RABAI EMPOWERMENT FOR COMMUNITY

(RefCom)

Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion

(GEDSI) Policy

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS THE GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY AND INCLUSION PROVISIONS THAT SHALL BE OF INSTITUTIONAL GUIDANCE ON GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION AT RABAI EMPOWERMENT FOR COMMUNITY (REFCOM)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD FROM CHAIRPERSON, GOVERNANCE ADVISORY BOARD

Rabai Empowerment for Community (RefCom) has developed this Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion Policy to provide clear guidance for the Governance Board, employees, affiliates, beneficiaries, and partners. This policy ensures that gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion are central to all of RefCom's activities. The Board has made a deliberate commitment to place gender equality and disability inclusion at the core of RefCom's operations, recognizing that the organization cannot effectively fulfill its mandate without promoting equal rights and opportunities for its employees, Governance Board, and beneficiaries.

The RefCom Governance Board acknowledges the importance of aligning the organization's operational model with both global best practices and the Constitution of Kenya, which promotes gender equality and non-discrimination. Article 10 of the Constitution outlines National Values and Principles of Governance, while Article 27 guarantees the right to equal protection and benefit of the law for all, ensuring that men and women are treated equally in political, social, economic, and cultural spheres.

Through this policy, the RefCom Governance Board reaffirms its commitment to building partnerships with like-minded organizations to advance gender mainstreaming and address discrimination and human rights violations. This includes combating Gender-Based Violence, promoting disability rights, and eliminating any form of exclusion.

The Board further commits to establishing internal mechanisms to prevent stereotyping and unequal power dynamics between men and women, with a focus on promoting gender equality, advancing the rights of girls and women, and ensuring the inclusion of people living with disabilities in all organizational activities. RefCom aims to foster an organizational culture that upholds gender equality, disability rights, and inclusion. The organization will support its staff in adopting positive practices and principles of gender equality and inclusion, within the available financial and human resources.

In adopting this policy, the Governance Advisory Board will ensure that it is implemented, regularly reviewed, and updated to remain relevant to national policies, international standards, and the organization's evolving internal environment.

_____   _____

Chairperson, Governance Board   Date

ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

	Term	Definition
1.	**RefCom**	Rabai Empowerment for Community
2.	**Disability**	Long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers, hinder the full realization of their rights as well as their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
3.	**Diversity**	It means recognizing, accepting, celebrating and finding strength in individual differences such as gender, age, nationality, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.
4.	**Empowerment**	A strategy to increase community agency over their own lives, and their capacity to influence the relationships and social and political conditions that affect them. Lack of power is one of the main barriers that prevent particularly girls and young women from realizing their rights.
5.	**Exclusion**	Exclusion is the process that prevents certain individuals or groups from fulfilling their rights. Exclusion is caused by inequality in the distribution of resources and power, by inequality in the value assigned to different groups, and by the social norms that perpetuate these differences. For example, girls, boys and youth with disabilities are often stigmatized and not valued; schools are not designed to be accessible and teachers are not adequately trained which means that their specific needs are not addressed and subsequently their right to an education is denied.
6.	**GB**	Governance Board
7.	**GAD**	Gender and Development
8.	**Gender**	The characteristics that are considered "masculine" and "feminine" in a society; it refers to an array of socially constructed qualities, behaviors, and opportunities associated with being male or female as well as with the relationships between men and women.
9.	**Gender-based Empowerment**	Focuses on promoting simultaneous change in: norms, attitudes and behaviors; social and economic resources and safety nets; as well as policy frameworks and budgets. It is a core strategy of any effective work promoting gender equality and inclusion. While empowering girls and young women is key in promoting their rights, it is also essential to engage boys and young men as partners and co-beneficiaries in the realization of gender equality.
10.	**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 female and males.

11.	**Gender disparities**	Statistical differences often referred to as gaps between males and females that reflect a quantifiable inequality in some development agenda or socio-economic status.
12.	**Gender Equity**	This is the process of being fair to men and women, boys and girls, with the equality of development outcomes and results. Gender equity may involve the use of temporary deliberate measures to compensate for historic or system bias and discrimination against either of the genders.
13.	**Gender Equality**	Ensuring that all persons enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy the same level of respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices regardless of their gender. Gender equality does not mean that women and men, or girls and boys are the same. It is a recognition of the fact that women and men, girls and boys, and individuals with other gender identities have different but related needs and priorities, face different constraints, and enjoy different opportunities.
11.	**Gender Mainstreaming**	The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.
12.	GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
13.	**Social Inclusion**	Inclusion is about bringing people into a process in a meaningful manner. It is the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society and to fully enjoy their rights. It requires addressing the root causes of exclusion and understanding how intertwined the roots of different forms of exclusion are. Inclusion involves improving the opportunities available to girls, boys, youth, in particular those who are vulnerable and excluded, including children, persons with disabilities, who are excluded on the basis of the social groups they identify with or are associated with, as well as respecting their dignity.
14.	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals (UN)
15.	**Sex**	Biological differences between men and women.
16.	**The Board**	The Governance Board of RefCom
17.	**The Organization**	RefCom

PROLOGUE

Rabai Empowerment for Community thereafter referred to as RefCom was established in 2024 as a non-profitable and non-political non-governmental organization (NGO) to mitigate social, environmental and climate change challenges while harnessing livelihood opportunities for the communities living around. This policy is aimed at bolstering RefCom's efforts towards total meaningful involvement of both name and female genders as well as people living with disabilities in our efforts.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear vision, direction, common language and consistent message to operationalize and communicate RefCom's commitment to the promotion of gender equality, rights of women and girls, and inclusion of PWD for all employees, at all levels. Gender inequality and exclusion of PWD in the RefCom context refers to all forms of gender-based discrimination, gender stereotyping and an unequal distribution of power between males and females (women, men, girls and boys), as well as exclusion based on factors such as race, class, ethnicity, ability, language, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity, among others.

RefCom recognizes that gender inequality intensifies the negative effects of all forms of exclusion and as a result, exclusion is different and often worse for girls, women and PWD. This policy therefore represents RefCom's commitment to take a consistent and coordinated approach to gender equality and inclusivity of PWD. The purposes of this Policy is therefore to:

 i. Define and communicate clear commitments and consistent messages within RefCom and with other partners; and

 ii. Continue to strengthen efforts to promote and integrate hence use gender and disability inclusion lenses in all activities of our organization

 iii. Increasing RefCom's integrity and credibility amongst donors, partners and allies as a champion in the gender equality and disability inclusion.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Based on the above , RefCom acknowledges that in order to effectively promote gender equality, girls' rights and inclusion of PWD, the Governance Board and management ought to :

i. **Design, implement, monitor and evaluate** the quality of gender equality and disability transformative and inclusive programmes. This shall involve the implementation of long-term strategies of changes in social norms to end injustice, challenge unequal power relations and address the root causes of discrimination.

ii. **Strengthen and build partnerships** that promote respect for gender equality, diversity and inclusion of minority groups including PWD. This shall involve engaging partners in joint approaches to promote gender equality, rights and inclusion of people living with disabilities, and expand our partnerships giving particular emphasis to representative groups such as women's and girls' rights movements, disabled people's organizations, indigenous rights movements, among others;

iii. **Integrate gender equality and inclusion** measures that align to and complement RefCom's Values and principles into the organization's processes, management functions and leadership. In other words, all of RefCom's processes and interventions shall reflect a in depth reflection of an organization that does not tolerate practices that constitute gender-based discrimination, exclusion or inequality based on gender identity or disability

iv. **Strengthen and scale up the organization's** efforts to influence decision makers at all levels to embrace gender equality, rights and inclusion of women, girls and persons with disability;

v. **Mobilize and dedicate** the appropriate/necessary human, technical and financial resources in line with and to meet our commitments to gender equality, rights of women and inclusion of PWD; and

vi. **Monitor and evaluate all of our work** towards achieving gender equality, rights of women, and inclusion of PWD, improve the quality of our programming and influencing work, contribute to continuous learning, provide an evidence base to inform decisions, and ensure accountability to the people we partner with or serve.

1 CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, the development and humanitarian sector adopted a "Gender and Development" (GAD) approach, which sought to correct systems that produce inequalities by challenging existing gender roles and relations. This conceptual shift was boosted by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, which acknowledged "gender mainstreaming" as the process of entrenching GAD into development practice. Ever since Global actors in the gender equality and women's rights movement committed to promote best practices as well as collect evidence on the importance and impact of gender mainstreaming in development and humanitarian efforts. The 2006 U.N. System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment helped bring worldwide attention to gender equality and the needed principles within both macro and programmatic planning. In 2016, gender equality was strongly embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both identified as a specific goal in itself as well as a means to sustainably achieving the other goals.

The 2012 World Development Report Gender Equality and Development states that during the past three decades, disparities of inclusion of gender and people with disabilities levels have decreased significantly. RefCom believes that such inequality is not only an affront to human rights, it is also shortsighted: underinvesting in women and PWD obstructs poverty alleviation strategies by denying them the opportunity to achieve important gains and, more broadly, by limiting their overall advancement in economic and social development. Gender equality is a longer-term driver of community and country competitiveness, and equity is even more important in an era of increasingly globalized economies.

Anchored on the above principle of Gender and Disability mainstreaming, RefCom seeks to analyze the issues and needs, both within the structures of the organization and externally at programming level, and uncover how policies, practices, and interventions will impact people differently, with the goal of addressing social and cultural norms that prevent people from accessing and benefitting from opportunities equally.

2 CHAPTER

2.1 POLICY SOURCES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As a Community Service Organization, RefCom conforms to both National and International Standards of Programme implementation guidelines. Through this policy, we align our operations and remain guided by the following provision on Gender Equality, Disabilities and Social inclusion both at International and National Levels;

i. **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.**
(Articles 2 and 23 state that there can be no distinction or discrimination on the basis of gender, including the right to equal pay for work).

ii. **UN Charter.**
(Specifically, the Charter of the United Nations (Articles 8 and 101) stipulates that there shall be no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in every capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs).

iii. **Beijing Platform for Action**
Strategic Objective G.1 (in the section on "Women in power and decision-making"), presented at the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, states that the United Nations must take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

iv. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

v. UN Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women

vi. Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act of 2011 Laws of Kenya

vii. Kenya National Policy for Prevention and Response to Gender Based Violence (Nov 2014)

viii. UN General Assembly Resolution on the Elimination of Domestic Violence Against Women

2.2 RefCom Principles for GEDSI Mainstreaming

The purpose of these Guiding Principles is to ensure GEDSI is mainstreamed effectively into all RefCom administration and programme activities. The principles shall also help in identifying gaps and additional support necessary for the mainstreaming efforts.

Principle	Description
2.2.1. **Wear Gender and Disability inclusiveness Lenses at all Times**	• Use Gender and Disability-sensitive language. • Ensure Gender and Disability-specific data collection and analysis. • Promote Equal access to and utilization of services. • Ensure Women and men are equally involved in decision making. • Consider people with disability in all decision making, planning and implementation levels. • Ensure Equal treatment is integrated into steering processes.

2.2.2. Develop Organizational Culture and Capacity for Gender Equality, Disability and social inclusiveness	• A commitment to promote gender equality requires that RefCom creates an enabling culture as well as staff and partner with the capacity to advance gender equality and involvement of people with disabilities. Strengthened by the existence of a policy, organization-wide training and coaching are crucial parts of building overall capacity and culture that values gender equality and inclusion of PWD.
	• In order to effectively entrench an organizational GEDSI cultures RefCom shall also nominate a *GEDSI Focal Person at the GAB level to lead GEDSI mainstreaming*. This GEDSI Focal Person shall undertake the following role:
	   i. Be responsible for championing the development of a GEDSI Mainstreaming and Action Plan for implementation;
	   ii. Lead discussions with the RefCom team to assess the degree of gender equality and social inclusiveness within the organization and make recommendations for improvements.

2.2.3. Address any resistance to mainstreaming GEDSI	In event that the Organization encounters resistance from staff or associates regarding gender equality or PWD's empowerment, the strategies will be employed to address such obstacles may include (but not limited to):
	   i. Providing staff with key messages about the benefits of gender equality, disability and social inclusion;
	   ii. Where women & PWD are given priority for participation in activities, events, training etc. RefCom should be transparent about the reason (because women and people living with disabilities have not previously had equal opportunities or access as men have had) ; and
	   iii. Regularly consult communities on their perceptions of GEDSI to identify opportunities to enhance GEDSI and manage negative perceptions.

Table 1-Managing GEDSI mainstreaming

3 CHAPTER:

REFCOM GENERAL POSITION ON GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

3.1 General position

RefCom recognizes that in many parts of the world, too many women suffer needlessly physically and economically, and with limited opportunities to voice their needs to a responsive audience. Such inequality is not only an affront to human rights, but also shortsighted: We believe that underinvesting in women obstructs poverty alleviation strategies by denying them the opportunity to achieve important gains in health and socio-economic outcomes. RefCom believes that gender equality is a longer-term driver of community and country competitiveness, and gender equity is even more important in this era of increasingly globalized economies.

3.2. Recognition of GEDSI in achievement of SDGs

RefCom posits that gender inequality and disability exclusion contributes to development disparities. We shall hence contribute towards reducing the factors that limit women's and people living with disabilities to access quality services.

3.3. The crucial need for Change in Mindset and structures

RefCom appreciates that a gender balanced environment will require people to think differently, learn new ways of viewing gender and disability inclusion, and adopt new behaviors that run contrary to what we have been socialized to believe and behave.

3.4. Minimum standards of Mainstreaming GEDSI in RefCom

Therefore, we borrow from the generally agreeable Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality, Disability and social inclusion that require that organizations not only develop a common understanding of foundational steps required to become "gender and disability aware," but also be able to identify a pathway for gender mainstreaming that promotes gender-responsive and, ultimately, gender/disability-transformative programming. This will go together with strategies for monitoring the mainstreaming efforts and changes in norms and practices within the organization.

3.5. Referral for Sensor and Emotional Cases Disabilities

Where necessary, RefCom shall form strategic partnerships to gain expertise in handling matters involving various forms of disability, refer beneficiaries to appropriate service providers and sustain high quality of service within the limitations of human and financial resources in the organization. Where possible, we shall train staff to handle the needs of Persons with sensory or emotional forms of disabilities, reach them at the same level with health and socio-economic empowerment skills and information and give them opportunities for growth at either equal or equitable levels as required by provisions of this policy, laws of Kenya and other international guidelines.

4 CHAPTER

MAINTREAMING APPROACH AND PROCEDURES

4.1 THE REFCOM GEDSI APPROACH

RefCom shall adopt a dual approach to addressing Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI). This approach shall be contextualized under Mainstreaming and Targeting as follows:

i. **Mainstreaming:** This will involve putting into consideration the different needs of women and men and people with disabilities from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and people with disabilities in the design of the project and systematically integrate GEDSI into all project and administrative activities (planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting) to enable beneficiaries to participate and benefit equally.

ii. **Targeting**: By adopting this approach RefCom commits to address aspects of gender inequalities where they are particularly challenging or where progress is slow, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment so as to create opportunities for social inclusion of the poor, the underserved populations, persons with disabilities and prevent gender-based violence.

4.2 MAINSTREAMING GEDSI IN POLICY FORMULATION

The purpose of this procedure is to improve awareness of beneficiary women and disadvantaged groups on related policies and plans of the government / enterprise and enhance the voices of target beneficiaries in the policy making discourse. The guidance for ensuring this implemented within RefCom is provided in table below.

The How	Detailed Description
a) **GEDSI in recruitment and labor policies**	The RefCom Board and Management shall put in place structures that will: • Prioritize women and people living with disabilities in recruitment processes and create opportunities for disadvantaged people (poor, disabilities). • Foster an enabling environment to designate qualified women as leaders in decision-making positions. Have a salary and bonus policy that equally benefits male and female workers in the same position and in accordance with the requirements of labor use under Laws of Kenya. • Create an enabling environment for women, men and people with disabilities to work effectively, equitably and safely, free from discrimination (e.g. ensure ease of access, space, light, ventilation, temperature, waste management, workplace safety and policies which recognize the rights of all employees regardless of sex,

	ethnicity or disability status).
	• Implement policies on sexual harassment and anti-discrimination and prevent other social issues (e.g. human trafficking, coercion, drug, etc). • Give due consideration to the different requirements of women who are pregnant or have small children (e.g. suitable type of work and working time, avoiding jobs that affect the health of mothers and children). • Group regulations should be developed cooperatively, giving equal opportunity to women and men to provide input. Consider regulations which encourage Youth women and PWD participation in the target value chain. Promote the importance of inclusive policy consultations. • Contributions from participants, especially from women and PWD shall be respected, listened to and incorporated in the development of policies/plans.

Table 2-Mainstreaming GEDSI in policy formulation

4.3 MAINSTREAMING GEDSI IN PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of this process is to ensure that the required focus on the equal and effective participation of women and disadvantaged groups in all programme activities so that they can benefit from enhanced awareness, skills, and confidence to participate in RefCom administrative and program activities. In addition, gender mainstreaming at RefCom shall include all the processes or means by which these unequal conditions are addressed to achieve the goal of gender equality. This means ensuring that gender lens is applied to all administrative and programmatic activities as listed in table 2 below.

The How	Description
4.3.1. **Conduct and Utilize Gender And Disability Analyses**	• In order to mainstream GEDSI in projects RefCom shall strive to perform gender analyses for every project, engaging a diverse range of stakeholders and using findings to inform partnerships, design, and implementation. Therefore, RefCom shall work towards identifying gender specific and gender-differentiated needs, challenges, risks, power dynamics, and opportunities that may affect program outcomes and impacts on employees and beneficiaries.
4.3.2. **Allocate Budget Resources for Gender Equality and Disability**	• Given that organizational commitments to promote gender equality require institutional and programmatic resources, RefCom shall allocate organizational and program budget resources to meet gender mainstreaming and capacity-building needs.

	• RefCom proposal budgets shall also include adequate allocation to support gender equality goals and programming. Budget line items shall include, and will not be limited to the following:
	  i. Capacity building and professional development for staff, partners and beneficiary population;
	  ii. Costs required to address safety and cultural sensitivities (e.g., male and female enumerator teams, traveling in pairs to reduce risks) and
	  iii. Gender analyses, assessments, and audits.

4.3.3 Use GEDSI in identifying aim (purpose) and objectives of activities	• To achieve this requirement the respective RefCom teams shall need to respond to questions:
	  i. What does the event aim to achieve?
	  ii. What information is required by beneficiaries (women and men)?
	  iii. What are the expected results for women and for men?

4.4 CONTINUOUS MONITORING OF GEDSI

The purpose of continuous monitoring of the mainstreaming efforts is to ensure that RefCom entrenches the right practice that will ensure that GEDSI engrained within the cultural and operational modalities of the organization. In addition to having a GESI focal person at the Governance Board level, the following additional structures shall be included to support the process of tracking and putting in place required actions for GEDSI within the organization.

4.4.1. Institutionalized Communication and Feedback Mechanism

RefCom shall also institute a participatory feedback mechanism that would facilitate getting of feedback from employees, associates and beneficiaries through a suggestion box at the office, through email via our contact at the website, telephone calls to the Executive Director and other feedback mechanisms the concerned feel appropriate.

4.4.2. Develop and track specific indicators to measure progress toward gender equality
Use gender equality indicators to measure gender-related changes over time. These indicators shall not only incorporate sex- and age-disaggregation but go beyond to measure gender constructs, such as changes in status, prevalence of harmful practices, or gender-based violence, expectations, and norms.

The first step in developing gender equality indicators for RefCom shall involve ensuring that its programs/projects have clearly identified gender equality goals. These indicators should be selected based on the findings of gender analysis and programmatic or administrative objectives.
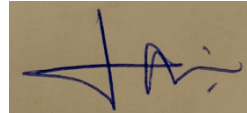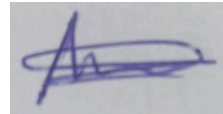
Gender equality indicators by themselves do not improve the status of gender equality. In order to be useful, RefCom will ensure that these indicators are regularly collected, analyzed, disseminated and used.

The Board and Management at RefCom shall put in place structures that will:

i. Record the number of participants, their sex and age, as a mandatory,

ii. Report on the different level of participation, ability to acquire and apply knowledge of women and men, identifying what worked and did not work and propose solutions for improvement in subsequent activities;

iii. Give priority to women and PWD in quotations and images, but also ensure the voice and participation of men, when appropriate;

iv. Ensure that participant list to take into consideration GEDSI disaggregated data including sex, persons with disabilities; and

v. Meeting minutes shall have signatures of both men and women representatives.

This policy is effective as of 15th January 2025 and will remain in force until further notice.

Approved by:

S/NO	Names, Postal Addresses, position held and Occupations of Directors	ID number of Director	Mobile Number of Director	Signatures of Directors
1.	James Katana Gibson	21005098	0723 734 303	
2.	Edward Chongwa Gamimbah	14499314	0721 786 550	
3.	Lennox Ringa Mwabaya	28186907	0718 056 796	
4.	Alicia Wanjoru Pauline	35195779	0796 981 760	
5.	Douglas Shauri Saha	11876086	0711 449 317	