



# Policy on Gender and HIV/AIDS

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## Preamble:

Understanding gender relations is critical to being effective in the fight to resist, survive, and overcome HIV/AIDS. The spread of AIDS in Africa is related to sexual behavior. Because of this, it is intimately connected to power relationships between men and women. From the moment they are born, males and females are treated and regarded and judged differently due to their sex, particularly with respect to sexuality. In Africa, women generally have less control over with whom, when, and under what conditions they have sex, particularly when they are young adults. They are more likely to be economically dependent on male partners. Female biology also puts them at greater risk of infection. For the above reasons, females are more vulnerable to HIV infection. Further, due to women's traditional role as principal caregiver, they are often the ones who suffer the greatest burdens in taking on the responsibilities for those who are living and dying with the disease and making arrangements for surviving children.

CAP NETWORK is committed to promoting gender equality as an integral part of its efforts to help African organizations on the front lines in the fight to resist, survive, and overcome AIDS.

CAP NETWORK defines 'gender equality' as the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play.

## Policy:

CAP NETWORK recognizes that any effort made to stop the spread of AIDS must include gender awareness and the promotion of gender equality. Striving for equality means:

- addressing the practical needs of women and men related to HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support;
- advancing the strategic need for women to participate actively in identifying and defining problems, developing solutions, making decisions, and benefiting at least equally from the positive outcomes of projects, and;
- encouraging shared responsibility between men and women for preventing, controlling and responding to the impact of HIV/AIDS.

CAP NETWORK requires commitment and participation of all of its staff, board members and volunteers in supporting the promotion of gender equality in its work. CAP NETWORK' efforts to promote gender equality will include:

- Identifying and selecting partner organizations with a shared commitment to the promotion of gender equality
- The promotion of equal, though sometimes separate, participation in decision-making and priority-setting.
- Analyzing and understanding differences in gender roles, access to resources and sexual health needs within the communities we support with resources.
- Ensuring that positive outcomes of projects and activities are experienced by women to a degree commensurate with the share of the burden of AIDS that falls upon them
- Encouraging women and men to work together as equal partners at all levels of the organization, taking shared responsibility for addressing the AIDS pandemic and all its manifestations.

In order to sustain a high level of awareness and good practice with respect to this policy, CAP NETWORK will periodically measure, monitor and evaluate the progress of our work in promoting gender awareness and equality.

This policy has been set by the Board of Directors, will be followed by all staff and volunteers, and will be reviewed and updated from time-to-time.