

# Women in Development Policy

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## 1.0 Overview

comdu.it (the “organisation”) recognises that social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female (and trans and gender-non-conforming) is perceived and experienced differently in different cultural contexts. Consequently, we are committed to gender sensitive practices within our projects, in local partners, and organisational practices.

## 2.0 Objective

The purpose of the Women in Development Policy (the “Policy”) is to improve development outcomes by empowering women and advancing gender equality, and to promote the full and equal participation of all members of society as essential for the effectiveness of development activity, and as fundamental to the attainment of human rights for all.

## 3.0 Scope

The policy applies to all international projects implemented by the organisation or its local partner(s).

## 4.0 Recognising the Need to Focus on Women in Development

The organisation recognises that discrimination against women, and excluding women from access to resources, services or productive activities negatively affects a vulnerable community’s capacity to increase its economic growth, development and to raise its living standards.

Women and girls face many gender-specific challenges that limit the economic and social opportunities available to them. These challenges include<sup>1</sup>:

- Diminished access to the resources and opportunities they need to survive and thrive.
- More family responsibilities and fewer opportunities.
- Limited control over their own bodies and reproductive choices.
- The ongoing threat of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Limited access to the tools they need to be financially independent.
- Legal barriers to work and other limits on economic freedom.
- Fewer opportunities to attend school.
- Unequal participation in governmental decision making.

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<sup>1</sup> Canada’s International Feminist Assistance Policy, 2017 <https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/assets/pdfs/iap2-eng.pdf>

Women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty and in particular in Sri Lanka, female-headed households are vulnerable due to the lack of a male income earner as a result of the civil war.

## 5.0 Feminist Approach to International Assistance

Abiding by Canada's *Feminist International Assistance Policy*, the organisation is committed to providing feminist international assistance that is:

- Human rights-based and inclusive. All people must enjoy the same fundamental human rights, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability or any other aspect of identity.
- Strategic and focused. Assistance will be directed toward those initiatives that best support the empowerment of women and girls and have the greatest potential to reduce gender inequalities.
- Transformative and activist. Unequal power relations and systemic discrimination, as well as harmful norms and practices, will be challenged, and a broad range of stakeholders—including men and boys – will be engaged.
- Evidence-based and accountable. Our assistance will be informed by gender-based analysis and will rely on clear accountabilities for planning, achieving, tracking and reporting on gender equality results.

## 6.0 Commitment to Gender Equality

The organisation's commitment towards women is to employ a rights-based approach by promoting local ownership of development processes through an emphasis on participation, inclusivity and accountability. Promoting gender equality and empowering women is also essential for combating violence against women, which is both a symptom and cause of gender inequality and discrimination.

The organisation recognises that investments in gender equality yield some of the highest returns of all development investments, including in reducing maternal mortality and in better educated and healthier children. Women's health and socioeconomic status, even before a child is born, is directly linked to a child's prospects for survival and their outcomes in life. Discrimination against women is therefore also detrimental to the next generation.

## 7.0 Policy Implementation Goals

As a result of this policy, the organisation is committed to:

- Developing mechanisms to integrate gender and development considerations into all stages and all levels of our operations.
- Taking steps to increase women's representation at all levels and in all decision-making bodies in the organisation.
- Developing and reinforcing the planning and management capabilities of the organization to take into account gender relations issues in all regions where the organisation works.
- Establishing mechanisms to ensure open dialogue with the organisation's partners abroad so that their expertise is used to attain the objectives of the Policy in the project implementations.
- Strengthening the organisation's ability to plan and produce educational activities and materials that take into account issues concerning female/male relations.

- Ensuring that the organisation's internal and external communications follow the guidelines of the Policy.
- Developing equal opportunity mechanisms in the organisation in all departments to eliminate all direct or indirect discrimination against women and ensure equitable treatment in terms of working conditions.
- Establishing a structure of responsibility and accountability for implementing the Policy, and ensuring that all personnel integrate its vision into their daily work.

### 7.1 International Project Partners

The organisation aims to 'mainstream' our gender equality approach within all stages of program management: selection, planning, design, participation, monitoring and analysis.

The organisation will factor in gender concerns into the assessment of programs/projects for funding. This will include actively engaging women by identifying barriers to, and risks arising from, women's involvement in the project, and strategies to overcome them. This also involved taking into account how women will meaningfully participate in the implementation phases and project review process and the inclusion of gender disaggregated data and measurable gender-specific outcomes and indicators.

### 7.2 Partner Selection

The organisation will work with like-minded implementing partners, committed to promoting gender equality in their context. Furthermore, the organisation is committed to building the capacity of partners to grow in their understanding of these issues and capacity to act upon them.

## **8.0 Communicating This Policy**

This policy is published on the organisation's website ([www.comdu.it](http://www.comdu.it)) and provided to all employees, volunteers, directors, consultants and other representatives, and local partners

## **9.0 External: Legislative and Regulatory Framework**

- United Nations *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations Against Women* (1979).
- Beijing Platform for Action (1995).
- Canada's *International Feminist Assistance Policy* (2017).

**Document Control**

<b>Last Reviewed</b>	<b>Prepared By</b>	<b>Reviewed By</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Next Review</b>
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