

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gender Policy Guidelines have been established in order to support the Department of Health in meeting not only its constitutional commitment to promoting gender equity and equality, but also its own commitments to equity, meeting the needs of those who have been previously marginalized and improving its productivity and quality of care within the health services.

The specific content of the guidelines is in line with the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality. The content is also in keeping with South Africa's international responsibilities to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the SADC Health Sector Framework Policy Document, and the Declaration on Gender and Development.

The need for these guidelines arose out of the often hidden impact of social norms and values within society that discriminate against women and other norms that assign men and women different roles. These social norms and assigned gender roles often influence the health status of men and women. The guidelines provide background as to how gender norms affects health, health seeking behaviour, the health system itself, and nurses as the major health providers. The substantial progress already made within the Department of Health in addressing these is fully acknowledged despite the fact that some of these had been done on ad-hoc basis. The guidelines provide mechanisms for institutionalising the Department of Health's concern to identify and address gender inequality both within its organisational processes, in its policies, and service delivery.

The methodology utilised to address gender inequality is that of 'gender mainstreaming'. It also utilised analysis of the causes and consequences of gender norms and inequities on the health system and health services as the basis for identifying actions that could be taken as part of the day to day, annual planning performance agreements, implementation and monitoring processes of the Department of Health. For this reason, it requires all senior managers to take on and integrate responsibility for gender mainstreaming, with the Gender Focal Points providing support and monitoring but not having a programming function themselves.

### **Vision and mission**

The vision of the Gender Policy Guidelines matches that of the Health Sector Strategic Framework 1999–2004: a caring and humane society in which all South Africans have access to affordable, good quality health care.

The mission is to create an effective enabling framework to guide the process of developing, implementing and monitoring laws, policies, programmes, procedures and practices which will serve to ensure:

- equitable attention to the health needs of women, men, girls and boys and equal access to quality of care at all levels of the health system; and

- equal rights and opportunities for both women and men within the Department of Health.

## **Policy Guidelines**

The Gender Policy Guidelines are:

1. creating an enabling policy environment for translating the commitment of the Department of Health to gender equality into reality;
2. establishing an institutional framework within the Department of Health and the Public Health Sector for the advancement of the status of women as well as the achievement of equality between women and men;
3. integrating the empowerment of women and transformation of gender relations into policies and programmes at all levels of the public health system; and
4. promoting new attitudes, values and behaviour and a culture of respect throughout the health system.

## **Principles and assumptions**

The Gender Policy Guidelines recognises that institutional commitment is a pre-requisite for implementation. They note the importance of senior management in all areas and tiers of the Health Sector's commitment to and responsibility for implementation, with the provision of adequate budget to support this. They note that this also requires setting aside time for training of both senior management and staff. In addition, the guidelines can only be implemented, if there is a positive working relationship between full time Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and senior management.

## **Institutional responsibilities**

The Gender Policy Guidelines specify the roles and responsibilities of three major implementers with the following broad scope:

- **Role of senior management:** Implementation of policy guidelines as they pertain to health systems development, to health programming and to building understanding and commitment of health providers to promote gender equality as integral part of health service provision; monitoring progress towards implementation of the above.
- **Role of Human Resources directorates:** Implementation of policy guidelines as they apply to internal working of the Department of Health; building the understanding and commitment of health officials to promote gender equality in the process of managing health services and service providers; monitoring progress in implementation of the above.
- **Role of gender focal points:** Advocacy roles both on the policy guidelines and for gender equity and equality in the Department of Health and its programmes, as well as in its inputs to national and international institutions; supporting senior management with information and expertise in carrying out its functions regarding

implementation of the policy guidelines; monitoring over all implementation and impact of the Gender Policy Guidelines.

The Gender Policy Guidelines specify the processes for internal and external co-ordination in the Department of Health as well as co-ordination with the Office on the Status of Women.

## **Goals**

The Gender Policy Guidelines comprise broad objectives, each of which are spelt out with accompanying objectives, activities and indicators. Only the objectives are presented in this summary.

### **Goal 1: Incorporating gender analysis into all public health policies and programmes**

The objectives that relate to this goal are:

- ❑ To gain senior management's commitment and build its confidence and capacity to promote, implement and monitor gender mainstreaming
- ❑ To facilitate senior managers' integrating of gender analysis into the strategic planning and business planning processes of their own directorates or institutions
- ❑ To build an understanding of and commitment throughout the health system to address the impact of gender-based discrimination in health and health services
- ❑ To ensure input from civil society, and particularly from beneficiaries of health services
- ❑ To integrate gender concerns into the department's overall plans, and to monitor them accordingly.

### **Goal 2: Promoting gender equity in organisational development**

The objectives that relate to this goal are:

- ❑ To eliminate gender-based discrimination in human resource procedures such as appointments, promotions, pay, conditions of employment and disciplinary procedures
- ❑ To ensure equal balance between the sexes in decision-making positions
- ❑ To ensure that institutional rules and culture promote participatory decision-making and an environment that is supportive of gender equity and equality
- ❑ To build understanding of the purpose of the Gender Policy Guidelines and ensure commitment to implement them by political leadership and senior management
- ❑ To sustain gains made in building commitment and capacity for addressing gender inequity as new people are recruited to the department

- To build the capacity of managers and other appropriate personnel to conduct a gender analysis of their policies and programmes and to use the findings to improve the quality of health policies and services
- To build the capacity of Human Resources Directorates to offer gender training at all levels so that all staff understand and are committed to addressing gender inequity in their area of work.

The Gender Policy Guidelines provide a realistic programme for the implementation of above goals and their related objectives at national level, with an incremental process for implementation at provincial and local levels.