

Revising and strengthening the gender policy of the Tea Association of Malawi (TAML)

Good practices



Responds to the following criteria

- ▶ Inclusive
- ▶ Replicable
- ▶ Sustainable



Main stakeholders

- ▶ Tea Estates
- ▶ Small holders
- ▶ women and men
- ▶ Local government
- ▶ Sector association

► Description

Gender equality and the fight against child labour go hand in hand. With limited childcare facilities and schooling opportunities, women often take their children with them to work, where they may be exposed to various types of hazards. Women and girls are often found working in the worst forms of child labour, and their wages are more often lower than those of men's ([ILO, 2003](#); [ILO, 2007](#)). It is therefore essential to undertake initiatives to ensure that women have safe and gender-responsive spaces in the workplace, and that they have equal opportunities for decent employment as men.

To this end, the Tea Association of Malawi (TAML) adopted its first Gender Equality, Harassment and Discrimination Policy in 2017. The policy aimed to uphold gender equality and create safe and effective mechanisms for the timely and fair resolution of all complaints regarding harassment and discrimination. The policy was developed in line with relevant regulations from the Government of Malawi, such as the Constitution, the Gender Equality Bill of 2012, Gender Equality Act of 2013, the Labor Relations Act No. 16 of 1996, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, among many others. During the policy's enforcement, it was applicable to all

member estates, and their management officials and employees, as well as any visiting personnel.

To operationalise the objectives of the policy, TAML is considering the implementation of the Gender Equality Program, which aims to create respectful and equitable working environments free from discrimination and harassment. The programme outcomes are organised into three thematic areas that reflect the objectives of the policy: (1) working environments that are free from sexual harassment; (2) workplaces that are inclusive and free from discrimination; and (3) increased economic empowerment of female employees. The achievement of these outcomes requires activities such as training and capacity building of personnel from TAML and the estates, awareness raising and information campaigns, and the management of cases that concern violations against gender equality. To ensure that these activities are being implemented effectively, TAML is considering accompanying the programme with a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan that outlines outputs, corresponding indicators, and guidance on which sources to use for data collection (e.g., monthly/quarterly progress reports from member estates, documents from case management activities).

► Description (Cont.)

In 2022, as the enforcement timeline of the 2017 gender policy came to an end, TAML launched an effort to assess its effectiveness and improve its provisions. A gender expert was hired to undertake the review, identify gaps in the policy, and provide supplementary provisions that address those gaps. As of the first quarter of 2024, TAML has successfully approved the revised version of the policy and is in the process of validating it with the tea estates and other relevant stakeholders.

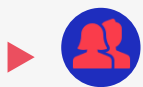
► Process

Consultation meetings with stakeholders



Inception meeting

A gender expert was hired, followed by an inception meeting shortly after, where she met with TAML to explain her approach to the work (i.e., data collection tools) and align it with the association's vision for the revised policy. Representatives from the ILO and government stakeholders, through the Ministry of Labour, attended the inception meeting to provide input. They highlighted key considerations for the policy, such as current gender issues, including the involvement of men in promoting equality and addressing both paid and unpaid work.



Organisation of meetings

TAML assisted the gender expert in setting up the meetings with officials from the association, as well as with personnel from seven TAML member estates. They assisted with contacting relevant stakeholders to set up dates to meet, as well as with booking venues for the meetings.



Meeting with the TAML Board Chair

The gender expert interviewed high-level officials from TAML to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of the previous policy, as well as to capture their vision for the revised version.



► Process



Consultations with TAML member tea estates

The gender expert then met with the leadership of six out of nine TAML member tea estates to assess their implementation on the ground of the previous gender policy. The six estates that participated in the consultations were chosen to represent different levels at which gender equality was being achieved, namely those who excel at promoting gender equality, those at an intermediate level, and those facing challenges. The gender expert used key informant interviews with the estates' gender focal persons, managers, and compliance officers, as well as focus group discussions with the estates' workers, gender committee members, women's welfare committee members, and Plantation and Agriculture Workers Union (PAWU) members, as well as National Smallholder Tea Growers Association (NSTGA) executive members and gender committee members. The gender expert asked them about how the policy was being implemented in practice, what challenges they faced, whether case management systems were working, and what opportunities could be taken to address these gaps.



Consultation with external stakeholders

To form a holistic assessment of the policy, the gender expert went beyond TAML membership and also interviewed relevant stakeholders from outside the association, such as the chiefs of tea-growing areas, as well as district gender officers, and labour officers. The gender expert asked them about how they were working together to receive and work on cases of discrimination or harassment.



► Process

Development of the issue paper



Identification of gaps

Based on the data collected from the TAML members, the employees from the estates, and other relevant stakeholders, as well as additional literature review, the gender expert looked at their day-to-day operations through a gender lens and identified a list of gaps in the previous gender policy. These gaps include, among others, the lack of gender quotas and affirmative actions in the policy, which contributed to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions.



Development of the issue paper

To summarise these gaps in the gender policy and put forward recommendations on how to address them, the gender expert drafted an issue paper. The document was 18 pages long and contained gaps in the gender policy, the gender expert's recommendations to address them, and emerging issues from the research.



Industry meeting

Once the issue paper was drafted, an industry meeting was held to deliberate on its content. The meeting included TAML board members, gender focal persons from the estates, and the Industrial Relations Committee, which acts as a bridge between TAML board members and key industry players and provide direction and inputs on gender, child labour and all industry-related interventions. With a few amendments, they agreed with the consultant's assessment and her recommendations, and authorised her to use the issue paper to develop a revised version of the TAML gender policy.



► Process

Revision of the policy



Drafting of the revised policy

The gender expert went back to the gender policy from 2017 and made changes in the document to reflect the new insights collected. Some of the changes included in the revised policy are:

- The establishment of new bathroom facilities that are conducive to the needs of both sexes and are closer to the work stations of women;
- The provision of child-friendly facilities that would accommodate their children safely and allow women to carry out their work comfortably; and
- The establishment of gender quotas when recruiting employees into the estates or promoting across positions, requiring that each sex must constitute between 40% and 60% of the employee pool.



Feedback from stakeholders

Once the policy was revised, the TAML Board, Industrial Relations Committee and gender focal persons from the estates held in-person and virtual meetings to discuss the revisions and provide their comments on the first draft. The gender expert then incorporated these comments into a reworked draft, which the stakeholders reviewed and commented on once again.



Validation workshop

After three rounds of stakeholder comments, the third version of the draft was ready for a validation workshop with external stakeholders. For the validation step, TAML Board members were joined by authorities from the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, as well as social partners, gender focal persons from the tea industry, human resources managers, and the Industrial Relations Committee.



Launch of the revised policy

After the validation workshop, the gender expert made final changes to the revised policy, which the TAML Board and the Industrial Relations Committee will once again review and provide their approval on. Once finalised, TAML aims to launch the new policy on 25 May during the commemoration of Tea Day.



► Enabling Factors

► Logistical support from TAML

TAML worked closely and consistently with the gender expert to schedule consultations with stakeholders, as well as to organise the in-person events required to revise the policy (e.g., industry meetings on the issue paper, validation workshops). Support from TAML allowed for the smooth coordination of consultations, which helped ensure that the process of revising the policy was inclusive and reflective of the needs of the estate employees, especially those who were women, working on the ground.

► Inclusion of women in the consultations

Women were actively involved in the stakeholder consultations, ensuring that their perspectives were adequately reflected in the gender policy. When setting up the meetings, the gender expert deliberately asked for a balanced representation among the interviewees from each of the estates. In some cases, she met with women separately from men in order to build more trust and comfort during the data collection process.

► Previous knowledge of TAML's gender equality initiatives

The gender expert also worked with TAML in the past to promote gender equality in the association, such as through the development of the Facilitator's and Learner's Training Manual on the Prevention of Workplace Violence and Harassment. Her previous working experience helped her understand the context in which TAML was operating and better understand the gender nuances in the association that could inform the revision of the gender policy.

► Capacity building for the implementation of the new policy

To ensure that the new policy is understood and implemented effectively by all relevant stakeholders, especially at the estate level, TAML and the ILO will conduct capacity-building workshops and run awareness-raising campaigns. Such workshops and campaigns will cover the most pressing gender issues in the estates to ensure that the policy is tailored and responsive to their specific needs.

