**UNION DESOLIDARITE D'AIDE AU DEVELOPPEMENT COMMUNAUTAIRE (USADEC) GENDER POLICY**

November 1, 2023

**Introduction**

The recognition of the leadership in decision making at international, regional and national level are reflected in the promotion of policies and actions related to gender. This policy provides a framework which will accelerate the realization of gender equality between men and women at Union de Solidarité d’Aide au Developpement Communautaire (USADEC).

Union de solidarité d’aide au développement communautaire (USADEC) is a NGO of 66 civil society organisations who are engaged in addressing climate change and development challenges in Rwanda. USADEC is legally registered with Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) with registration certificate number 58/RGB/NGO/LP/11/2012.

USADEC Gender policy provides internal guidance on how the Network aims to integrate a gender perspective, programme development and activity implementation, including projects monitoring and evaluation. In general, the policy aims to create an environment and shape a culture conducive to promoting women’s and men’s rights and to advancing gender equality within USADEC. This policy is largely an organisational guidance document, outlining a joint vision, strategic priorities and processes for integrating gender perspectives at any place where USADEC’s activities can be implemented. The mission of this policy is to ensure that gender gaps are addressed within USADEC, men and women, girls and boys are free from any form of gender based violence, harassment and discrimination. Gender concerns need to be fully integrated in the strategy process and captured in the monitoring and reporting processes.

**Policy statement** (USADEC with other documents)

USADEC gender policy is in complementarity to several documents by which some of them are highlighted in this policy:

* ***The revised National gender policy*** says that “among NST1 priorities include strengthening of the prevention and response strategies to fight against gender-based violence (GBV) and child abuse through establishing and strengthening family cohesion, home grown initiatives, implementation of integrated health care services for GBV victims in partnership with the Private sector, CSOs, Faith Based Organizations as well as community awareness campaigns”
* Agenda 2050
* Other International commitment on gender
* **HeForShe** **commitment of 2015** as a global effort to engage men and boys in removing the social and cultural barriers that prevent women and girls from achieving their potential. It has the objective to change disciminatory behaviours through building awareness of the importance of gender equity and women’s empowermwnt and cricial role men can play in their own lives and at more structual levels in their communities to end persisting inequalities faced by women.

According to the UN Resident coordinator to Rwanda on international women’s month celebration, the 2022 theme “**Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow**” is aligned with the priority theme for the 66th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66): “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies, and programs".

USADEC commits to promote human rights, equality, commits to promote and a just distribution of power between all staffs, including women and men, girls and boys. USADEC establishes partnerships with organisations /institutions that share our values, including gender equality goals. This policy lays out USADEC’s commitments to strive for a world free from discrimination based on gender. The policy sets out the Network’s commitments and principles for our gender equality work and applies to all its work: all programmes, projects, policies, advocacy and communication work.

USADEC has tools: Human resource and personnel policy, safeguarding commitment, code of conduct, children safeguarding policy, gender policy to secure a gender sensitive managers, members and board members, staff and partners to include the prohibition of sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation.

USADEC will:

* Keep track of the male and female composition in USADEC at all levels
* Enhance women in management positions and promote gender balance
* Provide for working conditions that suit the needs of women as well as men
* Promote a working culture of respect; free from sexual harassment
* Secure measures to identify sexual harassment and implement clear follow-up on reported cases from the beginning to the final solution
* Ensure competence and awareness on gender issues and violence against women within the Network

**Purpose of the policy** (igamije iki, ni iki gituma iyi policy ijyaho)

* **Importance of gender policy**

Why is it important? Gender mainstreaming ensures that policy-making and legislative work is of higher quality and has a greater relevance for society, because it makes policies respond more effectively to the needs of all citizens – women and men, girls and boys

* **What is one of the main goals of the gender policy framework?**

The objective is to provide for empowerment of women to eliminate discrimination and to achieve gender equality and equity through the development and implementation of gender responsive legislation, policies, programmes and projects

3. SCOPE

**3.1** The policy is largely an internal guidance document, outlining a joint vision, strategic priorities and processes for integrating gender perspectives throughout the Office. This policy applies to all USADEC staff members at Headquarters and in the Field, USADEC members, internees, contractors, visitors and partners.

**3.2** The policy gives broad strategic orientations for implementation, including institutionalizing gender equality in the organizational culture of USADEC, and advancing gender equality throughout all areas of the USADEC’s mandate.

4. POLICY

Framework and vision

**4.1** Gender integration (or mainstreaming)1 is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s, as well as men’s concerns and experiences, an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes; and this in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equall thereby ensuring that inequality is not perpetuated. Gender integration goes hand in hand with the promotion and protection of women’s human rights and the elimination of discrimination against women. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Guiding Principles

**4.5** Gender integration has been established as the global strategy of the United Nations for promoting gender equality, which refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.

Gender integration has been explicitly called for in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), as well as in several General Assembly, ECOSOC and Security Council resolutions

**Gender integration in USADEC programs**

1. ***Capacity building / development* vs gender equality and mainsteaming**

Developing and/or strengthening staff capacity and competency in gender analysis is essential to

the successful mainstreaming of a gender perspective into policies and programmes. Staff members who are responsible for programme design and implementation, as well as those

responsible for technical advisory services, will be trained in order to ensure that a gender perspective is reflected in their work.

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1. ***Research vs gender equality and mainsteaming***

USADEC plans to conduct different research with the aspect of gender consideration. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy that takes into account the interest and concerns of men and women in all policies, program and project. The importance of gender mainstreaming in research programs and projects can be considered for effective research results consideration. Without a gender perspective in research, there is a risk of losing sight of an important part of the problem and therefore not achieving effective results. A gender perspective will help USADEC to recognise the possible biases, preferences, interests and values of researchers. To include gender perspective in USADEC research, the Network will:

1. Train the research team on gender integration and awareness. It’s important to decode what we mean by gender for research. For example, the whole team needs to know key terminologies related to gender
2. Try to develop research questions that take into account gender norms and disparities
3. Try to find disaggregated data and evaluate the potential to measure gender issues when collecting empirical information, USADEC will consider questions like: who do the research results serve? Do they serve men, women and different gender identities in the same way?
4. Use a gender-sensitive language when conducting research

Gender blind research does not take gender into account and assumes that the research is gender neutral or that potential differences between men and women are not relevant

1. ***Advocacy vs gender equality and mainsteaming***

Gender concerns need to be fully integrated in the strategy process and captured in the monitoring and reporting processes. USADEC advocacy work will target positive changes in men’s and women’, girls and boys’ lives and specifically be based on the following steps :

1. **Changing perceptions** : showing men and women, girls and boys that there are new ways to look at an issue and that change is possible
2. **Changing policies** : by influencing government and decision makers / leaders to write laws needed to bring about change as well as providing funding needed to put it into action
3. **Changing practices** : by offering new ways to do things so that positive change can take place in men’s and women’s lives.

For achieving these 3 steps, there are the following methods to be applied :

* Public campaigning and mobilisation
* Lobbing decision makers
* Building partnerships
* Media engagement

USADEC advocacy strategy usually involves a combination of influencing decision-makers directly and engaging others from the parallel groups, activists, communities and members of the public to put pressure on those same decision-makers aiming at solving challenge faced by the rwandan people, men and women, boys and girls in matters of climate change and environment.

1. ***Documentation vs gender equality and mainsteaming***

The increased work of USADEC in gender will generate many good practices in ensuring gender-sensitive programming and implementation. This will generate positive results to be collected and shared among staffs and USADEC members as lessons learned. All staff and USADEC members are encouraged to make an assessment of gender integration efforts of their work and be considered when reporting.

Training of staff on gender integration is foreseen by USADEC, first for Gender champions, gender committee members and programme management units to be extended to all staff and USADEC members. Tools such as checklists and modules will be made available to facilitate the gender integration work and staff performance assessment will cover gender integration.

**(c) Participation and inclusion**

Both women and men have the right to access information and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives, wellbeing and enjoyment of other human rights. The participation in planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation by women is a crucial area to be supported. Both women and men participation in training activities, seminars and workshops enables everyone to play key role in the achievement of the network’s goal and objectives. It is not enough to programme **for** women but programme **with** women. USADEC shall ensure the participation of both women and men in all areas of the Network’s work.

**d) Equality and non-discrimination**

**Equality** between women and men refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men. USADEC management team should recognize such equality and should be applied equally to men and women. Discrimination includes direct **discrimination**, which occurs when a difference in treatment relies directly and explicitly on distinctions based exclusively on sex and characteristics of men or of women. It also includes **indirect discrimination**, when a law, policy or programme has the effect of creating or perpetuating inequality between men and women.

In applying equality and non-discrimination in its work, USADEC will ensure that women and men benefit equally from its policies, programmes and activities and that inequality is not perpetuated. The Network will accompany the National Gender policy in taking positive measures to ensure the realization of women’s human rights on the basis of equality with men. It will also support gender responsive frameworks tackling social and cultural patterns in society, which inhibit the realization of women’s human rights. In addition, USADEC will create awareness amomg its member organisations about multiple discrimination affecting individuals who are rendered more vulnerable by different discriminatory practices based on gender, ethnicity, race, beliefs or any other grounds.

**Institutionalizing gender equality in USADEC organizational culture**

USADEC will supportequal opportunities for allstaff and appropriate workingarrangements to balance work andfamily life. It will also encourage thehiring of women for posts at equalqualification and aim at progressivelyincreasing the representation ofwomen at decision-making levels. Furthermore, USADEC staff individually and collectively will have the responsibility to promote at the same time the women’s and men’s human rights and integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of the Office’s work at all levels.

In this regard, incoming staff will be evaluated during the interview process on their knowledge of gender concepts and their sensitivity to gender inequality. Institutional incentives will be created to strengthen the accountability of managers for gender integration work, and to assimilate gender integration objectives into work plans and staff review, ensuring that these are reviewed on a regular basis.

**Collaborations on gender integration with partners**

USADEC will reinforce the collaboration with different partners in the implementation of Gender Equality and mainstreaming Policy through bilateral and multilateral engagement at policy and operational levels. Partners include the ministry of gender and family promotion, GMO, transparency international-Rwanda, UNWOMEN, NPA, RWAMREC, Isange one stop center, Haguruka, Pro-Femmes/twese hamwe.

**Strategic orientations**

In order to be effectively implemented, the Gender Equality Policy requires that gender equality be institutionalized in the Network’s culture, structure and processes, while a gender perspective be tackled as a cross cutting issues in all fields of USADEC mandate.

**USADEC commitment on gender equality and mainstreaming**

**Gender mainstreaming**

* USADEC secretariat
* USADEC members
* Program /projects

**Policy revision**

The outdated policy can leave the organization at risk. Old policies may fail to comply with new laws and regulations. They may not address new systems or technology, which can result in inconsistent practices. This policy will be revised after 3 years.

**Why Gender Mainstreaming?**

* **Gender Mainstreaming**: Is the process of ensuring that women and men have equal access to and control over resources, development benefits and decision-making, at all stages of development process, projects, programs or policy
* It is a systematic way aimed at ensuring that the needs and concerns of women, men, boys and girls are addressed in programmes, activities and institutions. It is not only about women and girls!!
* **It** is not about adding a "woman's component" or even a "gender-equality component" into an existing activity. The goal of gender mainstreaming is the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women
  1. **. Vision of USADEC**

Communities capable of coping with national and global climate challenges for sustainable development

* 1. **Mission of USADEC**

To be a lead network in Rwanda that advocates for community resilience to climate change, justice and equitable development

* 1. **USADEC Core Values**

USADEC is built on the values that were agreed upon during its creation. These values guide how the organisation operates and determines who USADEC can partner with. USADEC works in partnership with and seeks support from those organisatios who share the same values elaborated below:

1. Commitment to eco-citizenship
2. Transparency and accountability
3. Solidarity and synergy
4. Gender equality and equity
5. Sustainability
6. Creativity and innovation
7. **Rationale of the policy**

USADEC recognizes that social norms and biased stereotypes prevent women and men from exercising their free choice and from taking full and equal advantage of opportunities for individual development and contribution to the national development. It is increasingly clear that gender disparities, mind set and biases undermine the effectiveness of women in development agenda while pursuing economic gains.

In order to fulfill our mission and vision, USADEC commits to promoting gender equality and gender equity within our organizational setup and within the programs and projects undertaken.

USADEC commits to improve the ability of men and women to work creatively and effectively in the organization and in communities by increasing awareness on gender inequities and by working with women and men to change the situation. We will advance gender equity within the institution through our human resources management, organizational culture, and within the communities we serve through our projects implemented on the ground. Finally, gender mainstreaming will improve USADEC organizational effectiveness, quality and impact of programs.

USADEC recognizes that gender equity is a critical component of the organization’s commitment to diversity. This Gender Policy, along with related policies that support diversity, seeks to clarify the organization’s expectations and guidelines to assist USADEC staffs in their efforts to promote gender equity.

1. **Policy goal and objectives.**

**The goal** of this policy is to contribute to better access of resources, opportunities and services for both women and men

The objectives are as follows:

1. **Ensure gender relations balance in our decision-making bodies and in our practices**. We are committed to enhance our organizational/institutional capacity in addressing gender issues.

Our strategy will be to improve capacity do a gender responsive management; a gender sensitive planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting process.

All staff should have capacity to take gender issues at all levels of the program cycle. They will be provided with gender mainstreaming training and develop relevant gender sensitive tools.

1. **Promote equity and equality between women and men, and ensure that interventions do not promote inequitable gender roles relations;**

USADEC will set up various mechanisms to enhance service delivery and professional development. This will be achieved by:

* Making the staff recruitment process be gender sensitive. We will encourage both women and men to compete for the positions we advertise;
* Putting in place an inclusive, clear and fair staff performance appraisal system,
* Set clear gender targets against which performance will be measured
* All research and other development processes will integrate gender relations as one of the key pillars of our programs.
* Before developing project proposals, a gender assessment will be carried out in the community where the project will to be implemented. This baseline assessment will allow the organization to capture gender related reference indicators and plan consequently.

1. **Policy Implementation**

**III.1. Organizational level**

USADEC has different documents and tools to secure a gender sensitive staff like human resource and personnel policy, safeguarding commitment, code of conduct, anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy, Prevention of sexual harassment and abuse policy, gender policy.

**III.2. Program Level**

USADEC will incorporate gender equity at every stage of programming through the application of gender awareness and analysis to the project cycle including baseline and survey, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation through:

* Developing the gender analysis tools and skills to support project participants not only in meeting immediate practical needs, but also in exploring and advancing strategic interests that may challenge socially defined roles which limit development potential.
* Examining the structures beyond the community that affect men and women’s access to and control of resources, power of decision-making, and how these structures might be influenced by the program.
* Ensuring that technology, training and information are appropriate and accessible to both women and men.
* Incorporating gender questions and perspectives into project design documents, guidelines, monitoring and evaluation tools.
* Increasing the level of staff awareness through training on gender issues, gender sensitivity and analysis.
* Building gender awareness as criteria into any partnership strategy and supporting partners in developing and applying gender equity in their programming and management.
* Continuing to expand knowledge and commitment to gender issues, through research, documentation and sharing of lessons learned.
* Allocating a budget for gender specific activities
* Analyzing the roles, responsibilities, cultural constraints, stereotypes and relationships between males and females before starting new programs and conduct the analysis in the existing programs.

1. **Implementation of the policy at Organizational level**

USADEC staff at all levels are responsible for implementation of activities that foster work environment that supports and rewards the full contribution and productivity of both men and women.

Activities will include, but not be limited to:

* Conducting gender analysis to identify and address barriers to equal representation in staffing patterns. Once data are analyzed, specific goals will be set for addressing staffing imbalances and modifying personnel and benefits policies if necessary.
* Ensuring that career development opportunities are afforded to both men and women. This may include such activities as a formal mentoring and coaching system.
* Ensuring that sufficient effort is made where appropriate that candidates of both sexes are given equal consideration for available positions.
* Developing and/or reviewing existing policies, procedures, and systems to ensure that they support a gender-sensitive and family-friendly work environment.
* Building staff skills and institutional capability through training in gender sensitivity and gender analysis.

1. **Gender based violence**

Physical, economical, sexual, psychological, emotional violence are not accepted in our organization. USADEC code of conduct has more detailed instructions on this issue.

USADEC discourages whatever brutal and discriminatory behavior in the organization. Sex based harassment can never be tolerated within our programs and among our beneficiaries. Our staff should adopt respectful attitudes and behavior. They should adopt courtesy attitudes.

USADEC ensures that our programs will not lead to any human being exploitation. We strongly disapprove the human trafficking practices.

1. **Gender focal point**

**The Gender focal point** has responsibility for on-going collection and dissemination of information, such as case studies of "good practice" in mainstreaming gender in mental health, as well as contributing to the building of an appropriate evidence-base on gender-related mental health issues in the Organization.  **The Gender focal point** at the Head Office will be collaborating with gender focal points at Provincial and /or District level, to ensure continuous implementation of this policy and the above activities. S/he will also be responsible for networking with other Institutions specialized in gender.

The success of this policy will depend on the involvement of both women and men.

Administrative and operational resources for implementation and monitoring of this policy are to be integrated in all projects.

**Monitoring and compliance**

The promotion of gender equality and mainstreaming will be performed through the network. This promotion is the basis for holding staff members accountable and documenting good practices. To achieve desired outcomes, adequate human and financial resources will be allocated to the implementation of gender integration. In addition, the Network has put in place key positions to ensure the compliance of gender and mainstreaming as follow: The board of directors, Coordinator and Gender Officer. Beside these positions a gender committee is created to oversee regular monitoring of gender respect within the network.

* **USADEC board of directors** have the responsibility in ensuring that the respect for women’s and men’s rights and the advancement of gender equality at workplace are effectively carried out guided by this policy and related documents.
* **USADEC Coordinator** oversees all in-house initiatives and chair the senior management team will hold all staff accountable for gender integration efforts, provisions on gender responsive budgeting, programming, reporting and staffing.
* **USADEC Gender officer** is involved in gender strategic development, analysis, planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation. He/she is responsible for the facilitation of trainings on gender, participate in the planning, programming, reporting and monitoring of activities implementation. He/she is also responsible for the organization of gender audit at USADEC level (secretariat and members) , coordinating the work of Gender committee.
* **Gender committee** reports on the integration of gender aspects in the different areas of the Office’s work. Gender committee members receive training on gender mainstreaming and apply how to report and resolve the problem in the case of gender based violence at work place. They also participate in further defining their terms of reference and work plans.

**GLOSSARY**

The definitions of gender related concepts used in this policy are drawn from a range of literature, but mainly from different trainings attended by USADEC staffs on gender equality and mainstreaming and the revised National Gender Policy.

**1. Gender** is used when analyzing the relationship between men and women, girls and boys, in regard to their different access to power, life opportunities, vulnerabilities and different strategies for development

**2. Gender Equality** implies that men and women, girls and boys have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefitting from) economic, social, cultural and political development. It is the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex in opportunities, in the allocation of resources and benefits or in access to services.

**3. Gender Equity** is the process of being fair to men and women, boys and girls. It refers to differential treatment that is fair and positively addresses a bias or disadvantage that is due to gender roles, norms or differences between the sexes. Equity ensures that women and men, girls and boys have an equal chance, not only at the starting point, but also when reaching the finishing line

**4. Gender mainstreaming**is a strategy for making girls’ and women’s, as well as boys’ and men’s, concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes so that girls and boys, women and men benefit equality, and inequality is not perpetuated. **It** is not about adding a "woman's component" or even a "gender-equality component" into an existing activity...The goal of gender mainstreaming is the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women.

**5. Gender analysis** identifies, analyses and informs action to address inequalities that arise from the different roles of women and men, or the unequal power relationships between them, and the consequences of these inequalities on their lives, their health and well-being.

Gender analysis is a tool to diagnose the differences between women and men regarding their specific activities, conditions, needs, access to and control over resources, and their access to development benefits and decision-making.

**6. Gender audit**

A gender audit is a systematic assessment of policies, programs, or projects to determine their impact on gender equality. The purpose of a gender audit is to identify and address any gender biases or inequalities that may exist within an organization or a specific initiative. This process involves examining various aspects such as organizational structures, policies, practices, and program outcomes to understand how they affect different genders

Kigali, November 2023

Reviewed by: Approved by:

USADEC USADEC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR