

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Revised version approved by the Board of Directors on March 30, 2021



CECI's mission is to combat poverty and exclusion through sustainable development projects in Africa, Asia and the Americas, since 1958.

CECI's mission is to fight poverty, exclusion and inequalities.

To this end, CECI builds the capacities of disadvantaged communities to enhance their economic development; supports initiatives that promote gender equality, combat violence, support food security as well as climate change resilience and adaptation; mobilizes resources and fosters knowledge sharing.

Constantly striving for more innovation and efficiency, CECI works to provide sustainable development solutions through programs and projects implemented with strategic partners.

Through all CECI interventions, its relations with partners in the South become ever more egalitarian.

The strengthening of democratic governance and the protection of the environment are systematically integrated throughout CECI's programming.

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy defines CECI's orientations and commitments in terms of sustainable development. CECI relies on the commitment of its staff and on a collaborative approach with its stakeholders for the implementation of this policy, in order to contribute to a more resilient, prosperous and sustainable society.

2. BACKGROUND

For decades, the development model that focused on economic growth rather than sustainability has accentuated economic inequalities and social exclusion, which primarily affect women, girls and other marginalized populations. It also accelerated climate change and the degradation of the environment. Since its creation, CECI has participated in the search for solutions that focus on sustainability.

For CECI, fighting poverty and working for equality and inclusion go hand in hand with the notion of sustainable development, defined as follows: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."¹ Sustainable development is thus based on "a long-term approach that takes into account the inextricable nature of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development activities".²

The efforts made to date to reduce inequalities and exclusion were met with success, but it is clear today that any sudden disaster, such as a pandemic, can lead to significant setbacks in areas where progress had taken several decades to materialize. As for the fight against climate change, efforts made by governments fall short in the face of the urgency felt by the most affected populations.

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1. UN, 1987. World Commission on Environment and Development. Brundtland Report (Our Common Future).

2. National Assembly of Quebec (2006). Sustainable Development Act, c. D-8.1.1.
<http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cs/D-8.1.1>

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In its new 2020–2025 Strategic Framework, CECI has taken all these issues into account as well as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030). CECI then updated its Sustainable Development Policy to ensure its coherence with the new Strategic Framework, thus reaffirming its desire to make sustainable development the backbone of its interventions around the world, as well as its preferred way to carry out its mission.

To this end, CECI calls for concrete measures supporting the three pillars of sustainable development, with human development as a common thread: 1) the achievement of social equity, 2) the pursuit of economic efficiency, and 3) environmental sustainability. These measures are integrated in and adapted to the organization's day-to-day operation, projects and programs, and interactions with stakeholders. By doing so, CECI wishes not only to adapt to the changing international context, but also to ensure that its projects and all activities are up to current challenges.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ARE MAJOR OBSTACLES TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL

To structure its sustainable development approach and ensure its alignment with the organization's vision, values, objectives and institutional policies, CECI draws upon Quebec's *Sustainable Development Act*,³ which presents 16 key principles to ensure the economic efficiency, social equity and environmental integrity of all development activities. Drawing from these principles, CECI chooses to follow an intervention framework that meets the highest internationally recognized standards in order to carry out its mission.

SOCIAL EQUITY

To ensure its interventions contribute to the achievement of social equity, CECI follows these principles:

- **Gender equality and women empowerment:** Sustainable development implies that actions are taken to eliminate gender inequalities and ensure non-discriminatory access to education, employment and trades. CECI's Policy on Gender Equality, Rights and Diversity is the guide for all initiatives in this area. The "Women's Rights and Economic Empowerment" and "Women, Key Players in Resilience and Climate Action" programming priorities aim to further support the application of this principle.
- **Equity, Social Solidarity and Global Cooperation:** Actions for development must be undertaken by mobilizing local citizen participation, ensuring equity between individuals regardless of differences in generation, culture, religion, sex, sexual orientation, etc., in a spirit of solidarity, mutual aid and cooperation, both at national and international levels.

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3. National Assembly of Quebec (2006). Sustainable Development Act, c. D-8.1.1.
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- **Health, Safety and Quality of Life:** CECI places people at the centre of its work in sustainable development, aiming to improve their quality of life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To contribute to economic development, CECI bases its strategy on:

- **The Fight Against Poverty and Hunger:** CECI fights poverty and hunger by focusing on climate-resilient farming practices that have the potential to improve the health and quality of life of populations in the long term.
- **Economic Efficiency:** CECI's work is based on sustainable economic solutions that generate wealth and well-being for the communities by focusing on innovation, green and sustainable technologies, as well as the principles of circular economy. This is why the resilience of economic systems in the face of natural or anthropogenic shocks is a key objective of CECI's projects.

PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

To contribute to environmental protection, CECI uses a rigorous approach, drawing from best practices, which aims to identify, very early on, from the design phase of any activity, the potential impacts (beneficial or negative) of said activity on the environment and on human health and, where appropriate, to identify applicable environmental sustainability measures. This approach is based on the following principles:

- **Integrating Environmental Protection and the Fight Against Climate Change:** CECI's work should help preserve and improve the quality of the environment while taking into account the threat of climate change. This means that all actions must aim to protect biodiversity, ecosystems, common heritage and cultural diversity, whether it be landscapes, places, traditions, languages or knowledge related to sustainable development. This also requires compliance with environmental laws and regulations and the promotion of climate justice.
- **Promotion of Responsible Production and Consumption:** CECI must use and promote the use of resources in a rational and sustainable manner, avoiding waste and overconsumption, and reducing its sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The objective of carbon-neutrality for its activities is related to this principle.
- **Continuing Improvement of Environmental Performance:** Commitment to the protection of the environment must be taken into account in all of CECI's decision-making processes at all levels. This includes the definition of strategic directions, investments, contracting, recruitment and staff training, business development, events organization and stakeholder relations. CECI focuses on environmental management based on transparency, monitoring and evaluation in order to improve its performance and enhance its practices.

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4. CECI'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Goal

CECI aims to integrate sustainable development principles throughout its activities to promote responsible economic development and thus reduce socio-economic inequalities, strengthen social inclusion, in particular for women and girls, and ensure environmental sustainability, taking into account the risks associated with climate change.

Approach

At CECI, the integration of sustainable development at the organizational level means balancing economic, social and environmental concerns by adopting a long-term perspective. That said, CECI's mission is interwoven with the concept of sustainable development. The achievement of an inclusive world, free of poverty and inequalities, largely depends on economic development viability, placing the equitable well-being of all individuals at the heart of its concerns and ensuring environmental sustainability. At CECI, the operationalization of sustainable development calls for a holistic approach, constantly seeking for synergies between all organizational components, functions and stakeholders, to ensure that results exceed expectations.

This Sustainable Development Policy must be taken up by everyone at CECI, leaving no possible doubt as to its application. CECI members and staff must share a common understanding of sustainable development and be committed to ensuring its implementation and durability. **Everyone must therefore take full account of CECI's mission and commitments set out in this policy, as well as its resulting responsibilities.**

Scope of the Policy

This Sustainable Development Policy applies to all of CECI's activities, including its facilities, staff, operations and projects in Canada and in country offices. It also applies to the board of directors, country advisory committees, members of the Corporation, as well as volunteer cooperation programs, interns, volunteers and consultants.

The adoption or revision of any CECI policy or institutional strategy must take this Sustainable Development Policy into account.⁴

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4. CECI's Sustainable Development Policy does not apply to partners or individuals who do not directly participate in the organization's activities.

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5. CECI'S COMMITMENT

In its programs, projects, volunteer cooperation and humanitarian work, CECI is committed to:

- Support and adopt an approach fostering **citizen participation, respect for human rights and the right to independent decision-making** for women and men in all development processes implemented by CECI. In particular, CECI **encourages the participation of women and girls**, values their ancestral knowledge and know-how in environmental decision-making, and their right to self-determination;
- **Reduce socio-economic inequalities** by promoting projects that improve the quality of life of the target populations, through a local governance that is respectful of the environment and human rights;
- **Ensure the protection of the environment and fight climate change**, while recognizing the critical roles that women can play as agents of change;
- **Encourage sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture** that reduces negative environmental impacts and ensures economic and social development, as well as a fair redistribution of agricultural profits among all those involved, as agriculture is the main economic activity in CECI's countries of intervention;
- **Develop both a transversal approach** integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development and **a specific approach** for the protection of the environment and the fight against climate change, while taking the strategic interests of **women** and girls into account to reduce inequalities;
- **Implement an integrated programming approach** positioning humanitarian aid as a **springboard** for sustainable development by continuing to implement the humanitarian-development NEXUS approach,⁵ and
- **Foster open dialogue with the projects, programs and activities stakeholders** to share and develop concerted approaches and reach sustainable development goals, including through advocacy, and with regard to climate justice in particular.

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5. "Nexus approach," "Nexus programming" or "the Nexus": an approach or framework that takes into account both the immediate and the long-term needs of affected populations and strengthens the opportunities for peace. (Oxfam QC, 2019)

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Within the organization, CECI commits to:

- **Institutionalize the policy's objectives** across all functions of the organization, in terms of its orientations, programs and projects as well as in the management of its human, material and financial resources;
- **Establish** an institutional sustainable development committee to guide and monitor the implementation of this policy;
- **Develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** to measure the impact of its policy and interventions according to the three dimensions of sustainable development, and publish annual reports;
- **Inform and raise awareness** among its members, staff, volunteers and partners on the approach outlined in this policy and hold each individual **accountable** for its implementation;
- **Foster the development and dissemination** of sustainable initiatives, as well as information and analysis tools among staff and partners to encourage the systematization and sharing of lessons learned with regard to the promotion of sustainable development; and
- **Promote a fair, healthy and safe work environment through the entire organization, its projects and programs and their staff by** generating a safe work environment that meets labour standards, fosters creativity and is free from harassment, while ensuring the personal development and well-being of all employees.

In its day-to-day operations, CECI is committed to adopting environmentally friendly management practices and a responsible behaviour, incorporating the principles of sustainable development through the following measures:

- Set up **responsible procurement systems** by selecting eco-friendly suppliers in order to incorporate sustainable practices.
- Improve the **management of residual materials** in its offices and activities by applying the principle of 3RV+Ed⁶: reduction at source, reuse, recycling, giving new value, and education.
- Reduce and improve the management of **energy consumption** (transport and buildings), as well as **water resources**.
- Ensure the accounting and **reduction of its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions** and other types of pollution with the aim of **becoming a carbon neutral organization**.

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6. The 3RV-Ed principle (reduction at source, reuse, recycling, giving new value, and elimination) was adapted by the Université de Sherbrooke, which replaced elimination with education in order to emphasize the importance of information, awareness and education in the transmission of eco-responsible behaviour. Université de Sherbrooke, 2018. Plan de développement durable 2018– 2022 – Stratégie de gestion des matières résiduelles, 21 p. Canada.

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In its relations with partners, CECI commits to:

- **Establish partnerships** with environmental and climate change organizations by promoting their institutional strengthening;
- **Develop strategic alliances** with networks of environmental and climate change organizations in the South and in the North;
- **Foster and intensify exchanges** among the networks of environmental and climate change organizations (South-South, North-South and South-North exchanges);
- **Connect networks of environmental and climate change organizations** in the South and the North with other partners, creating an enabling environment for exchange, integration and alliances to achieve sustainable development goals;
- **Participate in political** dialogue through advocacy activities on environmental protection and the fight against climate change; and
- **Ensure that all project and program partners** support this policy and are committed to the reduction of socio-economic inequalities, environmental protection and the fight against climate change.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

To ensure the successful implementation of this policy and the effectiveness of its monitoring in order for the entire organization to act in accordance with it, CECI is committed to establishing clear accountability mechanisms. It also commits to sharing learning and good practices to support the promotion of sustainable development principles.

CECI's Board of Directors is committed to supporting the application of this policy and allowing necessary financial resources for its implementation by management. A report to the Board of Directors on the application of the policy will be made once a year.

CECI's Ethics and Governance Committee is responsible for reviewing the adequacy of this policy, taking into account relevant changes, evolving laws and standards, and for suggesting amendments to the Board of Directors, if necessary.

The Executive Management is responsible for setting up and ensuring the operation of the institutional sustainable development committee, whose mandate is to mobilize, coordinate and support all stakeholders in the implementation of operational mechanisms to achieve the policy's objectives.

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DEFINITIONS



Climate Changes: For the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): any change over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity. In the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the term refers only to changes resulting from human activities.⁷

Equality: Equality refers to the rights of women and men before the law and in 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 fully enjoy their rights.⁸

Environment: The context in which an organism functions, including air, water, soil, natural resources, flora, fauna, human beings and their interrelationships.⁹

Equity: Equity refers to the fact that women and men, girls and boys, should all be treated fairly in accordance with their possibilities and enjoy equal opportunities, taking into account the conditions that are unfavourable to them. Equity contributes to equality.¹⁰

Governance: The government (or governance) of the company is a set of legal, regulatory or practical provisions which delimit the extent of the power and responsibilities of those responsible for providing sustainable guidance to the [organization]. Guiding the organization means making and controlling the decisions that have a determining effect on sustainability and therefore its performance regarding sustainability.¹¹

Green Technologies: Goods and services used to measure, prevent and limit pollution in order to improve the environmental conditions of air, water, soil, waste and noise-related problems; they should be affordable, adaptable and available in developing country markets for distribution and export.¹²

Circular Economy: Circular economy is defined as a “system of production, exchange and consumption aimed at optimizing the use of resources at all stages of the life cycle of a good or service, in a circular logic, while reducing its environmental footprint and contributing to the well-being of individuals and communities” (source: Pôle québécois de concertation sur l'économie circulaire).¹³

7. See <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/03/wg2TARannexB.pdf>, accessed April 19, 2021

8. CECI, 2018, Policy on Gender Equality, Right and Diversity

9. International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 2015. ISO 14001:2015 standard: Environmental Management Systems – Requirements and guidelines for its use

10. CECI, 2018, Policy on Gender Equality, Right and Diversity

11. Cadieux and Dion (under the direction of), 2012, *Manuel de gestion du développement durable en entreprise : une approche progressive – En appui à la norme BNQ 21000*, Fides.

12. International Trade Forum. <https://www.forumducommerce.org/Technologies-vertes-Des-opportunit%a9s-pour-le-commerce-Sud-Sud/> page consulted on March 23, 2021

13. RECYC-QUÉBEC, <https://www.recyc-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/entreprises-organismes/mieux-gerer/economie-circulaire>, page consulted on March 23, 2021

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Climate Justice: Climate justice means addressing the climate crisis not only as an environmental issue, but as a complex issue of social justice, focusing on the populations who are most vulnerable to its effects. This means addressing the root causes of the climate crisis, including production and consumption practices and trade agreements models, while advancing equity and the protection and fulfillment of human rights.¹⁴

3RV + E: The 3RV-E principle (reduction at source, reuse, recycling, giving new value and elimination) was put forward by the Ministry of Environment and Fight Against Climate Change (MELCC) in its 2011–2015 Sustainable Development Action Plan. The Université de Sherbrooke (UdeS), in its 2018–2022 Residual Materials Management Strategy, which was adopted as part of its Sustainable Development Plan covering the same period, brings a fundamental nuance to this principle by replacing the elimination of residual materials with education, thus changing the principle to 3RV+E. In line with its mission as a university, this amendment aims to highlight “the importance of information, awareness, and education in the transmission of ecologically responsible behaviour”.

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14. AQOCI, <https://aqoci.qc.ca/pour-une-justice-climatique-feministe/> page consulted on March 23, 2021