

GENDER POLICY

FOR NMS

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

NORWEGIAN VERSION ADOPTED BY   
NMS NATIONAL BOARD IN 2010

# NMS Gender Policy Document

This policy document for The Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) sets forth the primary principles guiding NMS in its approach regarding gender equality and the rights of women.

The goal of this document is twofold: First, to ensure that all measures and actions supported or undertaken by NMS include a focus on gender, and secondly, to provide a framework for the creation of equal opportunities for women and men, and to work for the rights of women, both within our own organisation and NMS’ partner organisations.

In focusing on gender issues, NMS seeks to ensure that the talents and worth of women and men are recognised as equal, and that women and men have equal opportunities to develop their abilities in the workplace.

The task of ensuring the rights of women will be primarily based on the creation of effective rules and organisational structures, such that no instances of discrimination against, or oppression of women will occur, neither in our organisation nor in our partner organisations.

NMS will make systemic efforts to enhance the rights of women in those areas where the recognition of such rights is weak.

This document is intended for use both for the work of NMS in Norway and as that of the partners of NMS.

Definitions

Gender, is the socially acquired notions of femininity and masculinity that women and men are identified with. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given society. As opposed to sex, which is the biology one is born with, gender is a learned and enforced behaviour that will vary with culture, within culture and change over time.

When we talk about gender we talk about both women and men, and the relationship between them. This relationship is often unequal, in terms of access to power and control, to resources and opportunities.

Work to strengthen women's rights means a systematic effort to strengthen these rights in those areas where this is weak.

## Objective

NMS will continuously work to ensure that:

* Women and men, girls and boys, participate and are recognised as equal and equally valuable. This view characterises NMS in internal and external relations.
* Women and men experience that they get to use their abilities and competence and have the opportunity to further develop these.
* Women and men have the same right to be heard.
* Leadership at all levels consists of both women and men.

## Basis

In accordance with NMS' constitution § 14, the Norwegian Mission Society shall work to achieve equality between genders.

NMS’ perspective regarding gender is based on our belief that God created both men and women in His image. (Gen.1:26-27.) It is important that the full range of human talents and experiences are put into use. Furthermore, Paul says that men and women are one in Christ (Gal.3:28.). Regrding salvation, the Bible considers men and women to have equal value. NMS does not believe that any text in the New Testament can be used as a basis for discrimination against neither women nor men.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are central to the work of NMS in the areas of women’s rights and gender equality. In 2002, the Lutheran World Federation issued the pamphlet *Churches Say No to Violence Against Women – Action Plan for the Churches*. By and large, NMS supports the content of these documents, and will seek to work in harmony with them.

The term "own body" in these documents implies that a foetus is part of the woman body. NMS does not view the foetus as part of the woman’s body, but as a separate individual with individual rights.

Context

Women and girls everywhere are less well-off than men in the sense that women are paid less than men, own less land, and have less control of resources.

Violence against women and children is a societal problem throughout the world, including Norway. Forced marriage and early marriages, circumcision of girls and lack of educational and health services are defined as violence. In certain cultures, women who become pregnant outside of marriage may be banished from their families, easily ending up on the fringes of society. This practice often leads to induced abortions. NMS wish that unmarried women who become pregnant feel cared for in church and society so that they choose to give birth to the child.

Oppression of women contributes to a feminisation of the AIDS epidemic. More women than men are HIV-positive. In sub-Saharan Africa, nearly two-thirds of those who are HIV-positive are women. The epidemic affects young people especially.

The ways in which oppression is manifested in practice varies among cultures. Oppression can have material and/or emotional consequences. Power can be both formal and informal: Women who may have very little formal power, may at the same time have great informal power. The challenge is that those who have considerable informal power are still at the mercy of formal power structures. It is therefore important to secure access to formal power for both women and men.

NMS is an organisation with a large majority of female members and volunteers. This has its roots in the large number of women’s associations which arose beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, and which are therefore an important community within the organisation. In many places there is new recruitment both by members and new associations or groups.

In spite of the fact that the majority of NMS members are women, NMS appears to have a male-dominated administrative leadership. In governing bodies, the tradition is to choose boards consisting of both women and men.

Female Pastors

All positions in NMS are open to both women and men.

Female pastors have been employed in NMS since 1990. Following the National Board’s resolution of December 1989 regarding the employment of female pastors in the Norwegian Mission Organisation, the National Board in June of 1990 issued *Guidelines Regarding the Issue of Women Pastors.* The Guidelines have been revised twice, most recently in 1997. The guidelines have been criticised as favouring the opponents of women’s ordination and are no longer followed.

NMS employees and volunteers are expected to be lojal to the NMS’ principles that all positions in the organisation are open to both to women and men. This principle has been made clear to all our partners.

## Priorities

NMS’ gender policy shall be mainstreamed in all areas of work. This means being sensitive to gender perspectives in local employment, in the creation of programs, in personnel and hiring policies, and in leadership.

In Norway

NMS will strive to:

* Create increased opportunities for men’s participation.
* Provide the necessary space for both men and women to become part of a Christian mission community which generates involvement in mission.
* Use congregations as an arena to engage both men and women in missionary work.

Program Work

All project documents and reports must be gender sensitive. In practice this means that:

* All evaluations must be performed in a gender-sensitive manner.
* The project board shall strive to have a minimum of 40% participation from women/men. The competence must be built so that both women and men have a real influence on the board.
* Among employees in the projects NMS supports, NMS recommends the partners to have a balance of women/men especially among the employees with higher education.
* The projects must have a wage policy that secures that men and women receive equal pay for equal work.
* Open and transparent recruitment procedures shall be sought.
* Local committees established as part of any NMS project are, to the extent possible, to include at least 40% participation of women and men.

NMS will focus specifically on women’s rights by supporting individual projects which, in relation to both women and men, work to end discrimination in practice and in attitude.

NMS wishes to achieve a thorough understanding of cultural contexts before putting specific measures in place. However, violent acts will always be unacceptable, even if they are culturally conditioned or justified.

Measures undertaken are to be based on the needs of the target group, local ownership, and participatory processes.

Recruitments and Follow-up of Employees

NMS will strive to create a personnel policy which accomplishes the following:

* Women and men have equal opportunities to use their skills and further develop these.
* Competence plans are established where both men and women are encouraged to further develop their own abilities and competence.
* There is a balance in the gender distribution among the managers, in the office staff, among the employees in outward-looking positions and at the campsites.
* Neither men nor women are discriminated based on gender.
* Arrangements shall be made so that it is compatible to be a parent of small children at the same time a leader in NMS.
* Systematic efforts are made to recruit women to leading positions in those parts of the organisation where women are in the minority.

For missionaries, the NMS should work to:

* The individual missionary is placed in programs where both the program plans for the individual country, and the competence of the individual applicant are considered as much as possible;
* As far as possible couples should be offered 200% position. The minimun beeing 150% position. However, this requires that the individual has the necessary competence, and that the person can fulfil a need that is part of the program plan.

Leadership in NMS

Socialisation and associations tend to encourage participation of one gender. This includes social groups, friendships, and humor, and can influence the hiring process. In order to ensure open and transparent decision-making, NMS will focus on:

* Systematic efforts to ensure that women or men who find themselves in the minority can succeed and participate on their own terms.
* Ensuring a minimum of 40% women or men in all governing bodies, both those which are elected and those representing employees.
* Systematic efforts to ensure female/male leadership in any areas where this is found to be lacking.
* Ensuring that all enforceable resolutions are passed in formally established forums, rather than informal ones at the fringes of meetings.

Relationship to Partners

The partners of NMS have their own priorities which are not always the same as those of NMS. Such priorities will be respected. At the same time, NMS employees will, through dialog with our partners, work for the establishment of a gender-sensitive approach and for the rights of women.

Gender is to be a cross-cutting issue. Simultaneously, there is to be a focus on the rights of women through our support for specific projects whose goal is the strengthening of women’s rights. This means that:

* Questions of the oppression of women will be taken up in dialog with our partners. These issues will include single women or girls who become pregnant; abortion; and various kinds of violence against women in accordance with the Lutheran World Federation document, *Churches Say No to Violence Against Women.*
* When visiting institutions and especially boarding schools for children and young people, the risk of sexual abuse will be assessed and discussed with staff and board.
* All projects receiving support from NMS are expected to follow our guidelines regarding planning, reporting and evaluation regarding gender.
* The projects must have an awareness of whether the measures or activities have men and/or women as target group. The activities must be adapted to the target group.
* Projects that have a goal of strengthening women's rights are given priority.