



**Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Rights
Policy**

Why a Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Rights Policy?

Discrimination on grounds of sexual diversity and gender identity is prohibited by international human rights instruments, which most states have ratified. Nevertheless, persons with a sexual orientation or gender identity that does not conform to – perceived - majority norms face discrimination, marginalisation and violence worldwide.

Even when sexual and gender identity freedoms and expression are not legally proscribed, persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as social (and sometimes economic) discrimination continues in most parts of the world , in cases with the complicity of state actors. Sexual and gender non-conformity can be a barrier to employment, economic opportunities, social acceptance and education in many settings – highlighting the critical need for non-discrimination laws and policies. In many contexts, cruelty and hate speech related to sexual and gender diversity may be perpetrated by individuals and state authorities.

In many cases, these barriers and stigmas are reinforced by deeply rooted cultural norms and beliefs around masculinities (premised on superiority and control over women/girls); the concept of 'traditional family' (and associated discrimination against non-conforming families, including gay men or lesbian women with children, single mothers, women who do not marry and/or have children, etc.) or the role of women as a source of income in circumstances where there is great poverty (e.g. through early marriage of girls and sex work.). Likewise, the lack of information on sex and sexuality for young people, including information on equal, consensual intimate relationships, is a source for confusion and perpetuates discriminating discourses and practices.

Children and adults who experience discrimination on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity, or that of their parents or other family members, have a significant need for psychosocial support and health care. However, in many developing countries, people seeking healthcare who do not conform to sexual and gender norms can encounter rejection, humiliation, derision, or sub-standard services. This can result in significant health related disparities. Even where health workers do not intend to discriminate, they often lack basic information or training about specific health concerns and appropriate medical and counselling practices.

This policy seeks to motivate development practitioners to consider human rights relating to sexual orientation and gender identity in development cooperation programmes.

Policy Statement

Armadilla strongly affirms:

- The right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to seek, receive and impart credible, evidence-based information related to sexuality; to choose their sexual orientation and sexual partner or partners; to decide to be sexually active or not; to participate in consensual sexual relations; and to pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable

sexual life.

- The right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, including sexual violence, to freedom of gender identity and expression.
- The right to equality, equal protection of the law and freedom from all forms of discrimination based on sex, sexuality or gender.
- The right to participation in civil, economic, social, cultural and political spheres for all persons, regardless of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- The right of all persons to privacy regarding matters of sexuality.
- The right to freedom of thought, opinion, expression and association regarding issues of sexuality, gender identity and sexual rights, without arbitrary intrusions or limitations based on dominant cultural beliefs or political ideology, or discriminatory notions of public order, public morality, public health or public security.
- The right to health care, including sexual health care for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of all sexually related concerns, problems and disorders.
- The right to comprehensive sex education and information necessary and useful to exercise full citizenship and equality in the private, public and political domains.
- The right to choose whether or not to marry and to found and plan a family, and to decide whether or not, how and when, to have children.
- The centrality of sexual rights to “active citizenship”, being human, well-being, fulfillment, liberty, and life chances.

Armadilla commits to:

- Assessing the potential harms – both intentional and unintentional – which may arise from general programs for people marginalized based on their sexual or gender difference, especially where being LGBTI is criminalized or society is particularly violent towards LGBTI people. This includes addressing factors which may marginalize LGBTI people from our programs, including where appropriate through addressing staff attitudes and perceptions of LGBTI people.
- Look for practices in our program work to protect and promote human rights of LGBTI people as well as practices that support the transformation of the underlying factors that generate violence and or oppression, thus encompassing a benefit for all people who differ from mainstream conceptions of sexual or gender normality in particular communities, not just LGBTI-identified people.
- Ensuring all of our work applies an intersectional lens, which incorporates considerations of gender and sexuality in terms of diversity, power and privilege in analysis, programming, policies and campaigns.
- Ensuring context specific analysis and closer work with local LGBTI civil society to understand development priorities and challenges in relation to LGBTI people and how the organisation's work might hinder, harm or on the contrary enable and leverage positive change for LGBTI people.
- Support civil society organizations that are working towards sexual rights and build the capacity of current partners to develop their work so it is more inclusive of sexual rights.
- Speak out publicly and actively for the rights of individuals and groups whose sexual rights are threatened or violated. Celebration and affirmation of sexual and gender diversity is

key to the realization of broader human rights for every individual.

- Reflecting our external policies in our internal commitments and practices, including in our Code of Conduct and employee non-discrimination and human resource policies (including extending social and legal privileges to same sex partners of all staff). We want to operationalize and live our values. This requires us to ensure that our workplaces promote and celebrate inclusivity and diversity.
- Ensuring that all staff are made aware of the policies herein, and are held accountable for integrating the policies into their work and their workplace.

Roles and Responsibilities

Armadilla Managers, and ultimately Directors, hold overall accountability for this Policy and its implementation.

Armadilla Director and Board are responsible for reviewing and updating this Policy annually and in line with legislative and organisational developments and hold overall accountability it.

All staff, volunteers and other representatives of Armadilla are required to adhere to this Policy and Armadilla's Code of Conduct at all times.

All Armadilla employees are obliged to report any suspicions of abuse based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity . Failure to report to a relevant person suspicion of abuse relating to someone else is a breach of Armadilla's policy, and could lead to disciplinary action being taken. For the avoidance of doubt, there is no obligation placed on any individual to report any incident that has happened to her/him.