Policy Statement on Gender

This Policy Statement on Gender outlines the Australian Red Cross position in relation to gender. Australian Red Cross is committed to gender equality to ensure that our programs and services benefit women and men, girls and boys equally and that women and men, girls and boys have the same opportunity to participate and contribute at all levels of our organisation as staff, volunteers and members including in governance structures.

Australian Red Cross is a humanitarian organisation guided by the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (the International Movement). Red Cross is committed to improving the lives of vulnerable people in Australia and internationally by mobilising the power of humanity. The International Movement is the largest humanitarian network in the world with over 100 million members and volunteers operating in over 186 countries.

Gender refers to the social attributes and differences associated with being female, male or transgendered and does not replace the term ‘sex’ which refers exclusively to biological differences. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men. Australian Red Cross acknowledges and accepts the inherently different experiences of women and men. Recognising this diversity and inequality, Australian Red Cross believes women and men should have equal access to enjoyment of their rights, opportunities and life choices, and that these opportunities should not be limited by whether they are female or male. Australian Red Cross does not make the assumption that gender is fixed and acknowledges that some people express or experience gender in different ways and that gender may change altogether.
With reference to the Fundamental Principle of Humanity, Australian Red Cross endeavours to prevent and alleviate human suffering guided solely by need and giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress. In line with the Australian Red Cross Policy on Diversity (2010), the organisation does not discriminate as to nationality, race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, social background, disability, family status, marital status, age or political opinions.

Australian Red Cross makes the following undertakings in respect of gender:

**To Achieve Gender Equality for all Red Cross People through Gender Mainstreaming**
Australian Red Cross will ensure that all Red Cross people (staff, volunteers and members) have equal rights and equal access to resources and opportunities to participate regardless of their gender. Australian Red Cross commits to gender equality through gender mainstreaming by ensuring that considerations of gender are integrated into every aspect of the organisation. This includes a commitment to ensuring adequate resources to enable implementation of gender analysis and integration of findings.

**To Ensure Access and Equity for Red Cross Beneficiaries**
Australian Red Cross is committed to access and equity for all clients and beneficiaries whether female, male or transgendered by ensuring that gender issues and needs are addressed in all aspects of our operations including needs analysis, program and service planning and design, service development and delivery, management, partnership agreements, program monitoring and evaluation. Australian Red Cross recognises the importance of addressing gender through the participation of both women and men in this process. Depending on the context (social, economic, political, religious, cultural), specific programs may be required that target the inequities experienced by females or males.

**To Promote Gender Equality and Combat Gender-Based Violence**
Australian Red Cross will undertake programs, activities and services intended to promote gender equality, combat gender-based violence and harmful acts perpetuated against individuals or groups as a result of ascribed gender differences.

**To Recognise and Acknowledge the Gender Dimension**
Australian Red Cross recognises that the nature of gender relations varies from one society to another and from one cultural group to another. Gender functions as an organising principle for society (as does race, ethnicity, and religion among many others) as a result of the cultural, social, economic and political meanings and roles assigned to being female, male or transgendered. Australian Red Cross works in a range of cultural, social and religious contexts and acknowledges these ascribed differences in gender roles.

Examples of the need to acknowledge the gender dimension in our programs are: disaster preparation and response and recovery (different impacts on men and women) and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities (recognising men’s business and women’s business).

**To Focus on Empowering Women**
Australian Red Cross recognises that a range of factors cause inequalities between women and men and that these inequalities can result in women and girls having less access to resources, assistance and opportunities within society. Australian Red Cross seeks to empower women and girls by addressing the issues and structures that result in women being disadvantaged and disempowered.

All Red Cross people commit to achieving gender equality within our organisation through gender mainstreaming.

Approved by the Board of Australian Red Cross (October 2010)