

# GENDER POLICY

2023



The strength of the Palestinian Housing Council (PHC) relies deeply on our steadfast commitment to implement all policies and guidelines throughout the execution of PHC's programs and projects. It is our endeavors that form the foundation of our enduring success, and strive to embody the highest ethical and professional standards. This commitment is essential to accomplishing our humanitarian and societal goals and mission. We emphasize the commitment of all PHC employees, across various administrative levels, to adhere to specific policies and frameworks applicable to their respective domains.

These policies and guidelines, signify our complete involvement in building a sustainable and equitable community. They express our fervor in delivering optimal housing services to the community in which we live and operate. The application of these policies is a fundamental pillar in building the PHC's reputation as a trusted entity, committed to sustainable development and earnest work.

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## Introduction

Tackling all forms of inequity, including gender inequality, is crucial for sustainable and peaceful development. Gender inequality is about unequal power relations leading to unequal opportunities to satisfy basic needs and develop oneself to one's full potential and a decent living. For PHC working on gender means working with women, men, girls, and boys from all different backgrounds, age groups, and intersectional approaches. This means PHC treats people equally no matter their gender, age, class, ethnic background, sexual preference, or physical ability (disabled people).

The adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) confirmed gender equality as a universally recognized core development objective. Women have a critical role to play in all of the SDGs, with many targets specifically recognizing women's equality and empowerment as both the objective and part of the solution. Goal 5 is known as the stand-alone gender goal because it is dedicated to achieving these ends. It also underlines the importance to integrate gender in all other SDGs such as #3 (Good health and well-being) and #16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

If the causes of unequal access of women to services and assets and their lack of voice are not addressed, and if PHC does not understand and work on the underlying factors that cause inequality, PHC's goals cannot be fully achieved. Gender equality means that the opportunities and life chances of men and women, boys and girls, are equal. The emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment reflects a concern that women and men have equal opportunities to make choices about what gender equality means and work in partnership to achieve it. Because of current disparities, equal treatment of women and men is insufficient as a strategy for gender equality. Equal treatment in the context of inequalities can mean the perpetuation of disparities. Commitment to achieving gender equality will require changes in institutional mindsets, practices, and social relations through which disparities are reinforced and sustained. It also requires a strong voice for women in shaping their societies. However, PHC's core scope is in the field of housing, therefore, mainstreaming gender in their programs and projects is sufficient and necessary to achieve the goals of PHC in providing decent and dignified living conditions.

PHC promotes gender equality and commits to international agreements on gender equality. By addressing the inequality, a more balanced power distribution between men and women will be reached and the rights of women and girls, as well as men and boys, enhanced. A sound gender policy capable of transforming the power relations and equaling the power balance at the level of households, communities, services, and society at large is key to the achievement of PHC goals and mission to reduce fragility and the vulnerability of people where it is most needed in the highly conflict-affected areas. Of both women and men, this policy document describes PHC's commitment to gender equality: mission and approach as well as the organizational policy.

## Definitions

For this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply

Gender	The social and cultural attributes, expectations, and norms associated with being male or female.
Gender Equality	Refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for - and indicator of - sustainable people-centered development.
Gender equity	Refer to the fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women.
Women empowerment	The concept of empowerment is related to gender equality but distinct from it. The core of empowerment lies in the ability of a woman to control her destiny. This implies that to be empowered women must not only get equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), but they must also have the agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (such as are provided through leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions). Women must live without fear of coercion and violence. Women empowerment has five components: Women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their rights to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.



Gender Perspective	The gender perspective shows that the different conditions and rights of women and men can be explained through interpretations of what is meant by males and females. It reveals how power is structured and helps us understand the reasons why women lack influence and why men are given certain privileges. It also opens doors to the analysis of other power structures: class, age, sexuality, spiritual beliefs, wealth, residence (urban or rural), the color of skin and disability are some of the many categories affecting the status of individuals in society and their right to a decent life.
Gender mainstreaming	A process that systematically integrates gender perspectives into legislation, public policies, programs, and projects. This process enables making women's and men's concerns and experiences to be made an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres with the goal of achieving gender equality (UN 2002).
(Sexual) and Gender-Based Violence	Sexual and Gender-based violence ((S)GBV) is violence targeted at individuals or groups based on their gender. An associated form of violence is Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), which is directed specifically at females. While research suggests that a significant proportion of women worldwide will at some point in their lives experience (S)GBV, the extent to which men and boys are affected is unknown.

## Policy Statement

The PHC is committed to advancing gender equity within the organization and in all its programs. The PHC recognizes that in Palestine, biased stereotypes and social norms prevent women and men from exercising their free choice and from taking full and equal advantage of opportunities for individual development, contribution, and reward. The PHC is dedicated to enhancing gender equity within the institution through the management of human resources and the organizational culture, and within the communities served through programs and projects.

## Scope

This is a PHC-wide policy that applies to all PHC operations, at the headquarters office, and in its branches. It applies to the programs developed and implemented in all PHC offices, to the communication, and to the environment that PHC creates to effectively reach its goals. This environment includes PHC's organizational structure and culture and the partnerships it engages in. To monitor progress and to keep all units at PHC and its offices actively involved, a gender

focal point is assigned to track and review the progress and to raise any issue to the General Director of PHC, consequently, this policy will be updated regularly and when needed.

## **Purpose and Principles**

The objective of this policy is to support staff in their efforts to advance gender equity. This policy is guided by the core values of PHC in relation to gender equity, and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). The following principles form the basis of the PHC's efforts in the area of gender empowerment:

- All people, by virtue of their shared humanity, carry inherently equal dignity and rights. PHC therefore always strives to affirm and uphold equal rights and opportunities for women and men.
- Each person, by virtue of his or her particular character and context, has a unique identity and combination of aspirations and abilities. Therefore, the PHC strives to understand how the particular conditions of each individual or social group shape his/her ability to achieve equal fulfillment and to create tailored opportunities for each to thrive.

The purpose of the Policy is to:

- Define and communicate clear commitments and consistent messages within PHC and with other stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- Continue to strengthen efforts to promote gender equality, increasing PHC's integrity and credibility amongst donors, partners, and allies as a contributor in the gender equality space, in both programming and advocacy.
- Establish commitments for PHC development and humanitarian programming.
- Enable PHC to work as a confederation and with others building on each other strengths, experience and lessons learned.

## **Commitments**

The Palestinian Housing Council (PHC):

- Contributes to the SDGs and especially to SDG 5 on gender equality and achieving empowerment of all women and girls.
- Incorporates gender and power analysis in the preparation and design of its programs and projects.
- Engages in partnerships with organizations that strengthen the gender perspective and stimulate partners to work in partnerships with gender transformative organizations.
- Includes gender in the entire project cycle and includes indicators (gender sensitive) for all stages: programming, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating.
- Accounts for the contribution the organization makes to gender equality and will make the results (gender-disaggregated data) available (Open Data Policy).

- Addresses gender in human resources policies and practices, communication & public relation mechanisms and tools, program materials, and all forms of documents and documentaries at PHC offices.
- Trains and sensitizes staff to be gender sensitive and promotes the commitment of the organization in this regard.
- Will share the gender policy actively with partner organizations as part of the contracting and ask partners to share gender policies with PHC.
- Ensures external fundraising, advocacy, and communications respect and uphold PHC's commitment to gender quality including being respectful, using inclusive and positive language and images, and avoiding stereotypes with particular attention to those based on gender.
- Senior management and human resource will ensure that all PHC employees understand and comply with this policy.

### **Gender mainstreaming in PHC programs and projects:**

Since the major core of PHC's work is the housing sector and since the target groups are middle- and low-income families for some programs and vulnerable families for other programs, therefore vulnerable families have a higher need to include gender mainstreaming within their program's activities. Hereafter a general analysis and description of the inclusion of gender mainstreaming within PHC programs and projects.

**Gender analysis situation:** The Israeli occupation and its enforcement of discriminatory policies has negatively affected Palestinian communities, especially women's and children's livelihood and rights. These policies lead to an increase in the likelihood of displacement and forced eviction of Palestinians; displaced women and girls lose the space where they enjoy privacy, self-determination, social networks, and their roots. In Palestine, women's rights are negatively affected by the interlocking forces of occupation-related political, social, and economic oppression. Safety, security risks, and threats, including the violence perpetrated against women, the restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement, and the family forced displacement, are direct consequences of the Israeli occupation policies and measures, as perpetrated by the Israeli military, settlers, and systematic discrimination. These threats are reflected as domestic and social violence against females, and military violence against males. Because of these threats that women face from a long time ago to this day, international law has organized many international rules in order to protect the rights of women and girls during conflicts. This is stated in many resolutions and agreements, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and Security Council Resolution No. 1325 of 2000.

The natural and man-made hazards gravely affect women, girls, and vulnerable people, create and exacerbate pre-existing gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities, and widens inequalities. With unemployment already very high, and even more for women, natural and man-made hazards can exacerbate economic insecurity and domestic and gender-based violence (GBV) against women.



At the same time, the Israeli measures and policies prevent women and girls from accessing essential services, including health, protection, security, and justice, and risk normalizing prevalent patriarchal conceptions that a “woman’s place is at home” and social factors that reduce the reality and times in which women can work. Moreover, women’s unequal access to information and connectivity is likely to make them more vulnerable to the negative impacts of confinement.

In the context of the above-mentioned situation, PHC's strategy ensures gender mainstreaming as a process of assessing the implications for women and men of the planned action. It is an approach for making different gender and age groups' concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the action. PHC interventions in Palestine especially Jerusalem improve the living situation of residents especially Female-Headed Households (FHH), people with disability, and the elderly. Besides, PHC programs ensure privacy and dignity and lead to a reduction in poverty, and increase safety, health, and comfort situations. PHC programs indicate the impact on the living conditions of vulnerable and limited-income families, the degree of safety and adequacy, the quality of work, and the progress achieved. Moreover, PHC assesses the changes that were attributed to the project intervention, as well as examines whether targets have been achieved, and makes sure to implement and monitor the project to ensure gender equality.

**Description of how assistance is tailored to the needs:** PHC’s methodology ensures the participation of different gender groups in the project cycle; starting with the needs assessments, to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Through the assessment phase, PHC conducts in addition to the technical assessment a social assessment in sight of separate individual interviews with women, men, boys, girls, and with different age groups to highlight their major social concerns, needs, and challenges. PHC interventions improve the housing conditions and thus, decrease the likelihood of displacement outside the city, in particular for FHH families, and strengthen the females’ capacities. In addition, maintaining the existing shelters in that area, especially for the FHH who have less capacity to do the basic repair works themselves will solve the problem of overcrowding houses, ensure privacy and dignity, leading to a reduction in poverty, and increase in safety, health, and comfort situations, especially for FHH and people with special needs who will have access to their basic needs.

**Description of how affected people influence the project/program and whether some people are excluded and why:** Through the selection criteria, the PHC Grading System for each program identifies the neediest beneficiaries for that program. specifically, the grading system for programs concerned to target vulnerable families such as the Housing Rehabilitation Program assigns that divorced and widowed women or FHH have a high weight that leads to increased benefits chances. The system is designed to respond to different segments of the beneficiaries (women, men, boys, girls & elderly) and their different needs. In addition, PHC pays special attention to individuals with disabilities, children, and the elderly. One of the assessment criteria is to involve the families in determining their needs according to their gender and age (e.g., vulnerable FHHs, the

elderly...etc.) or individuals with special needs. In the beginning, kick-off workshops with beneficiaries are conducted to discuss the project components and to take into consideration any recommendations from the beneficiaries' side in project design and implementation. During the project, other workshops are conducted to gather their feedback, complaints, and lessons learned in order to take suitable action accordingly.

**Description of how benefits for groups of concern identified in the analysis will be reported:**

Generally, the project indicators include but are not limited to:

- # of assisted HH living in an upgraded unit following the Shelter Minimum Standards.
- # of households protected and have enhanced their coping capacities.
- % of households who report satisfaction with the shelter intervention.
- % of females, the elderly, and people with disabilities report improved access to a safe and dignified shelter after the intervention.
- # of legal aid sessions conducted
- # of awareness-raising sessions conducted
- # of individuals protected and have improved access to adequate shelter.

In addition, the project team through workshops assists beneficiaries in technical and social workshops that are tailored with discussions concerning; their voluntary works, inputs, and their living standards. These workshops ensure a better life for the elderly, less domestic and social violence for women, less military violence for men, and more privacy for girls and boys.

Through the evaluation process, the project indicates the impact on the living conditions of the most vulnerable families, the degree of safety and adequacy, the quality of work, and the progress achieved. And assess the changes that were attributed to the project intervention, as well as examine whether targets have been achieved and make sure to implement and monitor the project to be gender equality across age groups. Through the evaluation process, the changes that occurred in terms of safety, dignity, and integrity are measured separately for women, men, girls, and boys.

**Description of the benefits expected from activities aimed at transforming gender roles and/or relations:**

The project team through the site visits conducts discussions, interviews, and focus groups with the family members individually to discuss their needs, roles, and relations with special attention to people with disabilities, children, the elderly, and FHH (widowed or divorced). In addition, awareness-raising workshops are held for the beneficiaries in order to clarify and highlight their rights to housing including their rights to self-determination. The project encourages beneficiaries to get voluntary work from the local community to increase the positive impact of the project. Also, the project team informs and encourages project beneficiaries to share feedback on the provided assistance, potential encountered issues, and/or remaining needs to be addressed. The project contributes to the capacities of target communities' members to deal with the risks of revocation of residency rights, eviction, demolition, and forced displacement.

PHC supports the beneficiaries to access legal aid by establishing a proper linkage between them and the Shelter Cluster – Palestine legal entity (Information Counselling Legal Assistance program ICLA) that works in Area C and Jerusalem, this entity advocates for beneficiaries before the commencement of the rehabilitation process and during/after if necessary. Also, PHC legal advisor is available to guide the beneficiaries and provide them as well as the project team with necessary legal support.

## **GENDER IN THE PHC**

Gender equality and women empowerment is achieved at PHC since it creates an enabling environment where the staff is prepared to work in a gender-sensitive and even transformative way, the offices are equipped to allow women and men to develop equally, where discrimination on whatever basis is not tolerated and where the support to achieving the goals is well organized. This comes down through:

1. A human resources policy that is supportive of gender equality, by applying legal rules and an internal system that regulates this issue<sup>2</sup>. The right structure and mechanisms in place to define targets, monitor performance and account for our results.

Indicator: the proportion of women in management positions

The human resources policy: The human resources policy aspires to achieve gender parity in all ranks and functions of the organization. The HR resource policy can support this gender balance at PHC offices.

- The recruitment of staff (selection); The target in the (higher) management positions is a 50/50 division.
- A conducive environment for women and men by ensuring the provisions that make women feel safe at the workplace and in their environment (safe room, separate toilets, nursing room) parental leave, and sanctions on sexual harassment. And a clear policy that denounces (sexual) and gender-based violence. The gender policy will be evaluated and reviewed regularly to ensure gender mainstreaming at PHC and through its programs and projects.
- Easily accessible complaint mechanism.
- Confidential advisor in every office, both male and female, this cannot be someone in higher management.

## THE PHC'S APPROACH TO GENDER EQUITY

The PHC's Gender Policy follows a two-fold approach, operational and organizational:

- **Operational:** Mainstreaming gender across all offices/departments, programs, and projects to ensure:
  1. The PHC systematically uses gender analyses to design and implement department and office strategies, programs, and projects that maximize impact on gender equity;
  2. When designing program and project activities, the organization target appropriate participants and strive to maintain a balance of gender roles and responsibilities with a commitment to simultaneously advancing long-term strategic gender interests;
  3. The PHC monitor and evaluate all programs and projects that measure the relative impact on men, women, boys, and girls.
- **Organizational:** Creating and maintaining a gender-sensitive work environment to ensure that:
  1. An equitable balance exists at all levels of the PHC;
  2. All employment decisions related to recruitment, transfers, compensation, and promotion are made without gender discrimination;
  3. The PHC's benefits policy is equitable and responsive to the need to balance work, family, civic life, and the different gender roles of staff (e.g., responsibilities of pregnancy, childrearing, and family care);
  4. An environment where non-discriminatory working relationships and respect for diversity in work and management styles are encouraged.

## PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

The PHC recognizes that progress in gender equity is made at different rates and by different means across its offices, programs, and projects. While PHC respects the flexibility of this process, the PHC holds all staff accountable for achieving measurable progress toward conditions in which women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities. To achieve this goal, the PHC endeavors to implement this policy following both operational and organizational tracks.

**Implementation of operational goals:** The PHC incorporates gender equity into all operations through the application of gender awareness and analysis of the project circle, including design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation by:

1. Incorporating gender questions and perspectives into project design documents, guidelines, and monitoring and evaluation tools;
2. Analyzing the roles, responsibilities, cultural constraints, stereotypes, and relationships between men and women in programs;
3. Examining the structures beyond the community that affect women and men's access to and control of resources, and power of decision-making, and how these structures might be influenced by the program;

4. Developing the gender analysis tools and skills necessary to support project participants not only in order to meet immediate practical needs, but also to explore and advance strategic interests that may challenge socially defined roles which limit development potential;
5. Ensuring that technology, training, and information are appropriate and accessible to both women and men;
6. Increasing the level of staff awareness through training on gender issues, gender sensitivity, and analysis;
7. Building gender awareness as a criterion in partnership strategies and supporting partners in developing and applying gender equity;
8. Continuing to expand the organization's knowledge about and commitment to gender issues through research, documentation, and sharing of lessons learned.

**Implementation of organizational goals:** The PHC implements activities that foster a work environment that supports and rewards the full contribution and productivity of both women and men. The activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Conducting gender analysis to identify and address barriers to equal representation in staffing patterns. Once data are analyzed, specific goals shall be set to address staffing imbalances and modify personnel and benefits policies if necessary;
2. Ensuring that career development opportunities are afforded to both women and men. This may include such activities as formal mentoring and coaching;
3. Ensuring that sufficient effort is made, where appropriate, that candidates of both genders are given equal consideration for available positions;
4. Developing and/or reviewing existing policies, procedures and systems to ensure that they support a gender-sensitive and family-friendly work environment;
5. Developing core competencies that address core values and gender awareness and equity. These competencies should be integrated into performance management systems and all management development models.