

## **Position Statement on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression**

### **Background**

Amref Health Africa is an indigenous African Organisation founded in 1957 and working in over 35 countries in Africa to achieve lasting health change through community-led and people-centred primary healthcare while addressing the social determinants of health which include human rights.

This position paper is based on the values of Amref Health Africa which include embracing diversity, equality, inclusion and belonging. Further, Amref Health Africa is a rights-based organisation and adheres to the international framework for human rights as declared by the United Nations in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** and reflected in regional instruments like the **African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights**, that embodies and emphasises the universality of human rights, dignity and equality of all people and respects their entitlement to freedom and protection.

### **International Human Rights Framework for Sexual Orientation**

The United Nations in a number of its human rights declarations has reaffirmed that people should not be discriminated upon on the basis of their sexual orientation. It has stressed that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that sexual orientation does not take away this birthright. It further emphasises on the right to life and right to the highest attainable standard of health, all of which have a legal protection thus condemned executions, criminalisation and other forms of punishment and discrimination of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender and all other people regardless of their sexual orientation. It is notable that medical ethics similarly follow principles of human rights and uphold dignity, respect, justice and beneficence for all individuals.

### **Position of Amref Health Africa**

The position of Amref Health Africa on the issue of sexual orientation and gender diversity is embedded and summarised in three key areas including human resources, programme implementation, partnering with governments and working with donors as follows:

## **1. Human Resources**

This position is based on Amref Health Africa HR policies that explicitly denounce discrimination of any kind.

Amref Health Africa will therefore:

- *Adhere to the diversity, equality, inclusion and belonging principles during the lifetime of staff while working for the organisation.*
- *Will provide for equal rights in its staff recruitment procedures and will not ask or record sexual orientation of individuals in the interview and hire process.*
- *Protect all employees' rights as guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
- *Organisational policies are based on the principal of human rights and cannot be overridden by personal values and beliefs.*

## **2. Programme Implementation**

Amref Health Africa concurs with the international community that each individual has a right to dignity, privacy, confidentiality and to access information and services that they need. As such:

- *All implementation will be guided by the principles of equality and non-discrimination and adherence to human rights among them the right to the highest attainable standard of health and employ the Human Rights Based Approach to implementation.*
- *All people served by Amref Health Africa programmes will receive equal, comprehensive, and compassionate care and treatment, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.*
- *All people served by Amref programmes will enjoy their rights as enshrined in the international framework for human rights including a right to dignity, privacy and confidentiality regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.*
- *People define their families according to their belief systems and Amref Health Africa will not interfere. The health programme will not restrict, limit or otherwise deny family presence or visitation privileges on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression.*

## **3. Partnership with Governments**

Governments through their ministries of health are key partners of Amref Health Africa. Amref Health Africa, as a civil society organisation, will do everything within its means to uphold every individual's right to health as part of the partnerships.

