
Urban Research Institute

Governance Document

Gender Policy and Action Plan

Approved by the General Assembly, Decision no. 3, 26 December 2024





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BACKGROUND

The Gender Policy and Plan 2024-2027 is URI's roadmap for promoting gender equality throughout its work.

The URI is dedicated to investigating and addressing pressing social and economic challenges across a spectrum of areas of expertise as defined in its Operational Manual and is committed to understanding the complexities within its sectorial development objectives and proposing effective solutions. By delving into its areas of expertise, URI aims to generate knowledge, inform policy, and catalyze positive change for communities and governments alike. The URI recognizes that different segments of the population are differently affected by social and economic challenges across its sectorial development objectives and areas of expertise.

URI's Gender Policy aligns with key international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the sustainable development goals. It emphasizes the equal rights of both women and men to access URI's services. Additionally, the Gender Policy builds on the gender policy and gender action plan of the Adaptation Fund, systematically integrating principles from URI's own environmental and social policy (ESP). Furthermore, URI's Gender Policy is in alignment with the organization's Code of Conduct, particularly point 3, which emphasizes respect for human rights and diversity.

In addition, it adheres to URI's Operational Manual, which regulates the integration of gender equality procedures throughout the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation phases of URI's projects. By integrating gender equality principles into its operations and decision-making processes, URI seeks to create a work environment that is inclusive, equitable, and conducive to the achievement of its mission and objectives. Through collective efforts and commitment, URI endeavors to contribute to broader societal efforts towards gender equality and sustainable development.

The Gender Policy highlights the principle of gender equality and women's empowerment as a central goal that URI strives to achieve through its processes. It acknowledges the importance of applying an intersectional analysis to address gender-related differences in vulnerability to climate change impacts. By recognizing the complexity and particularity of inequalities in the lives of women and girls, men and boys, including systemic barriers and root causes, URI aims to develop inclusive and effective strategies for building resilience and promoting adaptation.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Key gender definitions are listed below:

Gender: refers to how societies and specific cultures assign roles and ascribe characteristics to men and women on the basis of their sex;

Gender equality: as enshrined in international agreements and national constitutions, refers to equal rights, power, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, as well as equal

consideration of the interests, needs and priorities of women and men; gender equality therefore entails that society values men and women and the roles they play equally;

Gender equity: refers to the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure equity, measures often need to be taken to compensate for (or reduce) disparity for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on an equitable basis. Equity, therefore, leads to equality; and

Gender responsive: refers to the consideration of gender norms, roles and relations and to addressing inequality generated by unequal norms, roles and relations through changes within a given social setting through remedial action.

Gender sensitivity: refers to the understanding of the ways in which people think about gender and the sociocultural factors underlying gender inequality, and how they might be addressed. Gender sensitivity implies a consideration of the potential contribution of women and men to societal changes as well as the methods and tools used to: promote gender equity, reduce gender disparities, and measure the impact of climate change and other development activities on men and women.

Intersectionality: refers to how gender overlaps with other sociocultural factors, such as race, ethnicity, migratory status, religion or belief, health, status, age, class, caste, sexual orientation, gender identity, and inclusion and exclusion. Looking through the lens of intersectionality is critical for understanding the complexity and particularity of inequalities in the lives of women and girls, men and boys.

Women's empowerment: involves women gaining power and control over their lives, expanding their agency through participation and decision-making. It includes enhancing awareness of rights and self-worth, ensuring access to opportunities and resources, and enabling women to influence social, political, and economic change for a more just society.

OBJECTIVES

The Gender Policy of URI is a comprehensive framework aimed at promoting gender equality, mainstreaming gender considerations, and fostering inclusivity across all aspects of the URI's operations. Grounded in the recognition of systemic barriers and inequalities, this policy outlines clear objectives to guide URI in its commitment to advancing gender equality and empowering all genders within its sphere of influence, specifically:

Promoting gender mainstreaming across URI's projects and initiatives: Ensure that gender considerations are integrated into all aspects of URI's work, from design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. This involves developing gender-responsive indicators, conducting regular gender assessments, and fostering dialogue among project managers to enhance gender perspective in their respective areas of work. By prioritizing gender mainstreaming, URI seeks to address systemic inequalities and promote gender equality in its initiatives.

Building gender capacity within URI staff and leadership: Strengthen the gender capacity of URI's staff and leadership. This includes providing gender training opportunities, both mandatory and optional, for all staff members, as well as specialized training for the Board and General Assembly. Additionally, the policy encourages knowledge transfer and skill development through mentorship programs, ensuring that URI's workforce is equipped with the necessary tools to promote gender equality effectively.

Establishing a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation framework: Track progress towards gender equality objectives within its projects and initiatives. To achieve this, the policy calls for the establishment of a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation framework. This framework will enable URI to systematically assess the gender impact of its work, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability in achieving gender equality goals. Through robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, URI aims to continuously improve its efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

PRINCIPLES

The URI's gender policy comprises the following core elements:

Commitment

The URI is dedicated to adopting a gender-sensitive approach within its mission to investigate and address pressing social and economic challenges across various areas of expertise, firmly upholding a zero-tolerance stance within our organization and among our partners towards discrimination, sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.

This commitment aligns with promoting gender equality as outlined in international agreements, national constitutions, and other human rights frameworks. In furtherance of this commitment, the URI pledges to:

- (a) Gain insights into the sociocultural factors contributing to gender inequality within its areas of expertise, while recognizing the potential contributions of both women and men towards societal transformations aimed at enhancing resilience and addressing pertinent issues.
- (b) Employ methodologies and tools designed to foster gender equality and mitigate gender disparities within its projects.
- (c) Evaluate the outcomes and impacts of its endeavors on the resilience of women and men within the respective areas of expertise.
- (d) Safeguard beneficiaries from unintended negative impacts derived by projects, systematically for all future projects.
- (e) Identify measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse gender impacts of projects, systematically for all future projects.

Comprehensiveness in Scope and Coverage

The URI applies its gender policy uniformly across all projects, irrespective of funding sources, including international, regional, national, or subnational, whether from public or private entities.

Accountability

The URI accounts to its accountability by reporting gender-related results and outcomes to its Board on an annual basis in a transparent manner. All URI employees are responsible for contributing to the gender-equality objectives. To ensure a vision and consistency to its gender work, URI relies on a gender expert, responsible for coordinating and facilitating the implementation and monitoring of this Policy.

Additionally, the URI addresses gender-related complaints and grievances through its established mechanism for complaints and grievances.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The URI adopts a gender action plan to effectively implement its gender policy. This plan comprises the following priority areas:

Governance and institutional structure: the Board approves the gender policy and action plan; the Executive Director reviews and reports annual on the progress of implementation of the action plan; the Gender Expert prepares the annual progress report, providing detailed updates on the progress made towards achieving gender equality objectives, as well as any challenges encountered.

Operational guidelines are developed to provide practical guidance on how to integrate gender considerations into various aspects of URI's work. This includes designing a template for initial gender assessments and SMART gender-responsive indicators tailored to each of URI's sectorial development objectives. By incorporating gender perspectives into project design, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation, URI aims to enhance the effectiveness of its interventions and address gender disparities more effectively.

The Gender Policy and Action Plan will be operationalized through the following mechanisms:

- *Gender screening:* All projects will undergo a mandatory gender screening process at the design stage to identify potential gender-related impacts and opportunities.
- *Gender action plans:* Based on the gender screening, project-specific gender action plans will be developed, outlining concrete steps to promote gender equality and mitigate any adverse impacts.
- *Gender-responsive budgeting:* Allocate specific resources within each project budget for gender-related activities and interventions.

- *Gender focal points:* Designate gender expert within each project team to ensure consistent application of gender considerations throughout the project lifecycle.
- *Stakeholder engagement:* Engage with local women's organizations and gender experts during project design and implementation to ensure context-specific gender considerations are addressed.
- *Reporting mechanisms:* Establish clear reporting channels for gender-related concerns and feedback from project beneficiaries and stakeholders, based on URI grievance mechanisms in place.

Capacity development is another key component of the framework, focusing on strengthening the gender capacity of URI staff through training and resources. This involves providing mandatory gender training for new staff, as well as annual training sessions for all staff members to ensure a common understanding of gender concepts and principles. Additionally, the Board and General Assembly receive specialized gender training to support their role in promoting gender mainstreaming within URI.

Results-based management is essential for tracking progress towards gender equality objectives within URI's projects and initiatives. A gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation framework is essential to be established to systematically track and assess the impact of interventions on gender outcomes. This enables URI to measure the effectiveness of its efforts in promoting gender equality and make evidence-based decisions to guide future actions.

Knowledge generation and communications play a vital role in promoting gender equality both within URI and beyond. Gender considerations are mainstreamed into URI's Annual Plan, interventions, findings, and advocacy messages to address barriers faced by women in URI's areas of expertise. This involves publishing materials and disseminating information through various channels to increase awareness and visibility of URI's work on gender issues.

The implementation framework reflects URI's commitment to creating an inclusive, equitable, and supportive work environment that fosters gender equality and women's empowerment across all its endeavors. Through collaborative efforts and a dedication to transformative change, URI strives to contribute to broader societal efforts towards gender equality and sustainable development.

The proposed timeframe for the gender action plan spans three years, allowing the URI to initiate activities and evaluate implementation progress within this period. Following this initial phase, the duration of the gender action plan will be adjusted to align with the URI's business cycle.

REVIEW AND REVISIONS

URI is an evolving organization, continuously growing and learning. As it gains experience and derives lessons from implementing its gender policy across activities and operational modalities, including engagements with the private sector, the URI remains flexible to adjust

its policies, processes, procedures, and project/program designs accordingly. In line with this adaptive approach, URI will conduct a comprehensive review of its gender policy annually, as needed.

GENDER ACTION PLAN 2024-2027

The objective of the gender action plan is to establish a time-bound framework for effectively putting into practice the gender policy. Through the implementation of this plan, the URI will be equipped with the necessary tools and processes to ensure gender sensitivity across all aspects within the URI's mission. Additionally, it will furnish the Board with essential information to fulfill its oversight duties concerning the URI's gender policy.

The gender action plan is organized into the following priority areas, each delineating the necessary implementation actions.

Table 1: Work Plan for the URI Gender Action Plan, 2024-2027 (GAP-1)

Priority areas	Action	Indicator	Responsibility	Timing
Governance and Institutional Structure	Report annually to the Board with increased coverage and detail on the implementation of the gender policy and the gender action plan: - Annually through the Annual Progress Report	Annual progress report that is publicly available and results proactively shared	Executive Director, Gender expert	2025-2027
	Ensure and improve gender-responsive project design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation in URIs projects	Total amount of gender-related financial support planned	Gender Expert, Project Managers	2025-2027
	Hold regular dialogue with the project managers on how to better integrate gender perspective in respective areas of work	Regular meeting in a 3-month basis	Executive director, Gender expert, Project Managers	2025-2027
Operational guideline	Develop a guideline and template for initial gender assessment, including gender-related data baseline elaboration (based on	Template of gender assessment	Gender Expert, Project Managers	Q4 2024

Priority areas	Action	Indicator	Responsibility	Timing
	AF Gender Guidance Document ¹⁾			
	Review and update gender assessment guideline and template based on first year implementation experience	Updated template incorporating implementation feedback and lessons learned	Gender Expert, Project Managers	Q1 2025
	Design of “SMART” gender-responsive indicators and monitoring arrangements, per each of URI's areas of expertise	SMART gender-responsive indicators per each of URI's areas of expertise.	Gender Expert, Project Managers	Q1 2025
	Develop a systematic process for gender screening and gender action plan development for all projects	Gender screening tool and procedure developed (Yes/No)	Gender Expert, Project Managers	Q1 2025
	Implement a systematic process for gender screening and gender action plan development for all projects	Percentage of projects with completed gender screenings and action plans	Gender Expert, Project Managers	2025-2027
Capacity Development Strengthen the gender capacity of the URI staff through gender trainings and other resources (including knowledge materials)	Request new URI staff to take the mandatory training “I know gender - UN Women online course” Pair experienced staff members with junior colleagues to facilitate knowledge transfer and skill development	Number of new staff receiving training of basic concept	Executive Director, Gender expert	Q3 2025
	Minimum annual gender training for URI staff	All staff trained with basic concepts	Executive Director, Gender expert	Q4 2025

¹ https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/AF_GenderGuidanceDocument_Final_15Aug-2022_clean_16Aug-clean-3.pdf

Priority areas	Action	Indicator	Responsibility	Timing
	Gender training for the Board and General Assembly	Board and General Assembly trained on gender mainstreaming	Executive Director, Gender expert	Q1 2026
Results based - Management	Establish a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress towards gender equality objectives within URI's projects and initiatives	Percentage of URI projects and initiatives that have developed and implemented a gender-responsive M&E framework	Executive Director, Gender expert	Q2 2026
Knowledge generation and communications	Mainstream gender in URIs Annual Report with interventions, findings and advocacy messages to address their barriers women in URI's areas of expertise	Number of gender mainstreaming articles in the organization's Annual Report	Executive Director, Gender expert	2025-2027
	Update URI website on a regular basis, increasing visibility of URI's work on gender	Number of materials related to gender issues published	Executive Director, Gender expert	2025-2027



ANNEX 1: GENDER ASSESSMENT - GUIDANCE AND TEMPLATE

Urban Research Institute

Governance document

Gender Policy and Action Plan

Annex 1: Gender Assessment - Guidance and Template



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INTRODUCTION

This template is in line with the Adaptation Fund's Gender Guidance Document¹ and aligned with URI's Gender Policy. It provides key questions and structured guidance for developing comprehensive gender assessment for projects upon specifications of sectorial development of URI.

This methodological framework examines how different genders access resources, participate in activities, and experience constraints across URI's areas of expertise.

In alignment with URI's Gender Policy, this gender assessment guidance serves as a strategic tool to:

- Identify opportunities for enhancing gender equality within projects and programs
- Understand intersectional factors affecting different groups' vulnerability and resilience
- Recognize and build upon existing knowledge and capacities within communities
- Support evidence-based decision-making for gender-responsive interventions

This template provides a structured framework for conducting comprehensive gender assessments that inform project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

GENDER ASSESSMENT: GUIDANCE (PROJECT LEVEL)

What is a gender assessment?

A gender assessment is a tool for identifying gender differences and providing empirical evidence in the form of qualitative and quantitative data and analysis for gender roles, activities, needs, and available opportunities and challenges or risks for men and women within a particular context, geography or sector.

The gender assessment should elaborate the gender-specific socio-economic, political, cultural and legal context in which the project will operate. This should attempt to address questions such as:

- What are some of the **key gender statistics in the country** or region of the proposed intervention or the project area?
- Where available, **data should also be disaggregated** across other social factors like age, ethnicity or class.
- What is the **legal status** of women and non-binary individuals and applicable laws affecting gender groups in the country or region of the proposed intervention or the project area?
- What are **cultural norms**, commonly held beliefs, perceptions, stereotypes, values and practices related to gender in the country or region of the proposed intervention or the project area?

¹ https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/AF_GenderGuidanceDocument_Final_15Aug-2022_clean_16Aug-clean-3.pdf

When is a gender assessment used?

Gender assessment needs to be conducted at the early stage of the project development so that an understanding of gender roles and power relations is built into the project. All projects should include an assessment of gender and include data on gender issues within the overall situation analysis.

This template provides key questions to consider while developing a gender assessment for a particular project. The following questions are to be tailored to the context of project upon specifications of sectorial development objectives of URI.

Project Identification

At this early stage should be foreseen the engagement of women, men and people with other gender identities and of different ages, socio-economic backgrounds or ethnicities, with disabilities, etc., in initial stakeholder consultations about the project or programme in a gender-responsive manner and using an intersectional approach. For a two-step project development, at the concept note phase, only preliminary gender data on key gender issues (such as disaggregating the likely beneficiaries by gender and noting general differences regarding the roles and needs of women, men and other gender groups and possible different effects of the activity on them) should be included in the project concept note.

The detailed gender analysis will be conducted at a later stage of project development.

Comprehensive gender-responsive stakeholder consultation and engagement

Recommendations:

- Consult with beneficiaries/stakeholders from different gender groups both separately and in mixed groups.
- The time and location of consultation meetings is crucial.
- Consider gender differences in knowledge and priorities and appropriate ways of communication.
- Consider setting minimum quota and progress targets.
- Consider appropriate meeting formats.
- Make a targeted effort to include key stakeholders that bring a gender perspective and broad gender expertise.

Project proposal development

1. *Integrating gender in project goals/objectives and identifying target groups*

Guiding questions:

- Do the project objectives refer explicitly to different gender groups, including potentially a specific targeted sub-group of men and women, such as indigenous women in forest management efforts?
- Have the project beneficiaries been identified and disaggregated to reflect as necessary sex (male and female) and different gender sub-groups (such as for example urban men, older rural women, female adolescents with disabilities)?

- Is gender balance and gender diversity considered and reflected within the target beneficiary group(s)?

2. *Design of gender-responsive intervention measures*

Guiding questions:

- Do the planned activities support sustainable adaptation to climate change of the community as a whole, through addressing the different roles, needs, capabilities and opportunities of all gender groups, including identified sub-groups of women and men?
- Do the planned activities address and strengthen the voice and agency of the most vulnerable identified sub-groups of men and women?
- Do the planned activities mitigate identified gender-differentiated risks that might be created by the project?

3. *Gender-responsive results framework and indicators*

Guiding questions:

- Do the intended outputs of the project (such as services, products, policy measures or planning instruments) respond to the concerns, needs and capabilities of women and girls, men and boys and different gender sub-groups?
- Is it necessary to specify targeted outputs for different gender beneficiary groups?
- Does the outcome address the needs and concerns of different gender groups, including sub-groups of women and men alike and in an equitable way?

4. *Gender-responsive project budgets*

Guiding questions:

- Have the financial resources allocated to various activities been assessed to ensure that all genders will benefit equitably from the planned project, by setting specific resources for actions focused exclusively on the empowerment of women and girls?
- Does the project budget allocate adequate resources for intended gender mainstreaming activities?
- Does the budget allow for some contingency funding to allow for adaptive management in the case that additional gender-related resources are needed during the implementation?

Project implementation

Guiding questions:

- Are adequate provisions in place for adaptive management and project implementation adjustments based on lessons learned from earlier decisions and interventions and received feedback?

- Does the implementation team have gender expertise and a gender focal point?

Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

Guiding questions - Monitoring:

- Is a gender-responsive monitoring approach for the project in place, and is it broader than the required annual performance and results reporting to include regular communication with implementation partners and stakeholder engagement?
- Does the required baseline data report include a gender data baseline to track and monitor progress of gender responsive/transformational measures and related gender targets set for project implementation?
- Is regular project monitoring assigned to staff members with gender awareness and expertise, including data and communication/outreach specialists, and are they adequately resourced (time, financial and human resources)?

Guiding questions - Evaluation:

- Does the evaluation process include a gender perspective?
- Do the TOR for evaluators specify the need for gender expertise?
- Did the project bring about adaptation and reduced vulnerability outcomes for diverse gender groups, including sub-groups of women and men as intended?
- To what extent was the project/ programme aligned with the specific adaptation needs and priorities of diverse gender groups, including subgroups of women and men identified as main beneficiaries?

Knowledge Management, Information

Guiding questions

- Do publications, presentations or reporting on projects pay attention to relevant gender aspects and gender-responsive implementation efforts and/or best practices and lessons learned related to gender mainstreaming in projects/programmes?

GENDER ASSESSMENT: TEMPLATE (PROJECT LEVEL)

Project Information

- Project Title:
- Sectorial Development Area:
- Location:
- Implementation Period:

[Note: Complete all sections below. Mark 'N/A' for sections that are not applicable. Remove guidance text before submitting.]

If you require assistance, please contact the Gender Expert at mspahiu@uri.org.al.

1. Initial Screening Criteria

This initial screening helps identify the key gender dimensions of the project. Review each criterion carefully and check all that apply to ensure appropriate gender considerations are integrated from the start.

Select all that apply:

- Project affects different gender groups differently
- Project targets specific population groups
- Project involves workforce changes
- Project includes partnerships/stakeholder engagement

2. Summary of Gender Assessment Outcomes

This section presents a comprehensive overview of your gender assessment findings. Complete this section last, as it should synthesize the key findings and conclusions from all subsequent sections to provide a clear picture of the project's gender dimensions and planned responses.

[Complete this section last - summarize key findings from sections 3-5]

3. Intersectional Gender Analysis Findings

This section documents your analysis of how gender intersects with other social factors in the project context. The analysis should be based on available data and stakeholder consultations to provide a thorough understanding of gender dynamics in the project area.

3.1 Baseline Data

Consider: Demographic statistics (sex-disaggregated); Socioeconomic indicators; Legal and policy context; Cultural norms and practices.



3.2 Gender Analysis

Consider: Key gender issues identified, Stakeholder consultation findings, Data gaps and limitations.

3.3 Impact Assessment

Consider: Potential risks and opportunities, Vulnerability factors, Access to resources and benefits.

4 Gender-Responsive Design Elements

This section should be used for assessing how gender considerations are integrated into the project design. Each component should clearly demonstrate how the project will address the gender issues identified in the analysis and contribute to gender equality outcomes.

4.3 Project Objectives and Target Groups

Consider: Gender-specific objectives, Beneficiary identification and targeting, Gender balance considerations.

4.2 Implementation Measures

Consider: Gender-responsive activities, Risk mitigation strategies, Stakeholder engagement approach, Capacity building elements.

4.3 Resources and Budget

Consider: Gender-specific allocations

5 Gender Action Matrix

This section should be completed by **filling in the table below**. This matrix provides a structured framework for planning and tracking gender-responsive actions within the project. Each activity should be specific, measurable, and clearly linked to project objectives and gender equality outcomes.

Activity/Intervention	Implementation Approach	Risks and Mitigation	Timeline	Monitoring Indicators
<p>[List clear, specific and concrete actions that will contribute to achieving gender equality within the project.</p> <p><i>If there are limited or no options to improve gender equality within the project,</i></p>	[Explain how this action will be achieved]	[List possible risks for this action and mitigations to counter the risks identified]	[Provide a clear timeframe for undertaking this action. This may include milestones or completion dates]	[Detail when and how progress will be reported for this action]

<i>note actions that could be taken to support gender equality the next time this topic is considered]</i>				
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6 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

This section should be used for tracking of gender-related outcomes throughout the project lifecycle. It should include clear indicators, data collection methods, and responsibility assignments to enable effective monitoring of gender impacts and achievements.

6.1 Gender-Responsive Indicators

Consider: Output indicators, Outcome indicators, Impact indicators

6.2 Monitoring Arrangements

Consider: Reporting frequency, Responsible parties

6.3 Evaluation Plan

Consider: Timeline

7 Appendices when applicable:

1. Stakeholder consultation records
2. Additional supporting documentation

Prepared by:

[Name, Position] Date:

[Date]

Reviewed by: [Gender Expert Name]

Approved by: [Authority]

[Note: This template should be used in line with URI's Gender Policy and operational guidelines. Ensure all sections are completed with specific, measurable, and actionable information.]