

Interplast Australia & New Zealand
Gender Equality Policy

Policy Status:
Approved

Initial CEO Endorsement:	01 September 2006
Board Approval Date:	15 August 2025
Last Review Date:	22 July 2025
Future Review Date:	01 October 2027
Frequency of Review:	2 years
Policy Owner:	Program Managers

Revisions to Policy

Significant Changes	Endorsed by CEO	Approved by Interplast Board
Initial creation	01 September 2006	September 2006
Annual review and updates (wording changes, changes to reflect compliance and legislative updates, process updates)	2007-2018	2007-2018
Review and update of policy (including policy in practice section) in line with recommendations from external gender review. Inclusion of Gender Working Group and Gender Action Plan to Monitoring and Review of Policy.	30 January 2019	5 February 2019
Updated to reflect new template and new definitions. Separated policy and procedure. Complete review.	28 September 2023	10 October 2023
Minor updates	30 July 2025	15 August 2025

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Section 1: Purpose

This purpose of the Gender Equality Policy is to outline Interplast Australia & New Zealand's (Interplast's) commitment to advancing gender equality and equity in all its activities (including its international programs, human resources, fundraising and communications) and organisational culture. This policy is intended to inform all Interplast policies.

- Specifically, this policy seeks to ensure that all Interplast representatives prioritise gender equality and uphold our joint responsibility to create a gender inclusive culture, where everyone is committed to advancing the rights of women.
- Promote an intersectional understanding of gender and recognise that gender intersects with other aspect of identity, such as disability, Indigeneity, poverty, age, place of residence, religion and sexual orientation, which overlap to create new forms of discrimination.
- Build an open and aware environment where discussions about gender inclusivity can be raised in a fair and just manner, which respects the rights of people impacted by gender-based discrimination and injustice.
- Deliver programs that promote gender equity in response to local needs and tailored to local context.
- Ensure procedures are in place to systematically record the relevance of gender related to each project and to identify specific considerations to support gender equity during planning and implementation.
- Ensure that Interplast adheres to Australian and international legislation and conventions on the protection of women's rights across all spheres of society and international development.
- Demonstrate our commitment to the ACFID Code of Conduct and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's *Australia's International Gender Equality Strategy*.

Interplast's Gender Equality Policy forms part of Interplast's broader suite of safeguarding policies and other documents. These are listed in Section 7 of this policy.

Section 2: Scope

The Gender Equality Policy applies to Interplast personnel and observers accompanying any Interplast activity.

This policy is also applicable to relevant local partners in the countries in which Interplast works and is referenced in all documented partnership agreements. They must also abide by their own relevant policies, international declarations, conventions, agreements and domestic legal frameworks that relate to gender equality.

This policy also applies to third-party individuals and organisations who have been granted authority to fundraise for Interplast.

All Interplast personnel and observers, are accountable for understanding and adhering to this policy at all times.

Section 3: Guiding Principles

Interplast acknowledges that gender equality is a human rights issue and is essential to achieving peaceful societies with full human potential realised.

This policy is based on the following principles:

- Ensuring all employees, volunteers, Board and Committee members have an understanding of gender issues and the principles outlined in this policy
- Promoting gender equality to key stakeholders and local partners
- Working with all people, regardless of their gender, to improve quality of life
- Respecting the values and cultures of the people Interplast works with
- Encouraging participation of women in all areas of Interplast's work
- Recognising the close connection between gender and disability, poverty and geographical isolation in Interplast's partner countries
- Recognising that women, gender-diverse people and/or sexual minorities with a disability often face multiple stigmatisations and challenges in gaining access to quality health services; and
- Recognising that gender intersects with other overlapping identities of religion, caste, age, sexual orientation and ethnicity which exacerbate drivers of inequality such as discrimination, marginalisation and social exclusion.

Section 4: Policy

Interplast recognises gender equality as a human right and adopts a moral and ethical obligation to uphold and promote all human rights through its work. Interplast acknowledges that gender equality is an essential part of sustainable development that addresses the disproportionate impact of economic, social and environmental stressors on women and girls in Asia and the Pacific.

Interplast can have the most impact on addressing gender inequalities in health systems by targeting local clinicians and patients who receive Interplast services. Interplast recognises women as both users and providers of healthcare who should be supported to reach their full potential in both spheres.

Interplast recognises that women make up 70% of the global health workforce but are substantially underrepresented in management, leadership and governance.¹ Women are typically employed in roles with low pay and poor conditions with fewer opportunities for career advancement or skills specialisation. Additionally, female healthcare workers must balance caregiving duties in the home and community that are widely unrecognised and unpaid. The

¹ World Health Organisation, *Delivered by Women, Led by Men: A Gender and Equity Analysis of the Global Health and Social Workforce*, 2019, pp1. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241515467>

global health workforce relies on female frontline workers to function yet undervalues their labour and ignores their diversity.

Interplast recognises that the under-representation of women in management and leadership positions in healthcare may lead to less attention to and poorer understanding of the health care needs specific to women. In many contexts, access to female providers is an important determinant of women's health. A gender diverse workforce is better able to understand the diverse needs of patients and is better able to provide care. A fairly remunerated and empowered healthcare workforce is better able to contribute to the health and wellbeing of their family and community.²

Interplast is concerned by the significant challenges faced by women and girls in Asia and the Pacific which create and exacerbate barriers to accessing quality healthcare. These can include:

- Violence across all spheres of life, most commonly physical, sexual and institutional violence
- Financial dependence on family members and men
- Diminished right to control decisions about their lives and health
- Assignment of lower status and power
- Preferential allocation of finances to the needs of men; and
- Discriminatory attitudes and poor understanding of the specific healthcare needs of women within services.

Women and men have differences in exposure and susceptibility to disease and injury. These differences are largely due to the social construct of gender, which differentiates the expectations, attitudes and participation of men and women in society. Intersecting vulnerabilities such as disability, poverty, ethnicity and sexuality can further marginalise women when attempting to access healthcare. All differentiations significantly impact the health issues that each group faces. Key examples include:

- Women are less supported to access healthcare due to intra-household distribution of resources, power and the perceived lesser innate value of women compared to men
- Women are prevented from accessing healthcare services by abusers as a tool of abuse or to prevent the abuser from being penalised. Women are less likely to present to healthcare services as a method of keeping their abuse private due to shame and stigma
- Women are more likely to be injured from family violence and violence related to marriage, social or family reputation and sexual violence. Women with disabilities experience 10 times more gender-based violence than those without disabilities³
- Women are more likely to sustain a burn injury at home due to cooking duties, family violence and self-immolation

² A. Langer, A. Meleis, F. M. Knaul et al, Women and Health: The Key for Sustainable Development, 2015, p.1165. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277894247>

³ United Nations Population Fund, Five things you didn't know about disability and sexual violence, 2018, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/five-things-you-didnt-know-about-disability-and-sexual-violence>

- Women are less likely to be employed and have less ability to access funds to cover indirect costs for transport, childcare and medicines than men. This is exacerbated for women experiencing poverty and women with disabilities.

In response to these inequities and in-line with Sustainable Development Goal 3, *'Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for All Ages,'* Interplast systematically embeds gender indicators, outcomes and checklists within the program life cycle to improve mainstreaming of gender equity practices across all activities. Additionally, Interplast facilitates programs specifically designed to promote gender equity, including scholarships for female clinicians and locally led Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) workshops.

Further information on the relevance and importance of gender equity to Interplast's work can be found in [Interplast's Gender Equity Strategy 2021-2026](#).

Section 5: Summary of Gender Equity Practices

Interplast has a range of practices in place across the organisation and embedded into its international programming which promote gender equity. These relate to:

- Recruitment and Training
- Operationalising the 5-Year Gender Equity Strategy
- International program Activity Procedures.

This section provides a summary of Interplast's practices on these areas.

5.1: Recruitment and training

- Interplast is a safe environment and supports family-friendly work practices that enable both men and women to participate fully in work and family life.
- All personnel and observers are required to confirm their commitment to this policy as part of their induction processes.
- Interplast delivers regular training and capacity development opportunities for employees, Board Directors, volunteer and partners in the area of gender equality to ensure increased awareness and capacity to improve practice.
- Information on its activities reflects Interplast's commitment to gender equality, and where possible, influences changing attitudes and practices that reinforce gender-based stereotypes.
- All senior employees and Board appointments take gender and diversity into consideration and are considered alongside the annual skills matrix process.
- Interplast is committed to gender equality across all levels of the organisation.
- Interplast's recruitment team will proactively consider gender parity when weighing up skills and attributes for appointment.

5.2: Operationalising the 5-Year Gender Equity Strategy

- Interplast will systematically measure and report against its 5-year Gender Equity Strategy (2021-2026) to strengthen gender programming and improve gender equality across the organisation.
- Interplast will embed gendered indicators and outcomes within annual Operational Plans and annual Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plans to improve mainstreaming of gender equity practices across all projects.
- Interplast will ensure regular focus on gender equity targets through discussion at staff meetings, targeted programming indicators and ongoing communication with local partners to embed gender considerations into activities.

5.3: International program activity procedures

- Interplast will actively work to ensure that access to Interplast's program activities (for both clinical treatment and for training opportunities) is not limited by gender identity.⁴
- Where possible, the different needs and priorities of all people, regardless of their gender are identified when planning and implementing its program activities.
- Recognise the local experience and expertise within the countries it works. This includes recognising where local organisations that are best placed to be engaged to provide advice, deliver or evaluate program activities and ensuring appropriate remuneration for services.
- The relevant Gender Equality Analysis Tools are embedded into the program life cycle to measure the relevance of gender related to every project and to identify specific considerations to support gender equality during planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. This includes understanding where Interplast is best placed to influence gender focuses outcomes and where it is not appropriate.
- Data regarding program beneficiaries (patients and clinicians) are reported with disaggregation for sex, age and disability status where possible and appropriate.

Section 6: Monitoring and Review of this Policy

This policy will be monitored and reviewed at intervals as indicated in this policy and following the process outlined in Interplast's Policy Framework.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is ultimately accountable to the Board for managing and maintaining this policy and is responsible for the implementation of this policy. The Board is responsible for adopting this policy.

⁴ Note that Interplast patients are prioritised for surgery based on clinical and functional need, and the likelihood that there will be a successful outcome of their surgery. Local medical trainees are selected based on who is available, noting that often there are very few female plastic surgeons and anaesthetists in many of the countries in which we work, and conversely few male nurses and allied health practitioners.

The Program Managers are accountable to the CEO for ensuring the currency of this policy and all supporting procedures and relevant manuals and has responsibility for operationalising the policy.

Where compliance issues are identified, the Gender Focal Point will work with staff and other relevant stakeholders to address these issues promptly.

In line with Interplast’s Gender Equity Strategy (2021-2026), an annual Gender Equity Operational Plan will be developed, with quarterly progress reports completed noting achievements and challenges in operationalising the policy and strategy.

Any updates and revisions to this policy must be endorsed by the Gender Focal Point and the CEO before being submitted to the Interplast Board for its approval. Policy changes will be reflected, as necessary, in operational manuals.

Section 7: Related Documents and Legislation

In alignment with the ACFID Code of Conduct, Interplast is committed to addressing the effect of gender inequalities and inequities as being fundamental to the attainment of human rights (Section 2.3.1 of the Code –Participation, Empowerment & Local Ownership).

Interplast’s activities are aligned with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy (2016).

Interplast also adheres to Australian legislation and international conventions and frameworks listed in the following table.

Name of document/legislation	Location/hyperlink
ACFID Code of Conduct (2019)	https://acfid.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ACFID_Code_Dec-2019_published_high-res_0.pdf
Australia’s International Gender Equality Strategy, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia	https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australias-international-gender-equality-strategy.pdf
Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Act)	https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00895
Federal Sex Discrimination Act (1984), Australia	https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2014C00002

Equal Opportunity Amendment (Family Responsibilities) Act 2008, Australia	https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/c44acc5a-3190-3084-bd7b-d8626e45bb53_08-001a.pdf
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986, Australia	https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2004A03366
United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW (1979)	https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women
Child Protection Procedures	Interplast Key Documents
Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy	Policies and Guidelines Interplast Australia
Child Protection Code of Conduct	Policies and Guidelines Interplast Australia
Case Study and Photography Policy	Policies and Guidelines Interplast Australia
Case Study and Photography Procedures	Interplast Key Documents
Ethical Fundraising Policy	Policies and Guidelines Interplast Australia
Equal Employment Opportunity & Anti-Discrimination Policy	Interplast Key Document

Section 8: Definitions

Word / Phrase	Definition
Personnel	Personnel includes all employees, consultants, volunteers, Board Directors, Committee members, Working Group members and Ambassadors that are engaged by Interplast to perform the work of Interplast.

	Volunteers include both professional (e.g. administrative roles) and medical volunteers (e.g. surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses or allied therapists), students, interns, or any other person who has entered into a volunteer arrangement or agreement with Interplast.
Observer	Observers are individuals accompanying an Interplast program, delivered by volunteers in a partner country (e.g. individuals representing a donor organisation or students on an observational placement). Observers do not have a clinical role but may assist the clinical team by completing tasks related to program delivery.
Partner	Partner includes organisations that work with Interplast to implement a joint project with mutually agreed outcomes, and/or with whom Interplast has a signed partnership agreement and/or memorandum of understanding. Partner organisations may or may not be recipients of funds through Interplast.
Beneficiary	Beneficiary 1) a patient receiving treatment through an Interplast activity (this may include a consult only, surgery, allied health treatment or other clinical care, and could be provided by an Interplast volunteer, or a local partner clinician during an Interplast activity), or 2) local partner personnel participating in training delivered by Interplast.
Stakeholder	Stakeholders include all personnel, observers, partners, beneficiaries and supporters, community members in the country where we work, funders, international development peers and organisations, or any other individuals or organisations that connect with Interplast.
Gender	Refers to the socially constructed roles, expectations and power assigned to men and women as influenced by local culture, social systems, religion and institutions. Gender dimensions affect how men and women access and develop incentive to participate in development activities. As a social construct, these dimensions are dynamic, change over time and are diverse across cultures and regions.
Gender Equality	Refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as

	women. Equality between women and men is understood as a fundamental human rights issue. ⁵
Gender Equity	Refers to fairness in access to resources and in the distribution of benefits from development by responding to the different needs of women, men, girls and boys. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must be available to compensate for women's historical disadvantages within social, cultural, economic and political spheres that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field (United Nations Population Fund).
LGBTQIA+	Is an acronym for people who identify as a gender or sexual minority of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/agender.
Sex	Refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.
Intersex	Is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit with the typical binary notions of female or male (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner).
Gender-diverse	Also known as genderqueer, is an all-encompassing category for gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine and therefore outside the gender binary.

⁵ UN Women, Concepts and Definitions, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>