



ACGC

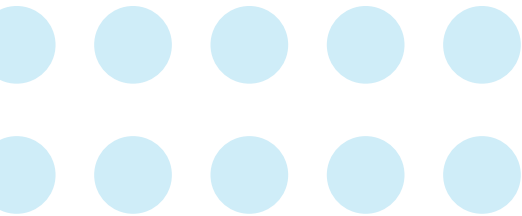
ALBERTA COUNCIL FOR
GLOBAL COOPERATION

Procedures and Policy

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

Policy name: Women's Rights and Gender Equality Policy

Policy type: Organizational



POLICY STATEMENT

The Women's Rights and Gender Equality Policy serves to define and describe ACGC's commitment to promoting women's rights and gender equality through a feminist approach.

SCOPE

The responsibility to advance women's rights and gender equality is the responsibility of all.

This policy applies both to ACGC's role as an employer and to its work in supporting its members. As such, the policy applies to all members of the Board of Directors and to all staff and volunteers of ACGC, and in the programming and policy work of the organization.

Please note: Definitions for key terms are included in the appendix of this document.

CONTEXT

ACGC's is committed to international cooperation that is people-centred, democratic, just, inclusive, and respectful of the environment and Indigenous cultures. ACGC works towards ending poverty and achieving a peaceful and healthy world, with dignity and full participation for all.

Further, ACGC is committed to realization of women's rights and gender equality as a goal in and of itself -- and as instrumental in the achievement of other development objectives.

In the United Nations' Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, gender equality is acknowledged as central to sustainable development. This is clearly demonstrated by Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality and the targets that cut across all 17 goals.

A commitment to gender equality and to challenging all kinds of systemic oppression, grounded in a feminist, human rights and intersectional approach*, is integral to realizing sustainable and people-centred development. This is particularly true in the current global context. There is a tremendous opportunity for Canada to advance such a commitment to gender equality. Yet this is also a time of backlash and organized resistance against feminism and gender equality, and shrinking space globally for civil society, including women's rights and feminist organizations and movements.

*Intersectionality can be summarily defined as an analytic framework which attempts to identify how interlocking systems of power impact those who are most marginalized in society.

Internationally, concepts, approaches and practices towards realizing equality for women and historically oppressed peoples have evolved. Feminist approaches now bring an intersectional perspective: deconstructing established hierarchies; drawing attention to multiple forms of discrimination; and avoiding simplistic or inaccurate gender binaries and dichotomies. Women's rights and gender equality organizations and feminist activists continue to articulate a positive vision for the future. They push for change, hold governments accountable for their international commitments and build the capacities of civil society organizations and social movements to work towards equality and justice. They work to build independent and inclusive women's movements, and advocate for gender equality and women's rights within other global movements. And they bring gender equality issues and analysis to discussions of development, humanitarian assistance, trade, debt, the environment and peace and security.

Despite these efforts, the ACGC acknowledges that equality is still not a reality in Canada or elsewhere. ACGC recognizes that gender inequalities are complex and multifaceted, and interwoven with various other systems of power and oppression. Work on this issue is inherently and unavoidably political as well as personal, socioeconomic, and programmatic. An organization's approach to women's rights and gender equality must include attention to issues of diversity and power across all forms of identities, acknowledging that identities coexist and intersect.

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General Principles

ACGC will support and help lead efforts in Alberta to advance women's rights and gender equality globally, through collaboration with civil society from Alberta, Canada and around the world.

To achieve this, ACGC will champion gender equality and women's rights as both a stand-alone objective, and as central to achieving other global goals.

ACGC will link with provincial, national and international initiatives which share similar goals; ensure robust feminist analysis across all of ACGC advocacy work; integrate these considerations in the services and programmes it provides to members and its broader constituency; and take consistent action within the organization itself.

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ACGC will consistently and visibly undertake to be a leader in feminist analysis of international assistance and advocate for progress on global women's rights agendas.

It will incorporate a gender and feminist analysis into its governance, programming, analysis, and organizational practices, and will work to ensure gender analysis is integrated into these elements, including through explicit and ambitious measures concerning ACGC's commitment to women's rights and gender equality. ACGC will make appropriate efforts to mobilize financial and human resources to help put this policy into practice.

In order to ensure the maintenance of high standards, ACGC will reflect and report on the progress of its internal institutional work and external work with members on women's rights and gender equality in a specific annual report for this policy, in the workplans for the organization, in an evaluation of the implementation of this policy presented to the Board annually as part of the Executive Director's report to the AGM. These reflections and reports will yield recommendations for improvement.

Strategies

A) Governance

Objective 1: ACGC will ensure that its governance structures facilitate and reflect its commitment to women's rights and gender equality.

In support of this objective, ACGC will strive to:

- Maintain gender equity in Board membership, including with respect to the selection of the Chair and Vice-Chair.
- Identify, and strive to remove or reduce barriers that prevent or discourage the participation of women in ACGC's Board, committees, management, and staff.
- Encourage a governance culture that honours, includes and facilitates a diversity of voices and ways of participating for all genders. This includes ensuring that decision-making processes enable a range of styles of participation that are suited to the issue at hand, and to the diversity of perspectives and styles of all Board members, regardless of gender, orientation or cultural background, with particular attention to the perspectives of women of colour, Indigenous women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and

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others who have not been traditionally included in decision-making processes.

- Build the capacity of Board members to ensure that they demonstrate gender-sensitive, and even gender transformative, attitudes and behaviours.
- Ensure that gender equality dimensions and consequences of all Board discussions and decisions are given due consideration.

B) Programming

Objective 2: ACGC will strengthen its internal capacities, and work to strengthen those of its members and the broader sector, to carry out gender and feminist analysis in policy and programming processes and activities, and to advance gender equality and gender transformative outcomes.

In support of this objective, ACGC will strive to:

- Prioritize training for ACGC staff to enable them to bring deeper gender-transformative analysis to their work, and to integrate findings into effective programming and policy work.
- Network with women's rights and gender equality organizations [Albertan, Canadian and international] to help inform the ACGC's work and realize the objectives of this policy.
- Support members' analysis and advocacy efforts related to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Strengthen gender analysis to incorporate ongoing and explicit attention to women's rights and intersectional perspectives, and to realize gender transformative outcomes in the programmatic work of ACGC, its members and the broader sector. This should include ensuring that goals, objectives and activities for all programmatic work explicitly demonstrate at a minimum a gender-sensitive approach, and ultimately a gender-transformative one.
- Support organizational practices among its members that promote women's rights and contribute to greater gender equality, including those related to the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct and gender-based violence.
- Collaborate in work to hold the Canadian government accountable to addressing gender inequalities across all international initiatives

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as well as the implementation of its Feminist International Assistance Policy.

- Support members in building their capacity with respect to feminist analysis in policy and program development, and monitoring and evaluation.

C) Organizational Practices

Objective 3: ACGC will ensure a supportive, equitable and inclusive work culture through appropriate organizational decision-making and human resources policies and practices.

In support of this objective, ACGC will strive to:

- Pursue an organizational environment and decision-making processes that include and value varied perspectives, voices and priorities.
- Ensure that a positive work environment, free of all forms of harassment, abuse and discrimination, is upheld by all management, staff and volunteers. This will include putting in place mechanisms to enable and encourage those who experience or witness misconduct to come forward, and to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and prevented from causing any further harm.
- Ensure that staffing and human resources management decisions related to hiring, training, transfers and promotions are grounded in a concern for gender equity, as well as other historical workplace inequalities.
- Ensure that ACGC's policies and practices are responsive to and reflect ACGC's priority to promote a healthy work/life balance and a family-friendly work environment for all, including in relation to physical and mental health.
- Ensure that any and all ACGC-led activities encourage a gender balance in terms of participants, and guarantee gender equity in terms of presenters.

Obligations

The following responsibilities and reporting requirements apply to this policy:

- The Board and Executive Director are ultimately responsible for the

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implementation of this policy and for ensuring that staff have the time, knowledge and resources to fulfil this mandate.

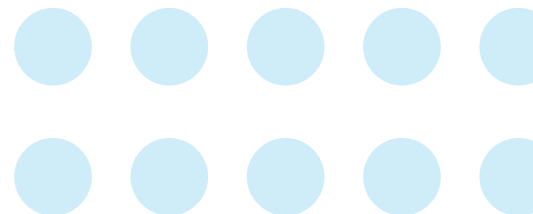
- The Board Chair is responsible for ensuring a climate conducive to upholding this policy during Board meetings and as part of overall governance.
- All staff have a responsibility to work towards the realization of the goal and objectives outlined in this policy.
- As part of ACGC's planning and evaluation cycle, an action plan will be developed for this policy and evaluated in terms of specific actions, responsibilities, resources and timeframe related to the accomplishment of goals of this policy. The action plan will be integrated into the broader strategic plan for the organization.
- The Executive Director will report to the Board in September each year on the implementation of the action plan, and dedicate time for Board and staff reflection and review (achievements, gaps, challenges and lessons learned). This reflection may lead to further recommendations and changes to the action plan.

Approval Date: 5 September 2018

Date of Last Amendment: 25 August 2018

Date of Reaffirmation: Spring 2020, 20 December 2021

Date for Review: Fall 2023





APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS

There is significant discussion around what words and concepts mean. For the purposes of this policy, key terms include:

Agency: An individual or group's ability to make choices, and to transform those choices into desired outcomes. Feminist agency includes principles of autonomy, choice, empowerment and meaningful engagement.

Agency allows us to recognize that individuals are experts and knowledge holders in their own right. [Source: A Feminist Approach to Canada's International Assistance, Inter Pares, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and Oxfam Canada, July 2016.]

Feminism and feminsit: Feminism is ultimately the belief that the full realization of women's rights is the pre-condition for equality between the sexes. A feminist approach must seek to address the root causes of structural and systemic inequalities and transform systems of power, many of which are grounded in social constructions of gender and patriarchal attempts to control women's bodies and choices. Central to the implementation of a feminist approach are: intersectionality agency and process. In the latter case, feminist process implies integrity, contextualization, learning, collaboration, participation, inclusivity and responsiveness. [Source: Adapted from A Feminist Approach to Canada's International Assistance, Inter Pares, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and Oxfam Canada, July 2016.]

Gender: Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of all people, including definitions that limit gender identities. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes, sexual orientation, and likely behaviours of people of all genders (femininity and masculinity). These roles and expectations are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures. Gender analysis has increasingly revealed how women's subordination, and the subordination of people who do not conform to a gender binary, is socially constructed, and therefore able to change, as opposed to being biologically predetermined and therefore static. [Source: Adapted from the CIDA Gender Policy]

Gender analysis: Gender analysis is the systematic attempt to identify key issues contributing to gender inequalities so that they can be properly addressed. Gender analysis provides the basis for gender mainstreaming and can be described as the study of differences in the conditions, needs, participation rates, access to resources and development, control of assets, decision-making powers, etc., between people in their assigned

Please note: Definitions from the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)

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gender roles [Source: European Commission (1998), One Hundred Words for Equality: A glossary of terms on equality between women and men (DG Employment and Social Affairs), http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/glossary/glossary_en.pdf]

Gender balance: Equilibrium in numbers and power between people of all genders taking part in an activity, a structure or organization. Achieving gender balance generally requires a “rebalancing” of power, attitudes and authority to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent people of all genders from otherwise operating as equals. [Based on / adapted from: Glossary, EuropeAid. http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/gender/glossary_en.htm]

Gender equality: The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys, and gender non-binary people. Equality does not mean that people of all genders will become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born (or assigned at birth) as male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men, including members of racialized and LGBTQ+ communities. Gender equality is not a women’s issue, but should concern and fully engage men, as well as women and people of all genders. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development. [Source: Adapted from Concepts and definitions, UN Women, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>]

Gender equity: A means for achieving gender equality. Gender equity means being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures are often needed to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating as equals. [Source: Canada’s Policy on Gender Equality, <http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng>.]

Gender sensitive: This tends to refer to more general analysis which takes gender issues into account. For example, in the analysis of a specific trade policy, if the analysis incorporates gender issues into the general analysis, then the analysis could be considered to be “gender-sensitive”. Gender sensitive tends to meet the different needs of women, girls, men, boys and gender non-binary people where they are at, without a focus on changing deep social norms and power dynamics.

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Gender transformative: In contrast to gender sensitive (addressing current needs), gender transformative seeks to completely overhaul existing systems of power and privilege that result in and perpetuate gender unequal outcomes. Gender transformative approaches address root causes of gender inequality through an intersectional power analysis.

Intersectionality: a framework that recognizes the multiple aspects of social categorization and identity that combine, overlap and intersect in our lives and experiences, such as class, race and gender, and that compound and exacerbate oppression and marginalization of an individual or a group. It also challenges us to expand our understanding of gender beyond binaries (woman/man, femininity/masculinity). Adopting an intersectional approach allows us to identify and address complex contexts, and formulate strategies to best meet the needs of those intended to benefit from initiatives. [Adapted from the definition of intersectionality in A Feminist Approach to Canada's International Assistance, Inter Pares, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and Oxfam Canada, July 2016.]

Women's Rights: Women's rights refer to the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, and which are enshrined in international conventions and covenants beginning with the International Bill of Human Rights. [See 10-Point Agenda for a table on the Rights Evolution]. The obligation to eliminate sex and gender -based discrimination against women to achieve gender equality is an essential piece of the international human rights framework. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reinforces the commitment to women's rights, providing specific guidance on the range of actions that must be taken to achieve gender equality. [Source: 10-Point Agenda].

