



GENDER AND DIVERSITY POLICY

APRIL 2025

Background

The West African Alcohol Policy Alliance (WAAPA) is committed to ensuring gender equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. Established to promote evidence-based alcohol policies in the region, WAAPA recognizes the importance of inclusivity in governance, advocacy, and research.

Historically, gender imbalances have been evident in leadership and decision-making across various organizations in West Africa, including those focused on public health and policy advocacy. WAAPA aims to address these disparities by ensuring that women and other marginalized groups have equal opportunities to participate in and influence the alcohol policy landscape.

WAAPA also acknowledges that diversity extends beyond gender to include age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, disability status, and other factors. By fostering a culture of inclusivity, WAAPA seeks to strengthen its impact and enhance the effectiveness of alcohol control policies across the region.

Gender Equality and Diversity Perspectives

WAAPA recognizes that gender is more than a binary concept and that individuals experience differing levels of power, access to resources, and opportunities. This disparity is particularly pronounced in West Africa, where cultural and economic factors often limit the participation of women and marginalized groups in decision-making processes.

In West Africa, alcohol consumption patterns and their consequences are often gendered. While men are more likely to consume alcohol and engage in heavy episodic drinking, women and children disproportionately bear the negative effects, including domestic violence, financial instability, and health-related harms. Therefore, gender-sensitive policies must be at the core of WAAPA's advocacy efforts.

WAAPA also recognizes the intersectionality of discrimination, acknowledging that gender-based inequities are compounded by factors such as poverty, disability and social exclusion. To address these challenges, WAAPA is committed to creating a platform where diverse voices are heard and valued.

Rationale

By ensuring gender equality and embracing diversity, WAAPA enhances its ability to develop and implement effective alcohol policies. Excluding certain groups leads to an underutilization of talent and the loss of crucial perspectives that can strengthen advocacy efforts. A diverse and inclusive approach ensures that WAAPA's policies are comprehensive, contextually relevant, and impactful.

Policy Commitments

1. **Inclusive Leadership and Representation:** WAAPA commits to ensuring that its leadership structures, including its board and committees, reflect gender balance and broader diversity, with at least 30% female representation.
2. **Capacity Building and Empowerment:** WAAPA will provide training, mentorship, and leadership development opportunities for women and other marginalized groups to enhance their participation in alcohol policy advocacy.
3. **Gender-Responsive Research and Advocacy:** WAAPA will prioritize research that highlights the gendered impact of alcohol consumption and integrates gender-sensitive approaches into policy recommendations.
4. **Safe and Equitable Work Environment:** WAAPA will maintain a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination, harassment, and gender-based violence within its operations and activities.
5. **Community Engagement and Participation:** WAAPA will work with grassroots organizations, women's groups, and youth networks to ensure that alcohol policy discussions reflect diverse perspectives.
6. **Monitoring and Accountability:** WAAPA will regularly assess and report on its progress in achieving gender equality and diversity in its programs and leadership structures.
7. **Legal and Policy Alignment:** WAAPA will align its gender and diversity commitments with relevant international and regional frameworks such as the ECOWAS Gender Policy and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
8. **Budget Allocation:** WAAPA will allocate dedicated funding for gender and diversity initiatives to ensure sustained impact and progress.
9. **Partnerships and Collaborations:** WAAPA will actively engage with women's rights organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders to drive systemic change in alcohol policy development and implementation.
10. **Cultural Sensitivity and Local Contexts:** WAAPA will address cultural barriers

that hinder women's participation in policy advocacy and leadership by fostering community dialogues and awareness campaigns.

11. Data Collection and Impact Measurement: WAAPA will collect and analyze genderdisaggregated data to track progress, identify gaps to inform evidence-based decisionmaking.

WAAPA recognizes that gender equality and diversity are not just ethical imperatives but also essential for effective alcohol policy advocacy. By actively promoting inclusivity, WAAPA strengthens its credibility, enhances policy outcomes, and contributes to a healthier and more equitable West African Region.



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