



POLICY FRAMEWORK

FOR

GENDER EQUITY /EQUALITY

UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA , SRI LANKA



gender is a social construct

Executive Summary

Sri Lankan universities can be identified as specific sites of gender inequality / inequity in which sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) takes place. In particular, gender issues identified at the University of Kelaniya include ragging & SGBV, the gendered division of labour in academia, gender-based violence (including the murder of women students, ragging and sexual harassment), fewer leadership positions held by women students as well as infrastructure and other facilities that are not gender sensitive. Thus, there is a critical need for the university to account for specific gender-related issues and to integrate legal and policy frameworks that can deal with instances of sexual and gender-based violence.

Since 2016, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka has taken a policy decision to mainstream gender equity and equality into the university system of Sri Lanka and has formally requested all universities to initiate gender-related structures, mechanisms and policies within universities. Accordingly, this policy was finalized by the CGSUK for implementation by the University of Kelaniya.

This policy, which aims to institute gender equity and equality at all levels of the University of Kelaniya, is founded on the core principles of gender sensitivity and responsiveness, gender equity and equality and gender justice

It provides measures to minimize gender inequalities within the university by creating a gender responsive environment. This includes the outline for an institutional mechanism to prevent and address SGBV in the University. The policy also draws attention to women's participation in policy and decision-making within the university echelons. To ensure effective implementation, the policy provides a framework for monitoring and evaluation that details the role of the Vice Chancellor and Administrative Staff as well as the CGSUK and the University Council.

It is anticipated that the actualization of this policy framework would impact positively on the achievement of the University of Kelaniya's goal as a Centre of Academic Excellence.

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Finally, we would also like to thank academics from all Faculties (Science /Commerce & Management / Humanities / Medicine / Computing & Technology and Social Sciences) at the University of Kelaniya for their immense support extended to make this policy document a reality.

List of Acronyms

CGSUK – Centre for Gender Studies of University of Kelaniya

GBV – Gender-Based Violence

GEE – Gender Equity/Equality

SGBV – Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

UGC – University Grants Commission

UNCEDAW – United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

UOK – University of Kelaniya

1.0. Background

The education system of Sri Lanka provides equal access and opportunities for all. Currently there are more women students than men students in universities, a situation that has been prevailing approximately for the past decade. However, universities in Sri Lanka have been grappling with numerous gender inequality issues including ragging and sexual and gender based violence. The reportage of instances of violence at the University of Kelaniya has increased in recent times.

The University of Kelaniya is the forerunner in giving leadership to gender issues within the Sri Lankan University system. Since 2007, the staff of the University have been developing a gender policy for the University which led to the establishment of the Centre for Gender Studies (CGSUK) in 2011.

Since 2016, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka has taken a policy decision to mainstream gender equity and equality in the university system of Sri Lanka and has formally requested all universities to establish gender related structures, mechanisms and policies.

Accordingly, the following policy was finalized by the CGSUK for implementation by the University of Kelaniya.

Policy for Gender Equity and Equality for the University of Kelaniya

1.1. Scope of the Policy

The scope of the policy will include the members of all staff (academic / non-academic / administrative), students (undergraduates, postgraduate students and external students) and other individuals and institutions affiliated to the University of Kelaniya as well as greater society.

1.2. Policy Statement

Based on the UGC policy on gender equity and equality and the vision and the mission of the University of Kelaniya, the policy on gender equity and equality will aim to institute gender equity and equality at all levels for the University in order to become a center of excellence.

1.3. Vision

To become a forerunner in gender equity and equality so as to ensure that the university is a center of excellence in terms of knowledge, attitude and skills where all are treated equitably and equally to achieve their fullest potential and to establish a democratic, gender-just, non-violent, humane learning/working environment and university culture.

1.4. Mission

To put in place university by-laws, structures, mechanisms, processes, and practices that are gender-sensitive and gender-responsive so as to ensure a space which accepts equality / equity and diversity and which is devoid of oppression and discrimination.

1.5. Core Principles

The University of Kelaniya Policy on Gender Equity and Equality is founded on the following core principles.

- Gender Sensitivity and Responsiveness
- Gender Equity and Equality
- Gender Justice

The Policy on Gender Equity and Equality will be based on the following standards:

- The Constitution of Sri Lanka
- The Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework of the University Grants Commission
- The guiding documents of the UGC Standing Committee on Gender Equity and Equality
- The Constitution of the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Kelaniya (CGSUK)
- The Women's Charter of Sri Lanka (1993)
- International frameworks including the UN Sustainable Development Goals, UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (UNCEDAW) and the UN Declaration on Violence against Women

Legally, SGBV is addressed under the Penal Code 345 of 1995 (sexual harassment), 363 (rape), 364A (incest) and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 2005. The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act recognizes the phenomenon of violence within the family / domestic sphere.

The Prohibition of Ragging and Other Forms of Violence in Educational Institutions Act No. 20 of 1998, Section 2 (2) is of specific import to universities as it has been drafted to prevent and punish sexual harassment that can occur during the course of ragging.

The strategy document on Preventing Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Universities of the University Grants Commission / Federation of University Teachers' Associations also provides detailed ways and means of addressing issue of SGBV within universities.

1.6 Definitions

The term 'sex' has been used to categorise a person as a man or woman based on biology and physical appearances. In contrast, the term 'gender' refers to the socially and culturally constructed differences between men and women. Yet, today, biomedical and technological interventions have resulted in alterations to the sex of a person - leading to in vitro fertilisation, sex reassignment surgeries, et cetera.

While the historical understanding of sex / gender has been as binary oppositions (man and woman or male and female), in recent times there has been the legal recognition of three sexes

/ genders in some countries. They consist of the male, female and 'X' - the non-binary. 'X' serves to indicate either intersex populations or transgender populations.

Gender equality refers to the equality in the rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all genders. While equality is based on the understanding of similarity people, it does not mean that women or men or trans or intersex people are the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities should not depend on their biological sex. Gender equality is not a women's issue; it should concern and fully engage all sexes. Equality amongst sexes is seen as both a human right and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable, people-centred development.

Gender equity refers to fairness of treatment of all sexes depending on their specific needs. The specific needs of men and women as well as intersex and trans populations are based on sex and gender differences. Consequently, certain rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities need to be founded on the individual's sex and gender (such as maternity, gender specific washrooms, et cetera). In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of marginalized men and women and X groups. Gender equity denotes an element of social justice - usually based on religion and culture.

However, the concept of equity can also be used to the detriment to women. Consequently, it is important to incorporate the aspirations of gender equity and equality simultaneously so as to account for both the similarities and differences especially between men and women - leading to gender justice.

2.0. The Objectives

The Objectives of the Policy on Gender Equity and Equality are:

- To create awareness about the rights and responsibilities relating to gender equity and equality within and outside the University
- To mainstream gender into University policies, mechanisms, planning, practices, teaching/learning, researching, innovation, training, capacity-building, and development projects and activities
- To address gender and SGBV issues within the University context
- To promote a violence-free, gender-just working and learning environment

- To empower vulnerable individual/groups to achieve their full potential at the University
- To normalize a gender equal and equitable perspectives, attitudes and worldview

3.0. Policy and Mechanisms

3.1.1 Objective: To mainstream the policy on gender equity and equality to all other university policies as well as mechanisms, planning, practices, teaching/learning, researching, innovation, training, capacity-building, and development projects and activities

To achieve the above objective, UOK shall

- review the workings of the University from a gender perspective to eliminate gender inequality and inequity
- formulate guidelines and strategies on how to translate the gender policy into institutional action and practice
- implement guidelines on gender equality in enrolling, recruiting, promoting, providing scholarships for higher studies and similar situations
- establish an effective and transparent implementation process including faculty focal points on gender equity and equality under the leadership of the deans.

3.1.2 Objective: To create/strengthen mechanisms to protect members of the university community from SGBV

To achieve the above objective, UOK shall

- establish a permanent institutional mechanism constituting student counsellors, academic wardens and sub-wardens, Marshals, University Security, the Kalana Mithuru Counselling Centre, the Students' Union / student subject associations / societies as well as the Task Force Against Ragging and SGBV will be established with a far-reaching power to prevent and address instances of SGBV.

3.1. Training and Capacity Building

3.2.1. Objective: To create awareness and enhance sensitivity of the university community given that they are mandated with the implementation of the policy

To achieve the above objective, UOK shall

- institute awareness and training programs as well as campaigns on the significance of gender equity and equality among students and staff
- integrate into and enhance gender equity and equality in staff development programs
- introduce capacity building on curricular reform, researching and innovation from gender perspectives

3.2 Knowledge Production and Dissemination

3.2.1. Teaching and Curricular

Objective: To mainstream gender into formal curricular and co-curricular programs at all levels

To achieve the objective, UOK shall

- create a discourse between students and academic staff regarding the importance of mainstreaming gender into formal curricular and co-curricular programs
- review the existing curricular and include gender responsive programs/courses/units
- create an evaluation criterion to ensure the continuity and outcome of the revised curricular and gender responsive programs

3.2.2. Research and Innovation

Objective: To mainstream gender equity and equality concerns into research and innovation projects

To achieve the objective, UOK shall

- promote research relating to gender issues in all disciplines by creating consciousness about the negative effects of gender blind and gender biased research
- incorporate a sex/gender analysis in all research and innovation
- support gender-related innovation in science-based faculties

4.0. Gender Responsive Environment

4.4.1 Objective: To create a gender responsive environment to minimise gender inequalities within the university.

To achieve this objective, the UOK shall

- develop and enforce policy guidelines on the use of gender inclusive and sensitive language within the university
- put in place gender sensitive infrastructure and amenities for men and women
- take practical measures to challenge the various university cultures (staff / student /faculty et cetera) that may have normalised gender prejudice and discrimination

5.0. Women's Representation and Participation

5.1. Objective: To ensure gender equality in representation and participation in decision-making bodies at all levels of the university.

throughout recruitment, promotion and retention in order to minimize the existing gender imbalance within the university system, structures and all the other activities in the university.

- Design selection criteria and frameworks that ensure equal opportunities for both men and women in representing the university
- Put in place programs to encourage women into decision-making, management and administrative positions
- Maintain a database which provides the qualifications, specialities and experiences of women academic as well as non-academic women in the University of Kelaniya.
- Design and implement programmes on gender sensitivity, capacity building, communication and leadership for young female staff in all disciplines

6.0. Implementation of the Policy

6.1. Vice Chancellor and Administrative Staff

The Vice Chancellor is responsible for the implementation of the gender policy at university, faculty and department levels. The CGSUK will support the Vice Chancellor in providing expertise, resources, guidelines and strategies on gender equity and equality to facilitate its

implementation. Senior administrative officers (Deans, Heads of Department and Units), Directors of institutions, and higher ranking non-academic officials) will take the necessary steps to translate the policy into action. For this purpose, there will be focal points established in each faculty under the leadership of the Dean. These focal points will translate the policy into action (with the assistance of the CGSUK, if necessary) and report back to the Vice Chancellor.

6.2. Centre for Gender Studies of University of Kelaniya

Policy guidance, expertise and support will be provided by the CGSUK Advisory Board to focal points of each faculties in the UOK.

6.3. Council

The Council is responsible for promoting gender equity and equality policy. The Council will actively monitor the progress annually on the implementation of the policy. To enable its members to ensure that the policy is being operationalized and promoting gender equality to eliminate discrimination.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Overview

Monitoring and Evaluation shall be an essential strategy in the implementation of Gender Equity and Equality Policy. The Monitoring and Evaluation mechanism shall involve:

- Quarterly updates to be sent to be submit for the Advisory board, Vice Chancellor and Steering committee by the CGSUK
- Monitoring every three months by the university under corporate plan
- Annual progress review report submits for the Advisory board, Vice Chancellor and Steering committee by the CGSUK
- Monthly meeting UGC standing Committee on Gender equity and equality

Gender Glossary

Gender equality. Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue; it should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen as both a human rights issue and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable, people-centred development.

Gender equity. Fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of 13 women. Gender equity denotes an element of interpretation of social justice, usually based on tradition, custom, religion or culture, which is most often to the detriment to women. Such use of equity in relation to the advancement of women is unacceptable.

Gender inequality. The ways in which males and females are treated differently in relation to opportunities and responsibilities in society.

Gender based violence. An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions. Examples include sexual violence, including sexual exploitation/abuse and forced prostitution, domestic violence, trafficking, forced/early marriage, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, honour killings and widow inheritance.

Gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is defined as: "Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Gender justice. Gender justice is a human right; every woman, girl and LGBT is entitled to live in dignity and in freedom, without any fear. Gender justice is indispensable for development, poverty reduction, and is crucial to achieving human progress. Realizing it includes sharing of power and responsibility between women and men at home, in the workplace, and in the wider national and international communities.

Gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is the chosen approach of the United Nations system and international community towards realizing progress on women's and girl's rights, as a subset of the human rights to which the United Nations is dedicated. It is not a goal or objective on its own; it is a strategy for implementing greater equality for women and girls in relation to men and boys. Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality

Gender- inclusive language. gender-inclusive language means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes

Decision-making and participation. Women's participation in public life, specifically in the realm of public decision-making, is a key measure of the empowerment of women and a strategy for bringing about gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action has two related strategic objectives: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making and increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership .

Gender responsiveness. Gender-responsive means creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of women's lives and addresses the issues of the participants.

Gender sensitivity. Encompasses the ability to acknowledge and highlight existing gender differences, issues and inequalities and incorporate these into strategies and actions.

Sexual and gender based violence. Sexual and gender-based violence refers to acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life based on one's gender and/or sexuality. It includes sexual harassment, domestic violence (DM) and intimate partner violence (IPV) amongst other practices.

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