions and link smallholder farmers with them in order to increase the production and productivity to meet demands of large markets.
- **AR4D institutions to build capacity for smallholder farmers' integration in value chains to improve the capacity to engaged in national and regional markets.** This will entail improving the entrepreneurship skill, and business acumen of smallholder farmers and other actors in member states and those within the region involved in value addition of agricultural products.
- **Promotion of agricultural business forums for different groups of farmers** - in order to ensure participation of women and youths in commercialization and improve market linkages, CCARDESA will create partnerships with AR4D institutions and other organisations working on women and youth empowerment programmes.

Thematic Area 4: Women, Youth and Social Inclusion

Thematic Objective: To empower women, youth and vulnerable people through actions that will make them play a meaningful role in agricultural value chains.

The following are the interventions for this thematic area:

- **Empowerment of women, youth and other social groups** – The principle of inclusiveness in the planning and execution of AR4D interventions will be promoted so that women, youth and other vulnerable groups are empowered and play a meaningful role in agricultural value chains.
- **Promote coordination and collaboration among actors** – CCARDESA will enhance its role of coordination of efforts among its partners. Cooperation and collaboration between and among all actors in the SADC region involved in working in areas concerning women, youth and other social groups is critical for achieving gender equality and social inclusion.
- **Youth employment in agriculture** – CCARDESA and AR4D institutions will support and the development and implementation of interventions that will increase the participation of youth in agricultural value chains. The agriculture sector will be promoted in a manner that it will be an attractive and wealth generating sector to attract young women and men in both rural and urban areas.

Thematic Area 5: Knowledge and Information Management, Communication and Policy Support

Thematic Objective: To ensure that the regional agricultural research for development stakeholders is provided with information and knowledge to make informed decisions and support agricultural transformation.

The following are the interventions for this thematic area:

- **Gender responsive knowledge and information** – As CCARDESA provides knowledge and information brokering services to all agriculture stakeholders through its ICKM system and other digital and ICT platforms, gender and social inclusion will be integrated. Therefore, the gender and social inclusion will be systematically addressed in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring phases of programmes, projects and activities.
- **Capacity building for the National Agricultural Research Extension Systems (NARES)** - CCARDESA will continue to monitor its knowledge hub with respect to the percentage of content featuring relevant material on gender and youth; support the partners strengthen

information packaging and use of digital innovations in order to transform agriculture with a focus on women, youth and other social groups.

- **Develop and disseminate knowledge products** - The integration of gender and social inclusion in the knowledge products is crucial to enable the regional agricultural research for development stakeholders have adequate information and knowledge to make informed decisions and support agricultural transformation. CCARDESA will promote success stories and best practices in the use of knowledge products which will ultimately improve agricultural productivity and increase in the participation of women, youth and other social groups along the agricultural value chains.

Thematic Area 6: Capacity Strengthening of CCARDESA and AR4D Institutions

Thematic Objective is to strengthen the institutional capacity of CCARDESA and AR4D institutions in Member States to deliver on their mandates.

The following are the interventions for this thematic area:

- **Regular assessment of capacities** – The differences in the capacities among AR4D institutions calls for regular capacity needs assessment to not only establish the capacity needs but also develop activities that will continuously address the identified gaps.
- **Institutional capacity for resource mobilization** – It is important to development capacity for GESI responsive planning and budgeting within CCARDESA and amongst its partners. Therefore, CCARDESA resource mobilisation strategy and action plan will incorporate key strategies, mechanisms, budget provisions and other measures for addressing GESI concerns during resource mobilisation processes.
- **Gender responsive governance and management systems** – The governance and management systems for CCARDESA and AR4D institutions are key in ensuring that the GESI policy is fully implemented. Women and men, youth and persons with disabilities will be considered not only in the high-level governance and management structures of the AR4D institutions but also the stakeholders these institutions engage with.

Mechanisms for Implementing the CCARDESA GESI Policy

In order to ensure that gender mainstreaming and social inclusion interventions are fully implemented, CCARDESA will institute /introduce the following institutional mechanisms and processes during the life of this policy. Implementing structures will be established at all levels and monitor how the objectives are being met.

(a) CCARDESA Secretariat

The four key units of the CCARDESA Secretariat which are of interest to the implementation of this GESI policy include Senior Management, Gender Focal Point, Human Resource and Finance and Administration. Examples of their respective roles include providing leadership on the implementation of the CCARDESA GESI policy; coordinating gender mainstreaming efforts by providing gender related technical support including programme design, implementation and monitoring progress; ensuring that all employees promote and work towards gender equality and social inclusion as part of their work and functions and ensuring gender responsive budgeting and a more open budget process at all levels.

(b) Partnerships

For CCARDESA to successfully implement the GESI policy as well as the institutional strategic plans, the Secretariat will develop new and strengthen existing partnerships for overall technical support, policy guidance, linkages with complementary initiatives for resource mobilisation, access to new technologies and innovations, sharing information and lessons learnt for joint planning and dealing with common issues of interest such as GESI in the agricultural context. Some of the CCARDESA

partners include the NARES, national and regional farmers' organisations, youth organisations, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), international cooperating partners, the private sector, media, academic and research institutions, other actors in agricultural value chains collectively being a strong force for helping CCARDESA achieve its GESI policy objectives.

(c) Capacity Development

Capacity development is required at all levels from the regional (CCARDESA Secretariat) to local (farmers) in order to deliver on their mandates considering that a capacitated team of partners results in actors who are adequately equipped to perform their respective roles in policy implementation. Special attention will be given to strengthening women and youth leadership capacity for them to take a more active role in decision-making processes and positions at local, national and regional levels in order to increase their ability to influence policy implementation. The capacity building programmes will be practical, participatory with investment made in not just initial skills development but refresher trainings throughout the life of the policy, programme or project.

(d) Gender Responsive Communication

Policy implementation involves translating policy objectives and principles into concrete actions and putting them into practice. Gender responsive communication is crucial to ensure that both men and women access appropriate and relevant agricultural information among all stakeholders and CCARDESA will systematically and publicly share knowledge, best practices on gender equality and social inclusion as it relates to agriculture. CCARDESA leads an active social media component of communication which includes LinkedIn, X (Twitter), Facebook, Institutional Website and Mailing lists where it shares the knowledge products such as events and technical reports, policy-briefs, journal papers, brochures, flyers, photographs and videos. These platforms will be utilised to ensure that communication strategies are gender responsive by avoiding perpetuating gender inequalities and social gaps in agriculture.

(e) Resource Mobilisation

In order to successfully implement the Policy, reliable, predictable, and steady flow of financial resources will be needed which ultimately influence the availability of the much-needed GESI human and material resources. Therefore, what is critical is not only effective resource mobilisation but also timely disbursement, actual utilisation and accountability for the attainment of desired results. As part of the resource mobilisation processes, CCARDESA and its regional institutions will capacitate their staff in resource mobilization by identifying the skills and organizational capabilities needed to deliver on the resource mobilization strategies.

Monitoring of the Policy and Evaluation Mechanisms

A results framework is provided in the policy, and this will form the basis for monitoring the implementation of this policy. It has gender equality and social inclusion actions under each of the thematic areas. The CCARDESA Gender Focal Point and those in AR4D institutions and other governing structures among stakeholders will play a critical technical role of providing necessary monitoring and evaluation support. This will assist in collecting harmonised data that can be comparable in the SADC region and within the institutions and in programming. This policy will be considered for review after the expiration of the CCARDESA Strategic Plan 2020 – 2029. This will allow for simultaneously review of both documents and more importantly provide an opportunity for embedding GESI actions in the future strategic plan and results framework of CCARDESA and its partners. Nevertheless, an earlier review will be undertaken in an event of a major change in CCARDESA'S focus areas, key documents or paradigm shift.

Key Messages

- 1) CCARDESA Secretariat should promote and coordinate the implementation of the gender equality and social inclusion policy and ensure that all the objectives are achieved.
- 2) Governments to provide strategic guidance and fully own the process of implementing the Policy in the member states respectively.
- 3) All stakeholders should be well informed and mobilised to contribute to the successful implementation of the CCARDESA GESI Policy.
- 4) Traditional leaders and their communities should actively participate in identifying key challenges for gender equality and social inclusion in sustainable agricultural development and provide support for addressing them.
- 5) Key stakeholders should ensure sufficient allocation of resources, adequate capacity, gender responsive data and time for the successful implementation of the Policy.
- 6) Civil society organisations should actively lead in the advocacy for GESI integration in agricultural interventions by sharing experiences, knowledge, tools, and best practices at planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation levels.
- 7) International cooperating partners and the private sector should participate actively in the policy implementation process and provide financing for identified GESI agricultural interventions.
- 8) Farmers and value chain actors should be supported in GESI and other capacity building programmes, access to technologies and innovations, access to adequate resources and markets and facilitate their active participation in decision-making positions and/or processes.
- 9) NARES should be supported to ensure they have adequate GESI capacity and resources to engage farmers and other end-users of agricultural interventions.
- 10) The media should create awareness about gender equality and social inclusion, the need to implement the GESI policy and help disseminate knowledge products.