
Urban Research Institute

Governance Document

Gender Policy



CONTENT

Background	3
key terms and concepts	4
Objectives.....	5
Scope of application	6
Principles.....	6
Implementation framework	7
Implementation review.....	9

Background

The Urban Research Institute (URI) is committed to promoting gender equality and ensuring that gender considerations are integrated across its institutional arrangements, portfolio management, and project and programme cycle. URI recognizes that women, men, girls, boys, and people with diverse gender identities may experience social, economic, environmental, and governance challenges differently, and that these differences may affect their needs, opportunities, participation, access to resources and services, exposure to risk, and ability to benefit from development interventions.

URI's Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan 2026–2027 establish the institutional framework through which URI gives effect to this commitment. Together, they provide the minimum governance, procedural, monitoring, reporting, and accountability requirements for gender-responsive action throughout URI's work. The Policy sets out URI's principles, standards, and institutional commitments, while the Action Plan translates those commitments into time-bound implementation measures, responsibilities, and reporting arrangements.

URI is dedicated to investigating and addressing pressing social, economic, environmental, and governance challenges across its areas of expertise and sectoral development objectives. In pursuing its mission, URI seeks to generate knowledge, inform public policy, support institutional strengthening, and contribute to effective and equitable solutions for communities and public institutions. URI accordingly recognizes that development challenges and policy responses are not gender-neutral, and that sound analysis and effective interventions require attention to differentiated experiences, structural inequalities, and barriers affecting diverse population groups.

This Policy is grounded in URI's institutional values and in internationally recognized human rights and gender equality standards. It is informed by, inter alia, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as both a stand-alone objective and a cross-cutting condition for sustainable development.

This Policy also reflects relevant international good practice on gender-responsive governance, stakeholder engagement, project design, monitoring, evaluation, and results management, including the approaches developed under the Green Climate Fund Gender Policy, the Adaptation Fund Gender Policy, and related guidance applicable to implementing entities. URI considers these standards as relevant reference points for strengthening the quality, consistency, and accountability of its institutional and programmatic practice.

URI's Gender Policy shall be read and implemented consistently with URI's Code of Values and Ethics and with URI's internal operational, accountability, grievance, safeguarding, and complaint-handling frameworks. In particular, URI affirms respect for human rights, dignity, equal opportunity, diversity, integrity, and a professional environment free from discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and exclusion.

In this context, URI maintains zero tolerance for discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment, retaliation, victimization, or exclusion on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or belief, ethnicity, disability, family status, political opinion, or any other status protected under applicable law. This commitment applies across URI's workplace practices, governance arrangements, stakeholder engagement, and external operations.

This Policy shall also be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, applicable Albanian labour and anti-discrimination legislation, and any other legal and regulatory requirements relevant to URI's institutional and operational context.

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.

Sex-disaggregated data: means quantitative information collected and presented separately for women and men, and supplemented, where relevant and appropriate, by qualitative analysis and other inclusion data.

Gender action plan: means the project- or programme-level set of measures, responsibilities, resources, indicators, and timeframes adopted to address identified gender gaps, risks, and opportunities.

Objectives

This Gender Policy strengthens URI's commitment to the diverse, context-specific, and intersectional dimensions of gender equality across its institutional arrangements, portfolio management, and project and programme cycle. The Gender Policy commits URI to strengthen gender-responsive governance and institutional practice within the organization, and to promote gender equality through its projects, initiatives, operational systems, and implementation of the Gender Action Plan 2026–2027 (Annex 1).

This Gender Policy sets out the principles for promoting gender equality through institutional measures, operational requirements, and supporting guidance and annexes, including requirements for project-level gender assessment, stakeholder consultation, gender action planning, monitoring, reporting, and periodic review of results.

This Gender Policy reflects URI's commitment to addressing gender equality in a way that is inclusive, practical, and responsive to the different experiences, needs, and capacities of the groups affected by its work.

The Gender Policy has the following main objectives:

- i. To strengthen gender-responsive governance, institutional practice, and accountability within URI, including through leadership oversight, equal opportunity, non-discrimination, staff and governance capacity development, confidential reporting and grievance responsiveness, and periodic reporting on implementation of the Policy and the Gender Action Plan.
- ii. To promote gender-responsive projects and initiatives by integrating gender considerations throughout the project and programme cycle, including project identification, gender assessment, stakeholder consultation, design, implementation, budgeting, monitoring, evaluation, and learning, in a manner proportionate to the nature, scale, and gender relevance of the activity concerned.
- iii. To contribute, through URI's areas of work, to reducing gender-related barriers, exclusions, and unequal vulnerabilities by supporting more inclusive, equitable, and

effective institutional, policy, and project outcomes, and by ensuring that URI's interventions and knowledge products are informed by gender-responsive analysis, data, and practice.

Scope of application

This Policy applies across all URI institutional arrangements and areas of work, including its governance, management, staffing, internal operations, and portfolio of projects and initiatives.

This Policy applies across all stages of the project and programme cycle, from identification through evaluation and learning, and is implemented uniformly across all projects, regardless of funding source or level (international, regional, national, or subnational; public or private).

This Policy shall also guide URI's engagement with partners, consultants, service providers, and other relevant stakeholders to the extent applicable to the activity concerned and consistent with URI's contractual, operational, and accountability frameworks.

This Policy shall be implemented in a manner proportionate to the nature, scale, complexity, and gender relevance of the institutional function, project, or initiative concerned, while ensuring compliance with the minimum requirements established by this Policy and its implementing instruments.

Principles

URI's Gender Policy is guided by the following principles. They shall guide the interpretation and implementation of this Policy across URI's institutional arrangements, internal operations, and project and programme activities.

Human rights and dignity

URI recognizes that gender equality is grounded in respect for human rights, human dignity, equality, and non-discrimination. In the implementation of this Policy, URI shall respect and promote the rights and dignity of all persons affected by its institutional and programmatic work, taking due account of their rights, needs, and protections applicable to persons in vulnerable or marginalized situations, in accordance with applicable law, URI's internal frameworks, and relevant international standards.

Commitment to gender equality

URI is committed to integrating a gender-responsive approach across its institutional arrangements, areas of work, and project and programme cycle, including through the systematic identification of gender-related barriers, risks, needs, opportunities, and capacities, the promotion of meaningful, safe, and accessible participation in consultations, decision-making processes, and access to project benefits, and the adoption of proportionate measures to promote gender equality, avoid unintended harm, and mitigate adverse gender impacts. URI maintains zero tolerance for discrimination, sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment,

retaliation, and exclusion within the organization and, to the extent applicable, in its partnerships and operations.

Non-discrimination and equal treatment

URI shall ensure equal treatment and non-discrimination in recruitment, remuneration, benefits, promotion, leadership opportunities, access to training, participation in decision-making, access to grievance mechanisms, stakeholder consultation, and access to project benefits and services. URI shall not tolerate discrimination, retaliation, exclusion, sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment on the basis of sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, marital status, social or economic status, or other status, in accordance with applicable law and URI internal policies.

Accountability and transparency

URI shall ensure accountability for implementation of this Policy through clear responsibilities, periodic reporting, institutional oversight, and appropriate gender expertise. URI shall report annually to its Board on implementation of the Gender Policy and its Action Plan, including progress, corrective actions, and any material gender-related grievances or risks. Gender-related complaints and grievances shall be handled through accessible, confidential, and safe arrangements in accordance with URI's internal procedures, with protection against retaliation and referral pathways where required. URI shall also make relevant information on its gender-related commitments, procedures, and implementation results available through appropriate institutional channels, subject to confidentiality, data protection, and internal disclosure requirements.

Implementation framework

URI shall implement this Gender Policy through a Gender Action Plan that translates the Policy into time-bound actions, responsibilities, indicators, and review points. The Gender Action Plan shall serve as the primary instrument for operationalizing URI's commitments on gender-responsive governance, project and programme management, capacity development, monitoring, reporting, and institutional learning.

The implementation framework shall be organized around the following priority areas.

Governance and institutional structure

URI shall maintain governance and oversight arrangements that support effective implementation of the Gender Policy and the Gender Action Plan. The Board and General Assembly shall exercise oversight through review of annual implementation progress, while the Executive Director shall ensure implementation at institutional level and report annually on progress, challenges, corrective actions, and any material gender-related grievances or risks. The Gender Expert shall support coordination, technical advice, monitoring, and preparation of the annual progress report, including institutional and portfolio-level implementation information. URI shall also maintain and improve gender-responsive project

design, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation across its project portfolio, including budget tagging for gender-related measures and coordination with project managers at relevant proposal, concept, and implementation stages.

Operational guidance and project-level application

URI shall maintain operational guidance and procedures to support the consistent application of this Policy across the project and programme cycle. This shall include a documented gender mainstreaming procedure covering concept screening, proposal-stage gender assessment, stakeholder consultation, design, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and revision where material project changes occur. The Gender Assessment, Guidance and Template (Annex 2) shall be updated, as required, to reflect implementation lessons learned and applicable partner or donor requirements. URI shall implement and quality-assure a systematic process for project screening and project-level gender action plans across the portfolio, with periodic checks for completeness and proportionality. For each relevant project or programme, URI shall maintain documentation proportionate to the scale and risk of the activity, including screening records, project-level actions, monitoring information, and implementation evidence.

Capacity development

URI shall strengthen institutional capacity for implementation of this Policy through induction, training, and knowledge-sharing. New staff shall receive onboarding orientation on URI's Gender Policy and its practical application. URI shall also provide annual refresher training for staff, tailored to operational needs and lessons learned, and shall deliver targeted briefings or training to the Board and General Assembly to support their oversight role. Records of attendance and training materials shall be retained as evidence of implementation.

Results-based management

URI shall track and improve the application of gender-responsive monitoring provisions across its projects and initiatives. This shall include the use, where relevant, of gender-responsive indicators, sex-disaggregated and qualitative data, baselines, targets, means of verification, review points, and documented follow-up actions at institutional, portfolio, and project levels. Monitoring and reporting arrangements shall support the assessment of implementation progress, identification of gaps, and documentation of lessons learned for future improvement.

Knowledge generation and communications

URI shall integrate gender considerations into its knowledge products, annual reporting, communications, and external visibility. This includes mainstreaming gender in URI's Annual Report through relevant interventions, findings, and advocacy messages, as well as publishing and disseminating key policy, guidance, and learning outputs through appropriate communication channels. URI shall also maintain and periodically review institutional gender

statistics and related equality data, including staffing composition by sex across functions and, where feasible and appropriate, aggregated information relevant to equality of treatment in remuneration, benefits, training access, and leadership representation, in order to support institutional monitoring, learning, and corrective action.

Implementation review

Implementation of the Gender Policy and the Gender Action Plan shall be reviewed annually on the basis of documented progress against the approved actions and indicators. The annual review shall support institutional oversight, corrective action, and continuous improvement in the implementation of URI's gender commitments.