

POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY

RIGHTS AND DIVERSITY

FIRMLY COMMITTED TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS



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# INTRODUCTION

## FIRMLY COMMITTED TO THE RIGHTS OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS!

The statistics on poverty and exclusion among women and girls are telling, and continue to reveal profound inequalities. We cannot ignore this. We at CECI, say no to the status quo.

We must recognize that, despite major progress that has been made throughout the world, gender equality remains a challenge. This is why promoting women's and girls' rights has always been a priority for CECI, in keeping with our stated mission and values, which are rooted in the fundamental principles of equality and equity between women and men. We promote a vision of relationships that are founded on **equity, cooperation, respect, commitment, and integrity** to build a world where equality, rights and diversity reign.

In 2018, our *Policy on Gender Equality, Rights and Diversity* was updated to align with our deeply held convictions. The policy acknowledges that many variables can add complexity to the discrimination that women and girls experience, particularly as concerns ethnocultural background, social class, caste, age, physical or intellectual disability, sexual identity or orientation, or any other factor of inequality.

It is directly aligned with the new *Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy* and consistent with the *Sustainable Development Goals*, in particular Goal 5, which aims to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”

With this policy, CECI and its staff, volunteers and partners commit to mobilizing institutionally to promote equality between women and men. In our programs and organization, we specify concrete implementation and monitoring measures to support the rights of women and girls, recognize their role as agents of social change, and empower them to act, with consideration for the range of conditions they face.

CECI's Institutional Gender Equality Committee and specialized gender equality staff, in Canada and other countries of operation, are supporting the implementation of our policy through training sessions, technical support and results evaluation.

At CECI, it is each individual's responsibility to take action and incorporate the underlying principles of equality and equity set out in this policy into our programs, projects, and day-to-day management, and to promote these principles and stay vigilant against potential setbacks.

CECI's Board of Directors commits to overseeing the policy's application and follow-up, and will monitor the organization's performance in this respect.



# BACKGROUND INFO

## INEQUALITY

### A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

While inequality takes many forms around the world, inequality between women and men, girls and boys, is the most widespread. It has an impact on social, economic and political relations in all societies and is a challenge on a global scale. It is undeniable that progress has been made, especially in the areas of education, health and political representation. But in 2018, the pursuit of gender equality remains an “uphill battle,” according to the OECD<sup>1</sup>. UN Women reminds us that, faced with major, persistent gaps, “women’s rights will only become a reality if they are part of broader efforts<sup>2</sup>” for justice, peace and the common good.

Gender equality, women’s and girl’s empowerment and determination to combat all forms of gender-based discrimination are central to our vision of fair, sustainable development, of and effectively reducing poverty and exclusion. Our Policy on *Equality between Women and Men, Rights and Diversity* 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).

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1. OECD, *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, 2017
  2. UN Women, *Turning Promises Into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

CECI fights poverty and exclusion. We build the development capacities of disadvantaged communities, and support initiatives for gender equality, violence

**EQUALITY IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**, which entails the rejection of all forms of exclusion based on sex, ethnocultural background, social class, caste, age, physical or intellectual disability, sexual identity or orientation, or any other factor of inequality. When these factors coincide within an individual person, they are called intersectional variables.

**ANY FORM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IS UNACCEPTABLE.** It is a scourge that affects the entire world, and a violation of human rights.

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE UNIVERSAL AND INDIVISIBLE.** The principles of equality and equity between women and men apply to all human beings, without exception.

**IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RECOGNIZE DIVERSITY** in women and girls in terms of their personal, sociocultural and geographic situation if we are to effectively fight against poverty and for equal rights.

**WOMEN AND GIRLS MUST BE BOTH THE BENEFICIARIES AND AGENTS** of the social, political and economic change sought. Their full participation is key to economic development and good governance.

**SOCIETY AS A WHOLE** benefits from gender equality.

In the face of persistent injustice, **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IS A FUNDAMENTAL BUT INSUFFICIENT PRINCIPLE.** Equity requires specific measures that account for intersectional variables in order to eliminate the legal, economic, political, social and cultural barriers which women and girls still face today.

**WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS AND FEMINIST NETWORKS** are a driving force in effecting changes in discriminatory social norms and practices, in particular through their awareness-raising, mobilization and advocacy work in the field.

reduction, food security, resilience and adaptation to climate change. We mobilize resources and promote knowledge sharing. — *CECI'S MISSION*



# OUR POLICY

## GENDER EQUALITY, RIGHTS AND DIVERSITY

Applying a participatory approach to the development process is essential to the sustainable advancement of peoples. It must build on peoples' willingness to change within the context of their local culture and traditions. The place and role of women and men in determining these changes are fundamental. Active participation and the inclusion of women's specific needs and interests are the building blocks of democratic life and the emergence and strengthening of civil society.

Enriched by thirty years of experience, our policy is founded on the conviction that women and girls must have equitable access to the effects of development and reap the benefits of both actions and projects.

Violence, in all forms, against women and girls is reaching epidemic proportions and rape as a weapon of war is causing profound physical and psychological harm to hundreds of thousands of women around

The discrimination they face reduces their access to education, health and decision-making power, and the violence to which they are subjected threatens their ability to act. These forms of discrimination are a barrier to women's and girls' full participation in society. This is why our approach, while closely linking men as allies and co-beneficiaries of gender equality, favours strengthening the individual and collective capacities of women.

Women already play an essential role in building a more just, equal and equitable world. Recognizing and validating this contribution continues to be one of our ongoing concerns.

## OUR GOAL

CECI's *Policy on Gender Equality, Rights and Diversity* strives for a development approach that is inclusive, equitable and sustainable, thereby transforming the unequal power 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 equality and equity at every level of its organizational structure.

## OUR APPROACH

Our approach is comprehensive. It addresses the social, cultural, economic, political and environmental dynamics that can impede women's empowerment and full participation in society. It prioritizes the promotion of equality and aims to transform power relations between women and men, girls and boys.

Since women and men have different positions in society, development projects and processes can affect them differently. Every person must have the opportunity to participate fully in decision-making processes, and thereby benefit equally from the results of interventions. By recognizing how women and girls are affected differently and supporting them as agents of social change, CECI is contributing to more inclusive sustainable development.

the world. It is estimated that one in three women in the world has been or will be a victim of violence in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

## OUR INITIATIVES

CECI strives for sustainable development that benefits women and girls, especially those in marginalised communities. 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 distinct needs are taken into consideration by the various institutional actors and partners who are present. We also meet the specific needs and interests expressed by women and girls, and take action against discrimination that impedes their ability to act, in order to:

**CONTRIBUTE TO A GREATER RESPECT** for the rights of women and girls with diverse backgrounds.

**REDUCE INEQUALITIES** in the access to knowledge (training and information) and the control over resources (material, financial) between women and men, girls and boys.

**STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AUTONOMY** and work to make market systems more inclusive for them.

**SUPPORT WOMEN'S FULL PARTICIPATION** in decision-making processes regarding the development of their community and society.

**BUILD THE INTELLECTUAL CAPACITIES** of state and non-state organizations to incorporate the needs and interests of women and girls when developing policies, programs and practices.

**DEVELOP AN APPROACH THAT IS FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTED** to the specifics of each environment, and ensure that men feel fully engaged in the values of equality and equity by getting them directly involved as allies and co-beneficiaries in the promotion of women's rights and equality.

**SUPPORT LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS AND FEMINIST NETWORKS** that bolster women's and girls' capacity to act collectively to defend their rights and organize.

During natural disasters, the risk of death is 14 times greater for women than for men.





**ENSURE THAT OUR ORGANIZATION'S APPROACHES AND PROCESSES** use an intersectional approach to support the development and implementation of projects that take into account the intertwining of different systems of inequality and oppression and the resulting discrimination that occurs.

**INTEGRATE EQUALITY AND EQUITY** at every level of our organization and build our institutional capacities accordingly by encouraging women's participation in management and leadership roles in relations with our partners.

CECI believes that equality between women and men benefits everyone. Women and girls will benefit because they will be able to make their own decisions, enjoy better access to education and health services, and no longer be subject to any sort of violence. Men and boys will benefit because they will no longer be subject to rigid, harmful norms of masculinity that are rooted in domination of the other. Whole societies and countries will benefit because they will be able to generate sustainable economic growth through a rights-based approach, if the barriers to women's economic empowerment are lifted.





# OUR COMMITMENT

**Through its programs, projects and interventions for sustainable development, volunteer cooperation and humanitarian assistance, CECI aims to:**

**PROMOTE AND ADHERE TO AN APPROACH** that fosters civic engagement, respect for human rights, and the right of women and men to independent decision-making in all development activities implemented by CECI.

Women play a central role in agriculture in developing countries and make up an average of 43% of the workforce. And yet, they have less access to resources and opportunities. If women enjoyed the same

**ANALYZE DEVELOPMENT** issues by systematically integrating gender inequality analysis, including intersectional variables. This analysis must deepen understanding of the environment and identify the constraints and opportunities that must be addressed to promote equality and equity between all people.

**PUT INTO PLACE MEASURES** that encourage women's and girls' meaningful participation and take into account their specific needs and interests, and the different intersectional ways in which they are excluded.

If there is a disaster or a crisis, **DEVELOP PROGRAMS AND SOLUTIONS THAT ARE ADAPTED** to the specific conditions and needs of women and girls, ensuring that they are protected and encouraged to fully participate in reconstruction and risk mitigation.

**MAINSTREAM A GENDER EQUALITY APPROACH** integrating gender issues into all the goals and target outcomes of policies, programmes and projects, and a specific approach targeting the strategic interests of women and girls based on their conditions, as well as the institutional and social practices that perpetuate inequality between men and women.

**DEVELOP WORKING APPROACHES WITH MEN AND BOYS** aimed at positive masculinity. Identify specific strategies that resonate with them and convince them to engage in fighting inequality that specifically affects women and girls.

**DEVELOP MONITORING AND EVALUATION MECHANISMS** that measure the impact of its policy and interventions on women and men, girls and boys, and that raise awareness about different types of exclusion.

**PROMOTE AN OPEN DIALOGUE** with partners in order to develop a common understanding of the objectives of this policy.

access to land, financial services, technical training and markets that men enjoy, agricultural production would rise by 20 to 30%<sup>2</sup>.

**Within the organization, CECI commits to:**

**PROMOTE** the meaningful participation of all women at every level of CECI's organizational structure, in all its offices throughout the world.

**INFORM** and sensitize members, staff, volunteers and partners to the approach set out in this policy and ensure that everyone takes ownership of implementing it.

**ENSURE** that CECI's values of equity, respect, cooperation, integrity and commitment are fully integrated and put into practice by its members and all staff, whether they are based in Canada or elsewhere in the world. This commitment requires "zero tolerance" for any inappropriate behaviour, harassment or violence.

**SUPPORT** the development and distribution of information and analysis tools to staff and partners, and promote approaches favouring the systematization and sharing of lessons learned on advancing equality between women and men.

**DEVELOP** human resources policies and organizational practices that promote a good work-life balance for staff, both women and men.

**ESTABLISH** recruitment and onboarding mechanisms through which staff take ownership of this policy that is so firmly rooted in the organization's culture.

**INTEGRATE** staff accountability mechanisms into the implementation and monitoring of this policy.

**SUPPORT** the Institutional Gender Equality Committee in its role of providing advice and oversight regarding this policy.

While the proportion of women in parliaments and congresses around the world has increased, the global average remains below 23.83%<sup>3</sup>. The primary school enrolment rate for girls is growing and reached 89%



**CECI commits to doing the following with its partners:**

**ESTABLISH PARTNER RELATIONS** with women's organizations and feminist networks working to promote, defend and strengthen women's rights.

**PROMOTE AND INCREASE** South-South, North-South and South-North exchanges between women's networks.

**CONNECT NORTH AND SOUTH WOMEN'S NETWORKS** with CECI's other partners to foster sharing, integration and alliances with a view to reaching gender equality objectives.

**DEVELOP STRATEGIC ALLIANCES** with women's organization networks from the South and the North, and with men working for equality.

**PARTICIPATE IN A POLITICAL DIALOGUE** the Policy on Gender Equality, Rights and Diversity.

**ENSURE THAT ALL PARTNERSHIPS** established through projects and programs commit to gender equality, maintain an ongoing dialogue and support the improvement of policies and practices.



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in 2016, according to World Bank data. But the rate of children who do not attend school remains higher for girls than for boys. Two thirds of all illiterate people in the world are women<sup>4</sup>.



# DEFINITIONS

## EQUALITY

Equality refers to 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

Equity refers to the fact that women and men, girls and boys must be treated fairly in accordance with their potential and enjoy equal opportunities, with consideration for unfavourable conditions that apply to them. Equity contributes to equality.

Women earn less than men for the same job, and are more likely to have precarious employment or work in the informal sector. This situation can be accentuated by ethnocultural background or other

## INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the recognition that various power relations exist and coincide, with compounding effects, and that the resulting inequality and oppression varies from one person to the next. Specifically, working towards gender equality, intersectionality takes into account the compounded effects that can influence a person's situation, such as their ethnocultural background, social class, caste, age, physical or intellectual disability, sexual identity or orientation, or any other factor of inequality. Therefore, in analyzing inequalities between women and men, instead of looking at different factors separately, we examine how they connect and interact to engender and intensify discrimination. Intersectionality makes it possible to design and implement projects aimed at all women and girls, with consideration for their diversity, ability to act or challenges faced.

## POSITIVE MASCULINITIES

Masculine identity and feminine identity refer to what *socially* distinguishes men from women and boys from girls. It is the *construction* of masculine and feminine roles and the assignment of distinct responsibilities that create (or justify) relations of male dominance over women, leading to unequal rights between women and men. These *socially constructed* relations are also referred to as gender relations. Working with men and addressing masculinities must incorporate a vision of transforming unequal relations between women and men, and between boys and girls, through the positive roles that men can play in eradicating inequalities. This underscores the range of masculinities and builds upon those that support equality between women and men. Lastly, it is also a matter of questioning the system of domination over both women and men who do not conform to the dominant model. It is critical to work with men as part of the solution towards gender equality.

intersectional variables. Women do the greatest amount of unpaid work in households, creating a “time deficit” that reduces their economic opportunities and perspectives for financial independence.<sup>5</sup>

## MAINSTREAMING AT CECI

Mainstreaming is the full integration of the *Policy on Gender Equality, Rights and Diversity* objectives into all of the actions of the organization, in terms of its orientations, programs and projects, and in the management of its human, material and financial resources. This implies a political willingness to promote equality between women and men at the highest level of the organization and requires straight-forward accountability and responsibility mechanisms at every level. This requires setting up operational mechanisms that promote equality, rights and diversity, and that translate intentions in concrete ways, such as through building staff capacities, developing and sharing tools, and capitalizing on good practices and lessons learned. Lastly, it means devoting the necessary human and material resources.

## EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment depends on a person's interaction with the possibilities in their surrounding environment to strengthen their capacities and willingness to influence decisions that affect their conditions and quality of life. It is an essential prerequisite for the political, social, economic, cultural and environmental advancement of all peoples. It applies to the development process as much as it does to results. Women's empowerment is defined as women's strengthened capacity to translate their knowledge into action or resources by broadening the range of choices and opportunities to which they have access, using a process to develop their capacity to act and decide with full autonomy.

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### Notes

1. WHO, *Global and regional estimates of violence against women*, 2013
2. FAO, *Gender in Agriculture, Closing the Knowledge Gap*, 2014
3. Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in national parliaments*, 2018
4. UNESCO, *World atlas of gender equality in education*, 2012
5. UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, [www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures](http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures)