Gender equality policy for the Atlas Alliance

Background and rationale

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2007) emphasises gender equality and women's rights as a central concern. It confirms the situation that research and practitioners have drawn attention to; that multiple discrimination face disabled women and girls, as well as men and boys. Also that girls, men, boys and women have differentiated experiences of disability based on their gender and the place and status they have in their societies.

In addition, all research show that disabled women and girls are often amongst the most marginalized and excluded in a society. They experience high rates of illiteracy, sexual and physical violence and exclusion from accessing services such as schooling, work training and reproductive health care.

The Atlas Alliance recognizes this situation and the discrimination that especially women and girls with disabilities or tuberculosis experience, both within and outside their home due to social stigma, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation.

In 2008 the Atlas Alliance underwent a gender review[1] which pointed to the need for a more holistic and systematic approach to integration of the gender perspective in the development work of the alliance. This policy is a response to this as well as an acknowledgement of the gendered challenges for disabled people in the societies in which the alliance work.

Gender equality
The term gender means the culturally specific set of characteristics that identifies the social behaviour of women and men. It implies concern for men and women, their social roles, and the relationships between them. Gender is not the same as sex, which refers to the biological differences between women and men. The understanding and enactment of what it means to be female and male is historically specific and changes over time. War and prolonged conflicts, technological advances and government policies have had major influences on gender relations and the understanding of gender in different societies.

Gender equality may be viewed as a social order in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities to fully participate in all areas of life. Gender equality does not imply that women and men are the same, but that they have equal value.

The United Nations regards gender equality as a human right and highlights the importance of empowering women as an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty[2], as well as a goal in itself.

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[1] " Setting our house in order", Nord/Sør Konsulentene, 2008
[2] UNFPA, Gender Equality: A cornerstone of development

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to promote the systematic incorporation of a gender perspective in all the interventions supported by the Atlas Alliance with the goal to contribute to reaching the objectives set in the existing 10 year plan for the Atlas Alliance (2007-2017)

This is based on the recognition that in order to achieve gender equality it is necessary to focus efforts on empowering women to claim their rights, on gender relations between men and women as well as addressing transforming discriminatory institutional structures and legislation. This policy will serve as the common platform for such efforts for the Atlas Alliance's initiatives.

Guiding principles

The Atlas Alliance[3] will adhere to the principles enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention of Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and The Patients' Charter for Tuberculosis Care as well as the 10 year strategy for the Atlas Alliance 2007-2017[4].

1. The Atlas Alliance will do its utmost to ensure that no woman, man, boy or girl, is subject to discrimination in the interventions supported by the Atlas Alliance, and will promote their rights in all supported interventions.

2. The Atlas Alliance will ensure that women's rights are seen as human rights in all their interventions.

3. The Atlas Alliance is committed to understanding the different contexts in which it works and the gendered impacts of global, national and local policies and decisions which affect disabled women and men, boys and girls differently.

4. The Atlas Alliance will work with staff and partners to ensure that all, but especially women and girls, participate freely and on equal terms in organisations representing them, in patient and parents groups.

5. The Atlas Alliance will work with staff and partners to ensure that woman, girls, boys and men all have equal access to health services, education and training.

6. The Atlas Alliance will include gender equality and women's participation in the project management cycle; i.e. assess gender equality, areas of possible discrimination and participation in baseline studies and data collection.

7. The Atlas Alliance will work with, and provide technical advice to partners, in addressing gender gaps in programme/project planning, monitoring gender

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[3] The Atlas Alliance: the Board of Directors, The Secretariat, all member organizations.
[4] 10-års strategi for Atlas Alliansen 2007-2017: Likeverd over Landegrensene

equity and equality, and reporting on gender indicators and results in annual and final reports. Gender equality should be addressed in all programme/project reviews and evaluation.

8. The ultimate responsibility for this policy lies within the leadership of each member organisation of the Atlas Alliance.

Appendices:

1. Suggestions as to how to turn policy into strategy and action

Below are possible steps to turn the guiding principles in this policy into strategy and action plans.

a) *Develop a time-bound action plan with indicators and targets*: this might sound as a big undertaking, but it need not be. You can create a 3-5 point action plan which starts from where your organization is and tackles some of the key issues over the next few years. The most important thing is to make priorities as one cannot do everything at once. You can also review existing plans and see how you can integrate gender concern into it. Start small and then things have a tendency to evolve. There are many places where you can get inspiration for indicators and targets online. In appendix 3 there are some suggestions for resources.

b) *Create a baseline*: this does not mean to undertake a huge assessment of all your projects etc, but to create an overview of where you are today on the guiding principles. What kind of data you chose to collect will depend on what you plan to do in the different countries and projects. This is important so that when you look back further down the road you can see if changes have taken place and if they are in line with what you have planned for.

c) *Dedicate a budget (or a budget line)*: things do not happen unless they are planned for and if they are planned there is often funds attached. So if the guiding principles are to become a reality in your projects you will need to dedicate some funds. This could be gender specific activities or adding components to other activities. It might mean you have to do some reallocations from other areas if new funding is not available.

d) *Dedicate human resources:* by this it is meant that all work takes time and tasks require hours and minutes of someone's attention. So time need to be set aside for someone to deal with gender issues. For some organization this can mean to hire someone, in others that their priorities are organized so that they can dedicate time. It might also mean that capacity development must be done of staff in order to take on these tasks. Naming someone who already has too many other responsibilities as a 'focal point' might just be a token, if that person has no real chance to work on the issues.

e) *Build capacity and competency over time*: it is important to ensure that knowledge and understanding of the issues enshrined in the guiding principles are built over time in a planned way and not only in ad hoc workshops. This can be done by also thinking through a capacity development plan where different means are used to develop the understanding and hence level of comfort with the themes. The organizations within the Atlas Alliance can be good support for each other and exchange knowledge and competencies amongst each other. Maybe a partner is a partner country can be a real resource for the Norwegian based organizations?

f) *Be systematic and persistent*: don't give up, but try to stick to your plans and efforts. By incorporating the guiding principles in your communication with partners, other organizations and the way you think about your work you can build a consistent approach to the principles.

g) *Have clear responsibilities*: find out who has the responsibility in your organization to work with and implement the guiding principles in the policy. There might be people on different levels that have the responsibility to do different things to make them a reality. And this might differ for the different organizations in the alliance.

h) *Know when to ask for help*: when you are stuck, do you know where to ask for help? Ally yourself with a resource person or organization that you can ask questions and learn from.

2. International and national frameworks

UN Human Rights Declaration (http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml*)*
The foundation for all development work of the Atlas-alliance is to promote basic human rights for both women and men as formulated in the Human Rights Declaration stating that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

CEDAW (*http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/)*
The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979. It is often described as the international bill of rights for women as it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and identifies an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

Beijing Platform for Action(http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/fwcwn.html
 As a result of the 4th UN World Conference on Women which was held to assess the situation of women in the world, a platform with 12 key areas for action was agreed upon by member states. It looks at actions governments and other actors are to take in these 12 key areas to address gender inequalities and improve women's rights. It is seen as a common reference framework and standard along the same lines as CEDAW.

UNCRPD (*http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150*)
The UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has taken a two track approach to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women with disabilities. It has as one of its principles equality between men and women, and it devotes an article to women with disabilities.

Millennium Development Goals (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)
The importance of gender equality is also highlighted by its inclusion as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals that serve as a framework for halving poverty and improving lives.

The Patients' Charter for Tuberculosis Care *(2006)*
(http://www.who.int/tb/publications/2006/istc_charter.pdf)
The Charter outlines the rights and responsibilities of people with tuberculosis. It empowers people with the disease and their communities. Initiated and developed by patients from around the world it is also concerned with equal access to medical care for men and women.

Norwegian Government White Paper on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in International Development *(2008)*
In 2008, The Norwegian Government presented a white paper to the Parliament on Women's Rights and Gender Equality*: On Equal Terms: Women's rights and gender equality in international development.* The white paper emphasizes the importance of women's full participation in political and economic process and in education.

3: Useful links to resources

Below are a number of links to different resources that might be of interest and help in taking the work forward in your respective organizations.

Handlingsplan for kvinners rettigheter og likestilling i utviklingssamarbeidet (2007–2009) Videreføres 2010–2013, s 63:
http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Utvikling/Kvinner%20og%20likestilling/Handlingsplan_kvinnerNo_0510.pdf

NORAD commitments to women's rights and gender equality
(http://www.norad.no/Satsingsomr%C3%A5der/Menneskerettigheter/Kvinner+og+likestilling)

Eldis (http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/gender) This page has lots of information on gender and development. Take your time to look through the menu on the left hand side. It is a knowledge data base for numerous topics within development and very up to date.

Siyanda (http://www.siyanda.org/) Run by the BRIDGE team at the Institute of Development Studies in the UK, Siyanda aims to support development practitioners by providing an ever-growing resource of gender-mainstreaming materials.

BRIDGE (http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/.) BRIDGE provides a fast route to gender information. It is a specialized gender and development research and information service based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the United Kingdom.

UNWOMEN(http://www.unwomen.org/) UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

WORLDBANK
(http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALPROTECTION/

EXTDISABILITY/0,,contentMDK:20193528~menuPK:418895~pagePK:148956~piPK: 216618~theSitePK:282699,00.html) The World Bank has incredible amounts of information. Here is a link to where they look at gender and disability.

http://capacitydevelopment.net/documents/Basicknowledge.pdf

To avoid a long list of links on tools to do gender analysis and include a gender perspective in projects etc, a suggestion is to use the following search phrases and look for tools that could suit your organizations and partners. Remember that all tools can be adapted to the local context:

- Gender analysis tools

- Gender mainstreaming tools

- Gender and development