



GENDER EQUALITY POLICY



**NIGERIAN INSTITUTE
OF MEDICAL RESEARCH**



NIMRNigeria

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GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

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HEADQUATER

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FOREWARD



I am delighted to present the Gender Equity Policy of our esteemed Institute. As the Director General/Chief Executive of the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR), I am pleased to introduce this transformative policy aimed at fostering a culture of gender equality, inclusivity, and respect for all staff within our organization.

Gender equality is not just a noble aspiration but a fundamental human right that we are obligated to uphold. It is a principle that acknowledges every individual's intrinsic value and potential, irrespective of their gender identity. By recognizing and addressing gender disparities, biases, and discrimination, we have the power to shape a fairer and more progressive society.

The Gender Equality Policy represents a pivotal moment in our collective journey toward creating an environment that enables all individuals to thrive and reach their fullest potential. It is a comprehensive framework that outlines our commitment to providing equal opportunities while removing barriers, and promoting a level playing field for all employees at the Institute. This policy is not merely a document but a call to action. It compels us, regardless of our roles or positions, to actively engage in dismantling systemic gender inequalities. It challenges us to challenge the status quo, question biases, and champion inclusivity in every aspect of our work. And create a workplace culture that values diversity, and embraces different perspectives to foster innovation research. This policy emphasizes the importance of fair recruitment and promotion practices, ensuring gender balance in leadership positions, research teams, and decision-making bodies within the institute. We are committed to providing equal access to resources, professional development opportunities, and mentorship programs to nurture talent and empower individuals to reach their full potential. Our Gender Equality Policy underscores our unwavering commitment to combating gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination within our Institute. We unite to create safe, respectful, and inclusive spaces where everyone feels valued, heard, and protected. We will not tolerate gender-based discrimination and will provide the necessary support systems to address and rectify such issues promptly.

I hereby thank the dedicated individuals who have worked relentlessly to develop this policy. Your expertise, insight, and unwavering commitment have been instrumental in shaping this comprehensive framework.

In closing, I invite every one of you to embrace the principles and objectives outlined in this Gender Equality Policy. Let us embark on this journey with determination and compassion, knowing that by championing gender equality, we are building a stronger, more inclusive NIMR and contributing to a better world for all.

Yours sincerely,



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Outline

1.0 Introduction

Background
Purpose
Scope

2.0 Policy Statement

Framework

Human Rights
Intersectionality
Gender Integration
Empowerment and Participation
Gender-Based Violence

Vision

Diverse and Inclusive Society
Violence-Free Community
Global Leadership
Non-Discrimination
Equal Opportunity
Gender-Responsive Research
Work-Life Balance

3.0 Critical Areas of the Policy Focus

Recruitment and Retention
Career Development and Advancement
Training and Capacity Building
Research and Data Collection
Work Environment and Culture

4.0 Leadership and Commitment

Policy Development
Recruitment and Hiring
Retention and Advancement
Work-Life Balance and Flexible Work Arrangements
Training and Education
Data Collection and Analysis
Awareness and Communication
Partnerships and Collaborations
Evaluation and Review
Recognition and Rewards
Collaboration with Research and Publication
Continuous Learning and Improvement

Reporting and Accountability

5.0 Conclusion

Introduction

1.0 Background

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and a necessary condition for achieving sustainable development and social justice. Recognizing this, the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR) in Lagos is committed to promoting gender equality and creating an inclusive and empowering research environment.

Medical research is crucial in advancing healthcare, improving health outcomes, and addressing public health challenges. However, historically, gender biases and disparities have been prevalent in research, leading to insufficient attention given to the unique health needs and challenges faced by women and gender minorities. Gender disparities in research participation, representation, and outcomes can undermine the validity and effectiveness of medical interventions, perpetuate health inequities, and limit progress in healthcare.

Gender-responsive research is essential to address these disparities and ensure that research findings are applicable and beneficial to all individuals. Integrating gender analysis into research design, data collection, analysis, and reporting can uncover critical insights into the social determinants of health, gender-specific health issues, and disparities in health outcomes. It allows for developing targeted and effective interventions that address the diverse needs of different genders, leading to improved health outcomes and more equitable healthcare systems.

The Institute, as a premier research institution in Nigeria, has a vital role to play in advancing medical research and contributing to national health and development. It conducts research into diseases of public health importance in Nigeria, disseminates research findings, and provides an

enabling environment and facilities for health research and training. Given its mandate and influence, the Institute has the opportunity to lead by example and champion gender equality within the research community.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of the NIMR Gender Equality Policy is to create an inclusive and gender-responsive research environment that values diversity, promotes equal opportunities, and addresses gender disparities within the Institute. This policy ensures equal access to opportunities, resources, and benefits for all genders and promotes gender-sensitive career development and advancement opportunities. It seeks to integrate gender analysis into research designs, methodologies, and data analyses to improve health outcomes. Additionally, the policy aims to develop and implement training programs to enhance gender sensitivity and awareness among staff and researchers, supporting the integration of gender analysis in research practices. Establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will enable the Institute to track progress and ensure accountability in achieving gender equality goals.

1.3 Rationale

While progress has been made in promoting gender equality globally, significant gaps and challenges remain. This necessitates formulating and implementing a comprehensive Gender Equality Policy for the Institute. Such a policy will provide a framework for promoting gender equality, preventing discrimination, and fostering an inclusive work environment within the organization.

A Gender Equality Policy at the Institute will address the specific barriers and challenges faced by women and gender minorities in medical research. It will ensure equal opportunities for

career advancement, mentorship, and leadership roles. The policy will also promote gender-responsive research considering different genders' diverse health needs and experiences.

By integrating gender analysis into research methodologies and practices, the Institute can generate evidence-based knowledge contributing to more equitable and effective healthcare interventions. A Gender Equality Policy will also provide clear guidelines and procedures for addressing gender-based discrimination, harassment, and bias within the Institute. It will create a safe and supportive work environment that values diversity, fosters collaboration, and encourages all staff and researchers' full participation and contribution, regardless of their gender identity.

This Gender Equality Policy thus outlines NIMR's commitment to eliminating gender-based discrimination, promoting equal opportunities, and fostering diversity in all aspects of medical research.

1.4 Scope

The policy is essentially an internal guidance document outlining a joint vision, strategic priorities, and processes for mainstreaming gender into all operations and activities of the Institute. This policy applies to all Institute staff members, adjunct researchers, interns, visiting fellows, and subcontractors.

The policy gives broad strategic orientations for implementation, including institutionalizing gender equality in the organizational culture of NIMR and advancing gender equality throughout all areas of operation. A Gender Equity Plan will complement the policy.

2.0 Policy Statement

The Institute recognizes that gender equality is essential for achieving excellence in research, improving health outcomes, and contributing to national development. NIMR is committed to

creating a workplace culture that values diversity, promotes gender equality, and ensures equal opportunities for all staff and researchers, regardless of gender identity.

2.1 Framework

2.1.1 Human Rights. The Gender Equality Policy of the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR) is grounded in human rights principles as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Chapter 4), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and international conventions. NIMR recognizes that gender equality is a fundamental human right and commits to promoting and protecting the rights of all individuals, regardless of gender.

2.1.2 Intersectionality. The Institute acknowledges the intersectional nature of gender inequality and commits to addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage faced by individuals based on their gender identity, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, disability, and other relevant factors. The Gender Equality Policy recognizes the importance of an inclusive approach that addresses diverse individuals and communities' unique needs and experiences.

2.1.3 Gender Integration. Gender integration, or mainstreaming, is central to NIMR's approach. The policy systematically assesses the differential impact of policies, programs, and actions on women, men, and gender-diverse individuals. Gender integration ensures that gender perspectives are considered and incorporated at all stages of policy development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation across all sectors and levels.

2.1.4 Empowerment and Participation. The Institute's Gender Equality Policy aims to empower individuals of all genders by promoting their active and meaningful participation in decision-making processes. It recognizes the importance of creating inclusive spaces that amplify diverse voices, promote gender-responsive governance, and enable individuals to contribute to social, economic, and political development.

2.1.5 Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response. The Institute is committed to preventing and addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in all its forms. The Gender Equality Policy emphasizes the need for comprehensive strategies that promote prevention, support survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable. NIMR will collaborate with relevant stakeholders to raise awareness, strengthen legal frameworks, provide support services, and promote a culture of respect and non-violence.

2.2 Vision

The Institute envisions a society where gender equality is fully realized, and all individuals, regardless of gender, can enjoy their human rights and contribute to social progress. The Institute's vision for gender equality encompasses the following:

2.2.1 Diverse and Inclusive Society: The Institute promotes a community that celebrates and values gender diversity and recognizes the unique contributions of individuals of all genders. We envision an inclusive society that respects and upholds the rights of all individuals, regardless of their gender identity or expression.

2.2.2 Violence-Free Community: NIMR is committed to creating communities free from gender-based violence. We envision a community where all staff can work in safety and

dignity and where GBV is prevented, survivors are supported, and perpetrators are held accountable.

2.2.3 Global Leadership: NIMR aspires to be a global leader in advancing gender equality and promoting evidence-based practices. We aim to contribute to the global discourse on gender equality, share knowledge and expertise, and collaborate with national and international partners.

Guiding Principles

The Gender Equality Policy of the Institute is underpinned by a set of guiding principles that shape our approach to achieving gender equality. These principles reflect the Institute's commitment to human rights, intersectionality, gender integration, empowerment and participation, and the prevention and response to gender-based violence. They guide the Institute's actions and decisions as it works towards creating a community where all staff, regardless of gender, can thrive and enjoy equal rights and opportunities. The Institute strives to build a more inclusive, equitable, and just world for everyone by adhering to these principles.

2.2.4 Non-Discrimination: NIMR prohibits all forms of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, in recruitment, promotion, training, and other aspects of employment. NIMR will strive to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on gender or any other protected characteristic and work towards creating an inclusive community that respects and celebrates gender diversity. It will advocate for robust legal protections, raise awareness through public outreach and education, and actively address instances of discrimination. By upholding these principles, NIMR aims to create a community where all staff can thrive and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive Institute.

2.2.5 Equal Opportunity: The Institute strives for a community where individuals have equal access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making processes irrespective of gender. We envision a world where everyone can reach their full potential, free from gender-based discrimination and barriers.

NIMR ensures equal access to resources, career advancement, and decision-making opportunities for all staff and researchers, irrespective of gender. By eliminating discrimination and structural barriers, the Institute creates an inclusive environment where all staff have an equal chance to succeed. NIMR's commitment extends to empowering staff of all genders and providing resources, support, and opportunities for personal development. It values diverse perspectives and strives to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion for everyone. Through these principles, NIMR works towards creating a fair and equitable community that upholds the principles of equal opportunity.

2.2.6 Gender-Responsive Research: NIMR integrates gender analysis into research design, methodologies, and data analysis to address gender disparities in health outcomes. The policy emphasizes the importance of gender mainstreaming in research. This means integrating a gender perspective into all stages of the research process, from conceptualization and design to data collection, analysis, and dissemination. By doing so, NIMR recognizes that gender is a critical social determinant influencing health outcomes, access to resources, and societal structures. Gender mainstreaming allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic and ensures that the findings and recommendations are relevant and applicable to all genders. The policy also highlights the principle of equitable representation and participation. It recognizes that historically, women have been underrepresented in research, resulting in a lack of understanding of

their specific needs and experiences. NIMR is committed to addressing this imbalance by actively promoting the inclusion and meaningful participation of individuals of all genders in research activities. This includes ensuring diverse representation in research teams, involving community stakeholders, and engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds in the research process. By doing so, NIMR aims to generate inclusive and representative research addressing all genders' needs and concerns.

2.2.7 Work-Life Balance: NIMR supports work-life balance initiatives and flexible work arrangements to facilitate the equitable participation of women and men in research. The policy recognizes the importance of creating a supportive and relaxed work environment. NIMR acknowledges that individuals have diverse responsibilities and commitments outside of work, including caregiving responsibilities, personal development, and community engagement. The organization is committed to implementing policies and practices that promote work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements, parental leave, and access to childcare facilities. By doing so, NIMR aims to enable individuals to effectively manage their professional responsibilities while maintaining a healthy and fulfilling personal life. The policy also emphasizes equal opportunities for career advancement and development. NIMR recognizes that work-life balance is crucial for individuals to thrive in their careers and reach their full potential. The Institute is committed to providing equal opportunities for growth, promotion, and skill development to staff of all genders, considering their specific needs and circumstances. NIMR actively supports training programs, mentorship initiatives, and professional development opportunities that enable individuals to balance their work and personal lives while advancing their careers.

3.0 Critical Areas of the Policy Focus

The NIMR gender equity policy strongly emphasizes promoting equal opportunities and addressing gender disparities across various areas of society. One key area of focus within this policy is to ensure gender equality in access to employment and decision-making processes. The organization recognizes that gender inequalities persist in these realms, limiting the potential and well-being of staff of all genders. Therefore, the NIMR Gender Equality Policy is dedicated to breaking down barriers, eliminating discriminatory practices, and fostering an inclusive community where all staff can thrive and contribute to the Institute. In pursuing gender equity, the NIMR Policy seeks to address the gaps and challenges that disproportionately affect any marginalized gender. It aims to create a community where all staff have equitable access to resources and where gender biases and discrimination are eliminated. The policy also strives for equal access to employment opportunities, ensuring that individuals of all genders can pursue their aspirations and contribute to the workforce fairly and inclusively. Additionally, the NIMR Gender Equality Policy recognizes the importance of equal representation and participation in decision-making processes, advocating for the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives in shaping policies that impact society.

3.1 Recruitment and Retention: NIMR strives to attract and retain diverse talents, ensuring gender balance at all levels of the organization.

3.2 Career Development and Advancement: NIMR provides all staff and researchers equal opportunities for career development, mentorship, and leadership roles.

3.3 Training and Capacity Building: NIMR offers gender-responsive training programs and initiatives to enhance the skills and knowledge of staff and researchers.

3.4 Research and Data Collection: NIMR promotes gender-sensitive research that addresses the unique health needs and challenges faced by women, men, and gender minorities.

3.5 Work Environment and Culture: NIMR fosters a supportive and inclusive work environment that values diversity, encourages collaboration, and prevents gender-based harassment and discrimination.

4.0 Gender Equality Plan

The plan for implementing the Gender Equality Policy aims to ensure that the policy is implemented in totality. This plan recognizes the importance of creating a supportive and equitable environment for all employees, regardless of gender. By implementing this plan, the Institute commits to eliminating gender-based discrimination, bias, and barriers and fostering a workplace culture that values diversity and equal opportunities.

This plan will serve as a roadmap to ensure equal opportunities, fair treatment, and representation for all genders across the institution's operations and activities.

4.1 Leadership and Commitment

4.1.1 NIMR's leadership will demonstrate a firm commitment to gender equity by endorsing and actively implementing this plan.

4.1.2 Leaders will act as role models by promoting gender equality, diversity, and inclusion within their respective departments and teams.

4.1.3 NIMR will establish a Gender Equality Committee responsible for driving the plan's implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

4.2 Policy Development

4.2.1 Review existing policies and procedures to identify and eliminate gender biases.

4.2.2 Develop and implement a comprehensive anti-discrimination policy addressing gender-based discrimination, harassment, and bias.

4.2.3 Ensure the policy is communicated to all employees and provide training and resources for understanding and implementing the policy.

4.3 Recruitment and Hiring

4.3.1 Promote gender diversity in the selection and recruitment processes by ensuring equal representation of qualified candidates.

4.3.2 Establish gender-neutral job descriptions and requirements to eliminate unnecessary gender biases.

4.3.3 Provide unconscious bias training for hiring managers to ensure fair and objective decision-making.

4.4 Retention and Advancement

4.4.1 Develop programs to support the career development and advancement of underrepresented genders at all levels within the Institute.

4.4.2 Implement mentoring and sponsorship programs to provide guidance and support for underrepresented genders.

4.5 Work-Life Balance and Flexible Work Arrangements

4.5.1 Promote a healthy work-life balance by implementing flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting, flextime, and parental leave policies.

4.5.2 Create a supportive environment for employees with caregiving responsibilities, including accessible childcare facilities and resources.

4.6 Training and Education

4.6.1 Provide regular training and workshops on gender equality, diversity, and inclusion for all employees.

4.6.2 Offer specialized training to management staff, Heads of Departments and Units, and supervisors on promoting gender equality, addressing biases, and managing diverse teams.

4.6.3 Encourage participation in external conferences, seminars, and workshops on gender equality and inclusivity.

4.7 Data Collection and Analysis

4.7.1 Collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data on recruitment, retention, and promotion to identify areas for improvement and measure progress over time.

4.7.2 Regularly report on gender equality indicators and share the results with staff and stakeholders.

4.8 Awareness and Communication

4.8.1 Develop an internal communication strategy to raise awareness about gender equality initiatives, policies, and achievements.

4.8.2 Celebrate gender diversity and promote positive role models within NIMR through various channels, including newsletters, intranet, and social media.

4.9 Partnerships and Collaborations

4.9.1 Collaborate with external organizations, academic institutions, and government agencies working on gender equality and empowerment to share best practices and resources.

4.9.2 Participate in relevant networks, conferences, and events to foster knowledge exchange and collaboration.

4.10 Evaluation and Review

4.10.1 Conduct periodic evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the Gender Equality Plan and Policy and make necessary adjustments.

4.10.2 Seek feedback from staff through surveys and focus groups to ensure their voices are heard and their experiences considered.

4.10.3 Regularly review and update policies and practices based on changing needs and emerging best practices in gender equality.

4.10.4 Establish a mechanism for staff to confidentially report gender-based discrimination, harassment, or bias without fear of retaliation.

4.11 Recognition and Rewards

4.11.1 Implement a recognition and rewards system that acknowledges individuals' and teams' contributions to promoting gender equality and creating an inclusive work environment.

4.11.2 Highlight success stories and achievements related to gender equality through internal communication channels.

4.12 Collaboration with Research and Publication

4.12.1 Encourage and support research on gender-related health issues, gender disparities in medical research, and gender bias in healthcare delivery.

4.12.2 Promote the publication and dissemination of research findings to raise awareness and influence policy change.

4.13 Continuous Learning and Improvement

4.13.1 Foster a continuous learning and improvement culture by regularly reviewing and updating gender equality training programs and resources.

4.13.2 Encourage staff to participate in professional development opportunities related to gender equality and diversity.

4.14 Reporting and Accountability

4.14.1 Establish a transparent reporting mechanism to track progress on gender equality goals and targets.

4.14.2 Hold leaders and managers accountable for implementing and promoting gender equality initiatives.

4.14.3 Publish annual reports on the implementation and impact of the Gender Equality Policy and Plan.

5.0 Conclusion

The Institute is committed to creating an inclusive and gender-responsive research environment that promotes equal opportunities, diversity, and excellence in medical research. This Gender Equality Policy serves as a framework for guiding NIMR's efforts in promoting gender equality and fostering a culture of inclusivity. By implementing this policy, NIMR aims to contribute to advancing national health and development in Nigeria while ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities and support to thrive in their research careers.

Finally, the Policy represents a significant step by the institute towards creating an inclusive and gender-responsive research environment. By promoting gender equality, the Institute aims to improve the quality and impact of medical research, contribute to more equitable health outcomes, and foster a culture of diversity and empowerment within the organization. Through implementing this policy, NIMR reaffirms its commitment to excellence, social justice, and advancing national health and development in Nigeria.

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