

Ethics Policy

MHI requires that its grantees adhere to the highest ethical standards in their practice. These standards need to be maintained not only in the field but in administrative and organizational matters as well. The following sections serve as a guide to understanding what exactly these standards constitute and the specific areas to which they are applicable. Prospective partners need to acquaint themselves and keep them in mind while applying for grants as well as during the entire period of the grant. This document also serves as a guideline towards ensuring compliance as well as documentation of the same.

A. ETHICAL GUIDELINES IN THE FIELD

- ⑩ In accordance with MHI's grant making philosophy, it follows that partners are required to ensure that their vision focuses on mental well-being and promotes holistic and inclusive mental health practices in order to achieve this in the communities they work in.
- ⑩ MHI believes that medicalization and stigmatization of mental illness are major impediments to mental well being and need to be addressed. Prospective partners therefore need to ensure that their activities and/or services do not in anyway promote either of these.
- ⑩ MHI requires prospective partners to ensure that their functionaries maintain the confidentiality of their clients/beneficiaries at all costs. This is a non-negotiable ethical consideration while working in the field of mental health¹.
- ⑩ Gender emerges as an essential component of MHI's mandate and therefore potential partners need to have a demonstrated capacity to work on gender issues within the larger arena of mental health.
- ⑩ Potential partners need to be sensitive to the needs of vulnerable groups within the communities they work in, for example the differently abled, people with non-heteronormative sexualities and gender identities, people belonging to backward castes, to name a few.
- ⑩ In future, MHI aspires to collaborate on research initiatives in the field of mental health. Agencies that would like to collaborate on these initiatives would be required to follow the strictest research ethics².

Compliance and Documentation

¹ "More on Confidentiality." *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 135(1), pp. 130-a–130

² A more detailed document discussing this will follow.

Partners are required to demonstrate compliance with the above mentioned ethical guidelines primarily by maintaining regular field records. The information from these field records would then be periodically reported back in the reporting formats provided by MHI³. In addition to this, project evaluation reports (as per grant requirements) should also reflect information about ethical compliance.

B. (i) ORGANIZATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE ETHICS (deriving from a gendered mandate)

It is important to note and keep in mind that MHI has a predominantly feminist mandate and derives its grant making philosophy from such a mandate. MHI would therefore primarily be interested in collaborating with agencies whose mandate derives from a strong gender sensitive policy framework. Such a framework should then, not only guide practice at the field level but also influence organizational and administrative working. The specifics of what comprises gender sensitive policy framework are as follows⁴-

- ⑩ The institution of a gender sensitive policy document and framework entails that the partner organization form an anti-sexual harassment cell. MHI emphasizes that all its partner organizations have (or intend to form) such a body.
- ⑩ Equal opportunity hiring and recruitment should be an organizational necessity, which should clearly reflect in the staff composition of the organization.
- ⑩ Partners need to prioritize gender mainstreaming in programming as well as at administrative and organizational levels in order to ensure a safe and friendly working environment for women.
- ⑩ Finally, partners need to ensure that provisions of the policy document actually reach the women and do not remain 'on paper' alone.

B. (ii) ORGANIZATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE ETHICS

- ⑩ MHI asks that partners maintain high standards of transparency with respect to financial expenditure, budgeting, utilisation as well as underspending as well as in programmatic aspects.

³The reporting formats have been provided as part of the grant making map tool kit.

⁴MHI prefers agencies that currently demonstrate these specifics. However, those agencies that do not currently have a gender policy but express commitment towards formulating one in future are also encouraged.

- ⑩ MHI believes in collaborative relationships with its partners as opposed to grantor-grantee, top-down relations. MHI requires that potential partners share similar ideas about collaboration and demonstrate the same in their relationships with communities/clients/beneficiaries.

Compliance and Documentation

MHI asks for partner organizations to submit documentation to the effect that gender related ethics are being met and carried out. This would primarily include the gender policy document and other relevant material such as gender mainstreaming process documents, field records and other gender related capacity building initiatives that partners may have undertaken. In addition to this, MHI proposes to make periodic field and organizational visits to discuss issues of compliance and talk to clients/beneficiaries in target communities.

Financial compliance will be documented in periodic financial reports in the financial reporting format specified by MHI.