

POLICY ON EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN



CECI

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES AND COOPERATION

CECI fights poverty and exclusion; it strengthens the development capacity of disadvantaged communities; it supports initiatives for peace, human rights and equity; it mobilizes resources and promotes the exchange of know-how. — CECI'S MISSION

Firmly committed to women's rights

The statistics on poverty and exclusion of women and girls are appalling and cannot be ignored. We, the people of CECI, reject the *status quo*. This is the very foundation of our Policy on Equality between Women and Men.

Twelve years after the adoption of our first policy on "women and development", progress has undeniably been made around the world. And yet, achieving equality between the sexes remains a challenge. For that reason, the Board of Directors wishes that the promotion of women's rights remain a CECI priority.

Our mission statement and values have, therefore, been revised and are now based firmly on the principles of equality and equity between women and men. In them, we put forward a vision of human relations based on respect, cooperation, and justice. At the same time, our "women and development" policy has also been updated to become the Policy on Equality between Women and Men. On behalf of the CECI board, I am proud to present it to you.

With this policy, CECI commits to mobilizing its personnel, volunteers and partners to promote equality between women and men. In our programs and our organization we advocate the implementation of concrete measures through the gender and development (GAD) approach.

The gender and development head office committee and the network of GAD resources in the field are already at work, supporting the implementation of this policy through training sessions, technical support and evaluation of results.

At CECI, the *onus* is now on each and every one of us to *take action*, *apply* the principles of equality and equity within our programs and daily management, actively *promote* this new policy and be *vigilant* in identifying anything that might constitute a step backwards. CECI's Board of Directors will be responsible for applying this policy and will monitor the organization's performance in this respect.

PIERRE RACICOT

CHAIRMAN, CECI BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Every day, around the world, 1,600 women die due to complications related to pregnancy and child birth. Maternal mortality is 18 times higher in developing countries than in industrialized nations.

INEQUALITY

A Major Obstacle to Human Development and to the Fight Against Poverty

While inequality takes many forms around the world, gender inequality is the most widespread. It has an impact on social and economic relations in all societies and is a challenge on a global scale. While advances have been made, particularly in education, health and political representation, progress is still too slow, according to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in *Progress of the World's Women, (2005)*.

EQUALITY AND EQUITY

EQUALITY has to do with the rights of women and men before the law and within society. These rights are recognized and enshrined in international instruments ratified by most countries. Equality means that women and men have the same status and enjoy their rights to the fullest.

EQUITY refers to the fact that women and men must be treated fairly and thus have equal opportunities. Equity contributes to equality.

Gender equality, women's empowerment, and the determination to fight all forms of gender-based discrimination are the cornerstones of our vision of sustainable development and the effective struggle to eliminate poverty and exclusion. Our Policy on Equality between Women and Men is based on the following principles:

- **Equal rights for women and men is a fundamental principle**, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*.
- **Equality is based on the principle of non-discrimination** which entails the rejection of all forms of exclusion based on sex, colour, ethnicity, age, caste and religion.
- **Human rights and the rights of women and children are universal and indivisible**. The exercise of these rights is carried out differently in keeping with cultural contexts. Nonetheless, the principle of equality and equity between women and men applies to all human beings, without exception.
- **Women and children are the same time, actors and beneficiaries of social, political, and economic transformations**. Their full participation is essential to human development and to democracy.
- In the face of persistent injustice, **equality of opportunity is a fundamental but insufficient principle**. Equity in results requires specific measures to eliminate legal, economic, political, social and cultural barriers which women still face today.



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In several African countries where women represent between 60% to 80% of the agricultural workforce, they receive less than 10% of the credit given to small producers and 1% of the total credit given to agriculture. Close to 70% of the 1.5 billion people living on less than \$1 per day throughout the world are women.



Our Policy on Equality Between Women and Men

A participatory approach to development process is essential to the sustainable advancement of peoples and countries. Participatory development builds on peoples' willingness to change within the context of their culture and traditions. The place and role of women and men in determining these changes are fundamental. They ensure the foundation of a true democracy, as well as of the emergence and strengthening of civil society.

Based on a decade of practice, our policy is founded on the conviction that women must have equitable access to the effects of development, and in this way, reap the benefits of both actions and projects. The discrimination women and girls face limit their access to education, health, decision-making power, among other resources. It is a barrier to their full participation in society. This is why our approach, while closely linking men to it, favours strengthening the individual and collective capacities of women.

Women already play an essential role in building of better world, a world that is more equitable and which responds better to the needs of individuals and groups. Recognizing and validating this contribution is one of our unchanging concerns.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment depends on the capacity of persons to have control over factors that affect their living condition and quality of life and to influence decisions that affect them. It applies to the development process as much as it does to results. It is an essential prerequisite for the political, social, economic, cultural and environmental advancement of all peoples.



Violence, in all forms, against women and girls are reaching epidemic proportions and rape as a weapon of war causes irreparable harm to hundreds of thousands of women around the world.



Our goal

CECI's Policy on Equality between Women and Men strive to achieve a development approach that is inclusive, equitable and sustainable thus transforming the unequal relations between women and men, girls and boys. The policy also applies within our organization. Through our policy, CECI highlights the need for greater awareness about the issues of equity and equality at every level of its organizational structure.

Our approach

CECI's gender and development approach is comprehensive. We address the complex social, cultural, economic, political and environmental dynamics that can impede women's empowerment and full participatory in society.

Since women and men have different positions in society, development interventions will also have different effects on them. Every person must have the opportunity to participate fully in decision-making processes, and thereby benefit equally from the ensuing results.

Our interventions

CECI works for the development of all people. In implementing our actions, we identify two streams of intervention. First, we are concerned with the impact of activities, projects and programs related to the situation of women and men, while making sure that their priorities and various needs are taken into consideration. Second, we support measures in response to the specific needs and the strategic interests expressed by women, in order to:

- ▬ Contribute to a greater respect of women's fundamental rights;
- ▬ Reduce inequalities in the access and the control over resources (material, financial) and knowledge (training and information) between women and men;
- ▬ Strengthen women's financial independence;
- ▬ Support the full participation of women in the decision-making process with regard to the development of their community and their society;
- ▬ Develop an approach that is flexible, progressive and adapted to the specifics of each environment, and ensure that both women and men become involved in promoting values of equality and equity in their society;
- ▬ Support and share in women's local, regional and international networks that contribute to the active citizenship of women and take part in the networks;
- ▬ Integrate equality and equity at every level of CECI's organization and promote increased participation of women in management positions.



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While the proportion of women in Parliament and Congresses around the world has increased, the global average remains below 16%. School dropout rates and illiteracy remain higher among girls. Two thirds of all illiterate people in the world are women.

Our Commitment

With this Policy on Equality between Women and Men, CECI affirms its commitments to these actions:

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In our programs and projects

Promote democracy, respect for human rights, and the right of women and men to independent decision-making in all development activities implemented by CECI.

Systematically integrating gender analysis in designing and evaluating all programs and actions. This analysis must deepen understanding of gender dynamics in the home, the community, and the nation and identify the constraints and opportunities that must be addressed to promote equality and equity between women and men.

Facilitate the meaningful participation of women and excluded groups in the development process and ensure their needs and interests are taken into account.

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Promote equality through mainstreaming and targeted approaches. Mainstreaming involves integrating gender equality into all goals and results that the organization's policies, programs and projects seek to achieve. Targeting means identifying the strategic interests of women and implementing specific actions to change the institutional and social practices that perpetuate inequality between men and women.

Develop mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation that measure the achievement of the objectives of this policy and the impact of our intervention on equality between women and men.

Promote an open dialogue with partners in order to develop a common understanding of the objectives of this policy.

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In our organization

Promote the meaningful participation of women at all levels of CECI's organizational structure.

Inform and sensitize members, staff, volunteers and partners to the objectives of this policy and ensure that everyone endorses the responsibility of its implementation.

Ensure that CECI's values of equity and respect are fully integrated and put into practice by its members and its personnel at head office and in the field. This commitment entails "zero tolerance" of any inappropriate behaviour, harassment, violence or sexual exploitation.



Support the development and circulation of information and analysis tools to personnel and partners, and promote approaches favouring the systematization and sharing of lessons learned which are related to advancing equality between women and men.

Develop human resource policies and organizational practices that allow staff to balance their personal and professional lives.

Integrate responsibility for the implementation of this policy into staff performance management systems.

Support the work of the CECI gender and development committee which provides advice and oversight with respect to this policy.

In our partnerships

Establish partner relations with organizations working for the promotion and defence of the rights of women.

Promote and increase exchanges between the networks of women of the South-South, North-South and South-North.

Link these networks with other partners to promote synergy and collaboration in advancing equality between women and men.

Develop strategic alliances with networks of women's organizations of the South and North and engage in the political dialogue concerning equality between women and men.

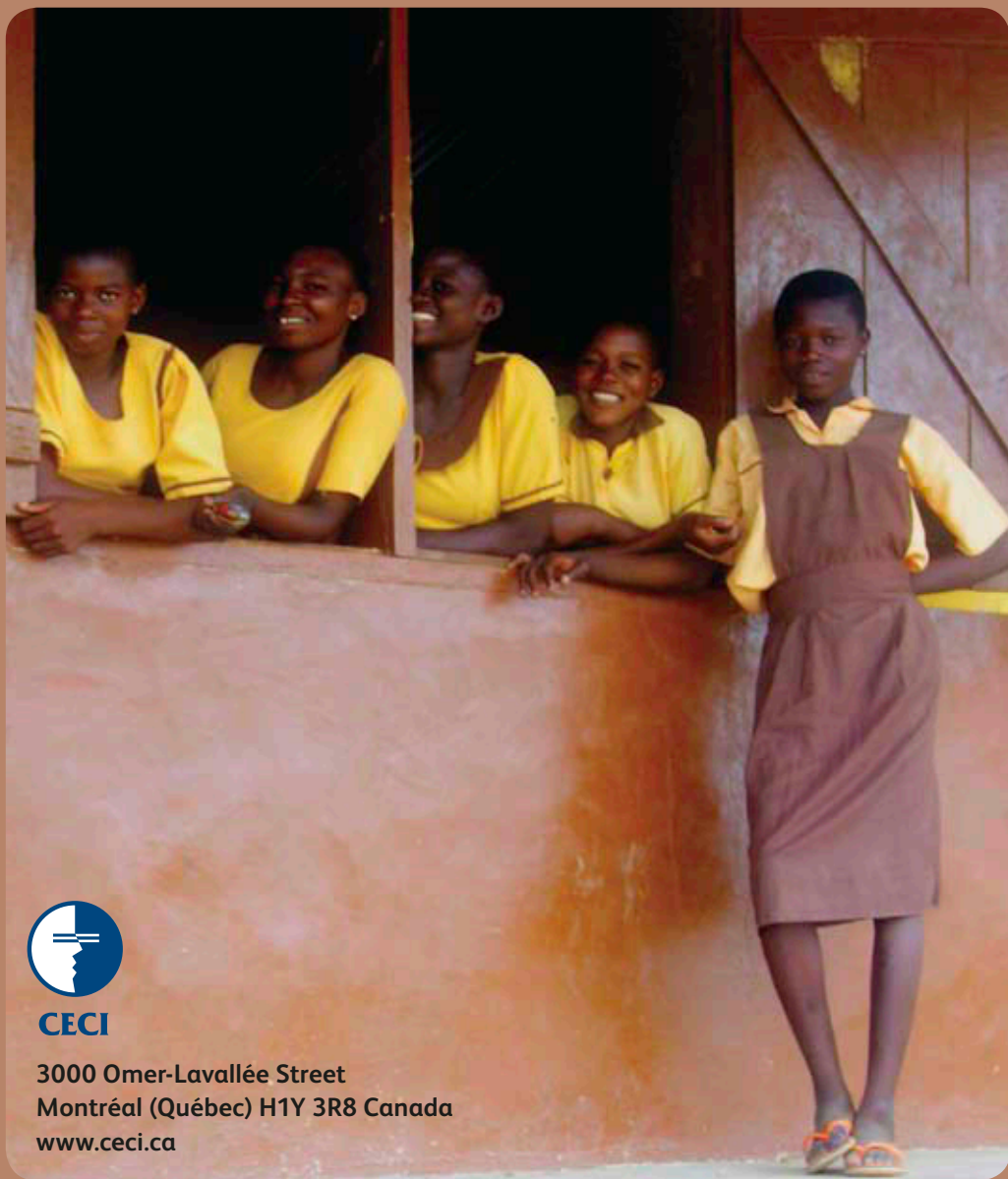
Ensure that all partnerships established within projects and programs incorporate a clear commitment to the defence of women's rights and the promotion of equality between women and men.

PRACTICAL NEEDS

Practical needs refer to immediate necessities: an increase in women's incomes, reduction of their unpaid workload, improvement in their health and that of their children, as well as, on a larger scale, access to a clean water supply, decent housing, health care and protection against violence.

STRATEGIC INTERESTS

Strategic interests refer to the status of women in society relative to that of men. They are related to the empowerment of women, an increase in their economic and political autonomy, an improvement in their social position, an increase in their capacity to negotiate and be involved in defining social and political priorities. Within this framework, programs and projects advancing women's strategic interests provide training, awareness-raising and knowledge of the law and the defence of their rights.



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In spite of progress towards equity in primary school enrolment, significant disparities remain at the secondary and post-secondary levels. In South Asia, registration of girls in secondary school is 47.1%, compared to only 29.7% in Sub-Saharan Africa.



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