

SOCODEVI POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY



POLICY RATIONALE

Poverty has been substantially reduced in the world over the last thirty years but unfortunately not everyone has benefited to the same extent. Gender equality has not yet been achieved.

Around the world women are facing, to varying degrees, persistent structural barriers which prevent them from fully enjoying their rights and which also undermine efforts deployed to improve their living standards.

As a matter of fact, gender equality is a determining factor for increasing the pace of sustainable development and is absolutely essential for eradicating poverty.

SOCODEVI, GENDER EQUALITY AND COOPERATIVES

Our mission is to contribute to sustainable development in our partner countries with a view to empowering their inhabitants

Gender equality is one of our core values. We are actively striving to close the gender gap and strengthen women's empowerment.

*We rely on **structure-enhancing projects aimed at inclusive and sustainable economic development** that takes gender inequality into consideration with the aim of eradication.*



When women are able to develop their full economic potential – whether as agricultural producers, employees, entrepreneurs or business leaders – economies thrive and the benefits of growth reach more people.



*Global Affairs Canada, 2017
Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy*

Concretely, the cooperative and mutual model that we advocate is an effective tool for empowering women.

Effective application of **cooperative principles** creates an environment that is favourable to inclusion and to inequalities reduction within cooperative organization, as well as within the communities that welcome them.

Because they **serve their members**, cooperatives have the potential to meet the specific needs of women as producers, entrepreneurs and members-users in their communities.

When they foster **inclusive governance**, cooperatives can also contribute to strengthening women's leadership and their decision-making power.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following fundamental principles guide all our interventions and direct our decisions:



Gender equality is a **human rights** issue.



The eradication of poverty necessarily entails a **decrease in gender inequality** and a transformation of the power relationships between genders.



Strengthening the empowerment of women provides fundamental positive action towards achieving equality and building sustainable development. The power of women to make choices, their full participation in decision making, along with their access to, and control of resources, must be enshrined in all spheres of society - within the family, among local authorities, within community organizations and producers' associations, right up to the highest levels of decision-making.



A **participatory and inclusive approach to development is indispensable** to guarantee that the needs of the targeted populations are matched with the action taken. Making sure that the voices of women, men, young people and minority groups are heard at each phase of a project cycle is a valuable investment in its success.



A **holistic and multidimensional vision of development is essential**. The economic, political, social and environmental aspects of development are all thoroughly linked. Sustainable economic empowerment for all members of the community cannot be accomplished without addressing the issues surrounding power relations, political participation, systemic discrimination and social marginalization.



Both men and women have important roles to play in changing traditions, beliefs, behaviour, attitudes and in transforming the institutions that perpetuate gender inequality.



OUR WINNING STRATEGIES



The following winning strategies have proven their worth in a multitude of contexts and we are an advocate for them in our projects.

1

Strive for **parity and diversity in our work environment**. Devote special attention to diversity in the hiring of our field staff directly related to the communities being assisted. Lead by example and offer positive models by hiring more women in traditionally male roles such as agricultural extension work, team coordination and leadership positions.

2

Invest in **ongoing training** of our staff in the field and at headquarters related to issues of gender equality and the strategies used to close the gap.

3

Make systematic use of **gender-based analysis** throughout our project cycles. Prioritize a creative approach that goes beyond the traditional ways of consulting people in positions of authority. Make sure to reach out to women and girls who have more limited access to formal networks and more difficulty in making their voices heard. Gender analysis must fuel the theory of change and influence the choice of the initiatives that are given priority so that further progress can be made towards women's equality, rights and empowerment.

4

Implement a system to **collect and monitor gender-disaggregated data and targets** as well as other relevant project variables – such as age or ethnicity – to take into account intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion. All stated results should have gender-sensitive indicators to ensure measurement and documentation of the progress made to close the gender gap and promote equality.



We are determined to ensure women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including through the enhancement of their capacities to enjoy the benefits of equal access to these resources, inter alia, by means of international cooperation.



*United Nations General Assembly, 1995
Beijing Declaration, paragraph 35*

5

Make use of **innovation** to boost the empowerment of women through, for example, adopting new technologies that reduce women's domestic workloads or the menial aspects of their production-related tasks.

6

Adapt the **choice of agricultural and commercial value chains** in projects to women's needs and constraints. Prioritize value chains in which women already represent a critical mass and, if that is not possible then, at a minimum, choose value chains which offer the best opportunities for sustainable integration of women.

7

Put more importance on **collective efforts for conditioning and processing** since these are sectors that are often in high demand among women and offer added value.

8

Contribute to **challenging gender stereotypes and discriminatory norms and practices**. Through training programs such as Farmer Field Schools SOCODEVI or other awareness-building activities, initiate discussions and stimulate thinking about the impact on women of their domestic work burden-overload, in addition to the gender-specific violence they experience as women (domestic violence, sexual harassment, forced/early marriage, early pregnancy, etc.).

9

Invest in **capacity-building aimed at women**: awareness-raising activities regarding democratic and cooperative life, better knowledge of women's rights, self-confidence and leadership, education related to finance and administration, best and climate-smart practices for farming.

10

Offer **specific economic opportunities to women**: this could involve, for example and based on the context, creating new women's cooperatives, promoting female entrepreneurship through a targeted program or encouraging the hiring of women into salaried positions in cooperatives.



The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels.



*United Nations General Assembly, 2015
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Paragraph 20*

11

Support **inclusive governance** within the management and decision-making structures of cooperatives: promote institutional tools having a structure-enhancing effect such as inclusive statutes and by-laws, quotas fostering men-women parity, or even a gender equality action plan.

12

Acknowledge the **specific contribution of women to environmental protection**. The traditional role of women in the management of natural resources (collecting water and firewood, preparing meals, etc.) puts women in a disproportionate position of vulnerability in relation to climate change and natural disasters. But it also makes women important agents of change whose knowledge and skills could strengthen resiliency in vulnerable communities.

13

Strengthen the **networking of women entrepreneurs and women in cooperatives**: these networks are very effective tools for acquiring knowledge, strengthening skills and leadership abilities since they provide an environment that fosters self-confidence and can adequately meet their differentiated expectations and needs.

14

Support **women's associations** as they advocate for reform and defend their rights. Approach groups of women in civil society who already invest in sectors of interest for our projects and develop synergies with them to advance shared concerns: land ownership, access to credit, countering gender-based violence, etc.

15

Facilitate **alliances and partnerships** with private and public stakeholders to create a business and institutional environment favourable to gender equality.

16

Work with the **new generation** to invest in the future and address the intergenerational challenge related to development. This strategy gives us access to a group that is often more receptive to examining issues related to traditional gender roles. Young men and women can be veritable catalysts who do change mentalities within a community and can thus contribute to developing new, more egalitarian relationships between men and women.

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Encourage men to be partners in change: offer a program of positive masculinities, or identify positive male leaders within the community and involve them in our awareness-building efforts.



OUR COMMITMENTS

We acknowledge that promoting gender equality and a more inclusive world must apply both in the communities targeted by our development projects and among the individuals implementing those projects. We work, therefore, to guarantee a **healthy, respectful and safe work environment** for all our teams whether at the headquarters or in the field and we take action as an organization in a responsible, just and equitable manner.



At SOCODEVI, we are committed to gender equality in a concrete manner at all levels of the organization.

1 The **Board of Directors** and **Executive Management** are committed to assuming a leadership role and to inspire all the personnel within our organization to take action. The commitment is to strive for the highest standards and to implement best practices to achieve equality within our staff as well as within our projects.

2 **Each member of our staff** at SOCODEVI acknowledges bearing a **shared responsibility** to combat gender inequalities. Each individual, regardless of area of expertise or assignment, is committed to applying this policy in all project components as well as in the performance their daily tasks.

To carry out our mandate, we shall undertake development of an **institutional action plan** to structure the application of our gender equality policy. This action plan will incorporate targets that are prioritized by the organization on a specific schedule.

An **annual report** describing the level of achievement for the targets set will be produced by the gender equality advisory team and presented to SOCODEVI's Executive Management who will then report to the Board of Directors.



As a woman, as a member of a cooperative and a farmer, and as the first woman President of SOCODEVI, I am committed to continue working for an egalitarian world and make it a priority within our organization and our cooperatives.



*Cécile B. Pichette
President of SOCODEVI's Board of Directors from 2016 to 2020*