



## Gender Equality Policy

Edited policy approved by the Board of Directors, March 25, 2015

### INTRODUCTION & RATIONALE

Women in rural sub-Saharan Africa play a vitally important role in farming, food and nutrition security, family and community health, and in local, regional and national economies. Yet they are less likely than men to enjoy the benefits of these endeavors, are more likely to experience extreme poverty, malnutrition and poor health, and have less access to and control over productive and reproductive assets and resources. For example, female farmers contribute almost half of all agricultural labour in Sub-Saharan Africa, yet their challenges in production are not adequately addressed and as a result, they continue to benefit less from their production than men<sup>1</sup>. Underlying causes include tenuous and inequitable access to land, information, and other productive resources, low participation in decision-making, and unequal access to profits from production. Overall family farm earnings are less than they would be if women had more and better support for their agricultural endeavors, and if there was greater gender equality.

Farm Radio International (FRI) is well placed to facilitate ongoing dialogue about how the responsibilities, work, privileges, benefits and burdens of rural life are shared and distributed between women and men. It can also influence the extent to which rural radio programs enable women, as well as men, to share and access information, gain and exchange practical knowledge, make changes, and have their voices amplified.

Farm Radio International can have this impact by building the capacity of African radio broadcasters to design, produce and broadcast rural radio programs that strengthen gender equality in rural development in a way that respects national and local cultural diversity and operate within the legal and policy framework about gender in each country.

The capacity of rural radio programs to promote gender equality and provide services of equal benefit to women is constrained in several ways. These constraints include:

- **Misrepresentation and stereotypes:** Rural radio programs typically represent the roles and responsibilities of women and men in rural life in limited and sometimes inaccurate ways. For example, they seldom reflect the important roles women play in commercial production and marketing. Too often, women are represented only as caregivers who produce for household consumption. Men, meanwhile, are seldom represented as having a role in raising children, producing for home consumption, or caring for the health and well-being of others. Yet these roles are often interchangeable, dynamic and transforming. Radio programs, by accepting and presenting stereotypes, can block change and reinforce inequality rather than support transformation.
- **Women's access and control over radio:** Generally, rural women in Africa have less time available to learn skills and listen to the radio. Working schedules (within and outside the household) make it challenging for women to listen to a program even when it interests them. Women's ownership of and access to radio sets and mobile phones is often less than men's.
- **Women's voices on radio:** Normally women are interviewed less than men during field reporting because they are less available or because it is considered inappropriate for women to speak to male journalists. Women are less likely to phone in to radio call-in shows and are less likely to make the repeated calls necessary to "get through."
- **Broadcaster capacity for addressing gender equality issues and serving female listeners:** Generally, women are underrepresented in agricultural radio programming, production and design. In most cases, radio stations employ more men than women, and women that are on staff

mostly play supporting roles. Women staff are usually in a lower position and are less likely to be involved in decision-making. Men at these stations seldom receive gender equality training, though when they do, they can deliver excellent programs that meet women's needs and discuss gender issues effectively.

- **Links with gender equality organizations:**  
There are many country-specific organizations that focus on women's equality in agriculture

and rural development that could be engaged as partners and advisors to rural radio programs. However, there are few if any links between rural radio producers and these organizations. They are seldom involved as knowledge partners or advisors to rural radio programs, and are rarely invited guests on radio programs.

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## THE POLICY

Farm Radio International is committed to promoting gender equality in all of our work. We equally value the contribution of women and men farmers to their families, to agriculture and rural life, and to their societies. We equally value the contribution of men and women broadcasters to rural communities and to broadcasting. In all of our activities we will support both women and men in the pursuit of the equal enjoyment of rights, responsibilities, opportunities, resources and rewards, and we will give equal weight to the perceptions, interests, needs and priorities of both women and men.

Specifically, we will

- a) Respond to the communication needs of women farmers and men farmers, including representing women and men farmers equitably and respectfully in the range of activities associated with agricultural production and rural development;
  - b) Develop the capacity of rural radio stations and broadcasters to:
    - facilitate culturally appropriate and effective dialogue about gender equality,
    - forge links with national and local organizations involved in the promotion of gender equality and women's rights
    - produce programs that respond to both the practical and strategic needs of women and men, and
- c) give voice equitably to women and men farmers in the discussion – both on-air and through ICTs - of all important issues related to agriculture, health and rural development, representing the diverse, dynamic and changing roles both men and women play in development
  - c) Encourage a positive working environment at partner stations that supports gender equality and equal opportunity for women and men broadcasters through training, strategic partner engagement and human resource policies that contribute to this environment
  - d) Facilitate increased access to radio listening and radio program participation by women farmers using radios, listening groups and interactive communication technologies
  - e) Create a working environment at all FRI offices that, through locally appropriate and contextualized policies, processes, standards and norms, promote and support gender equality, equal opportunity, and a positive working environment for all employees.
  - f) Create and implement a five-year plan identifying clear goals, activities and targets related to gender equality
  - g) Evaluate and refresh this policy at least every three years to take into account FRI's experiences, results, and new thinking about equality and gender.

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<sup>1</sup> O'Sullivan, M., Rao, A., Bannerjee, R., Gulati, K., (2014) *Levelling the Field*. World Bank and One.org. Retrieved October 28, 2014 from: [http://one.org.s3.amazonaws.com/pdfs/ONE\\_Levelling\\_The\\_Field\\_Report\\_EN.pdf](http://one.org.s3.amazonaws.com/pdfs/ONE_Levelling_The_Field_Report_EN.pdf)