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RATIONALE:

“The Burnet Institute’s Centre for International Health (CIH) is committed to improving the health of communities in developing countries. In doing so, we are also committed to the values of social justice and equity and recognise the important influence of these values on achieving health for all members of the community.

In many parts of the world, gender inequalities and systematic discrimination make women disproportionately vulnerable to poverty, violence, HIV infection and ill health. Women often have little control of their fertility, sexual and marital choices. In comparison to men, women commonly lack legal recognition and protection, have less control over income and assets, less access to public knowledge and information, less decision making power within and outside their homes and reduced opportunities to participate in development.”

We acknowledge that women and men are different and play different roles in all societies – but we believe that they should have equal status. We recognise that gender interacts with other characteristics such as socio-economic status, age and ethnic origin. We recognise that gender roles and relations are undergoing rapid change, due to factors such as economic growth, globalisation, migration, and urbanisation.

We are mindful that these changes can lead to frustration and resentment on the part of men, especially young men. One manifestation of such change is that in many countries women now have higher tertiary enrolment rates than men¹. In the same way that we promote equity for women, we also promote equity for men when appropriate.

Over the past few decades the United Nations has facilitated important processes to address the gender inequalities that exist between men and women. These have included the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, The Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action in 1995, and the Millennium Development Goals of 2000. These strategy documents represent the growing consensus to which CIH closely aligns - that the advancement of women’s human rights and fundamental freedoms is necessary if we are to realise gender equality, reduce poverty and achieve effective and sustainable development.

Specific strategies are needed to empower women and to promote their participation to enhance the effectiveness of development initiatives; at the same time, these strategies also require the active participation of men.

¹ UNESCO. Gender and Education for All. The Leap to Equality. EFA Global Monitoring Report. Paris, 2004

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Understanding the power relations between men and women and the relationship of gender to broader social, economic, political and cultural issues is an important step toward achieving gender equality.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a practical guide to Burnet staff to ensure that our work is informed by rigorous analysis of the likely impact on men, on women, and on the relationships between them, and includes specific strategies to ensure that equal opportunities exist for women and men as participants and beneficiaries. Gender analysis also seeks to identify ways in which health and development activities might both assist men and women in their gender roles, and foster gender equality.

We seek to ensure that all Burnet staff have an understanding of gender issues and that the principles outlined in this policy are followed within the organisation, in our relationships with partner organisations, and in our relationships with the communities in which we work.

DEFINITIONS:

‘Sex’ is a classification, generally male or female, according to the reproductive organs and functions – it relates to the biological and physiological differences between women and men.

‘Gender’ refers to the economic, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female.¹ The social definitions of what it means to be female or male vary among cultures and change over time.²

‘Equity’ means ‘fairness’ or ‘justice’; ‘equality’ means ‘sameness’ or ‘equivalence’.

The Burnet Institute defines ‘gender equality’ as:

- men and women having the same entitlements to all aspects of human development including economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights
- men and women enjoying the same status and level of respect
- ensuring that men’s and women’s perceptions, interests, needs and priorities are given equal weight in planning and decision making.

To take into account female disadvantage, strategies that are equitable rather than equal are often needed to achieve gender equality. For example, to achieve gender equality of educational opportunity, a gender equity strategy may be needed that provides greater support and encouragement to families with girls than boys to enable girls to attend school.

² DAC Guidelines for gender equality and women’s empowerment in development cooperation (Paris: OECD, 1998)

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THE BURNET INSTITUTE'S POLICY AND PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- To promote equal participation of women and men in decision making and leadership in consultations at all levels.**

Encourage and support the participation and representation of poor women and men in decision making positions and assist in the training of women for leadership in community activities.

- To provide gender appropriate primary health care and reproductive health services to improve availability and access for both women and men.**

Support initiatives that consider the varying needs of women and men in relation to health care services and their delivery. Specifically, support initiatives that empower men and women to participate in the planning of appropriate services that best address their needs and preferences; initiatives that support improving women's access to acceptable and appropriate reproductive health care and maternal/child health services; and initiatives that support men to access acceptable and appropriate sexual and reproductive health services and become active participants in addressing women's and children's health.

- To promote the human rights of women and men and assist efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women**

Address inequalities that stand in the way of achieving these rights. That is, support legal reforms for the advancement of women; provide training to men and women to address laws, customs and practices that discriminate against women; support community initiatives that address violence against women, including initiatives that target men as part of the solution to ending violence; and, support appropriate interventions for men and women in crisis situations that address their basic rights and needs

- To promote men's understanding of and commitment to changing those aspects of their lives and behaviours that hinder gender equality**

Ensure that men understand the need for processes that facilitate gender equality.

Encourage men to fulfil their potential for personal development in circumstances where they perceive that they may be disadvantaged

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-  **To ensure that health promotion strategies do not assume or encourage greater roles for women than men in either preventing transmissible diseases or caring for others.**

Avoid working with female sex workers but not their clients; facilitate discussion of gender roles when supporting community care processes that do not involve men; try to encourage community dialogue about how women and men can talk together about sexuality, faithfulness, condom use and reproductive health. In countries where HIV and other STIs are commonly characterised as “heterosexually” transmitted we recognise that many males are reluctant to acknowledge that they engage in sex with other males. We do not characterize risk among women and men based on their sexual orientation but rather on their sexual behaviours.

ENSURING THE BURNET INSTITUTE’S COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY:

We will seek to understand the roles, responsibilities, experiences and concerns of women, men, girls and boys in the communities in which we work. This means that staff will seek opportunities to involve women and men actively in consultation and decision making. We will examine the broader social, economic, political, environmental and cultural factors that influence the role, assets, power and decision making capabilities of women and men, and the relationships between them, at all levels in society. This gender analysis will help shape the way that we plan, implement and evaluate our work.

We will work with women and men, girls and boys, together and separately to support longer term changes to the attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate gender inequalities.

Awareness of the goal of gender equality will influence the setting of targets, and monitoring and evaluation. Quantitative indicators will be disaggregated by sex, and women’s and men’s views will be sought for qualitative indicators. Care will be taken to analyse the differential impact of programs on women and men, girls and boys so that any negative outcomes can be addressed.

The priorities, needs and interests of all members of a society will be considered at all levels and at all stages of Burnet’s development activities. Initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality will be the responsibility of all Burnet program staff.

The following times provide critical opportunities for the further integration of gender strategies into our work:

-  In the identification and selection of new partnerships

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- During partner development processes so that partners are aware of Burnet's gender policy
- In the planning and development of program and project priorities
- During the ongoing management of programs to ensure that gender is considered throughout the project cycle.
- During the documentation and sharing of lessons learned through implementation
- During recruitment of new staff, engagement of consultants, development of position descriptions and terms of reference

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