

Gender Equality Policy

Version 4.0

Introduction

ChildFund Australia recognises that gender inequality is one of the most significant drivers of poverty worldwide, and that many children today experience disadvantage and vulnerability because of harmful gender norms and practices. Structural gender inequalities and power imbalances between genders, including imbalances between adult women and men that can cause violence against women, significantly affect women and children's wellbeing, safety and enjoyment of equal rights and opportunities. Gender inequalities also exacerbate the vulnerability of especially women and girls to climate change, while their exclusion from climate action makes it less effective and further worsens climate harms. Moreover, gender inequalities intersect with and exacerbate other factors influencing marginalisation and disadvantage, such as disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.

ChildFund Australia understands that to reduce poverty and achieve better development outcomes for children and young people of all genders and their communities, a gender perspective must be integrated into the design of the programs we support. We further understand that working towards gender equality requires us to critically examine and challenge harmful gender norms and power dynamics, and enable culturally grounded, positive norms, attitudes and practices alongside strengthening systems that support gender equality.

This Gender Equality Policy defines ChildFund Australia's explicit commitments to support gender equality and our willingness to challenge harmful gender norms and power dynamics. We recognise that it is women and girls who experience more disadvantage due to socially constructed gender identities, cultural norms, roles and responsibilities. We also recognise that gender is non-binary (i.e. not just male and female), and that terms related to gender identities are diverse across the countries where we work. Within this policy we refer to 'all genders' to encompass this diversity.

The policy aims to provide clear guidance for ensuring proactive and consistent integration of gender equality in all ChildFund Australia programs.

This policy applies to programming work supported in all ChildFund Offices and guides our partnerships. All ChildFund program staff are responsible for the implementation of the policy. All Country Directors and Heads of Program/Program Directors are accountable for this policy. All program staff should receive an induction on this policy.

This policy should be read alongside ChildFund Australia's Organisational Inclusion Policy and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy, which establish complementary organisational commitments on gender equality. It should also be read alongside the Disability Inclusion Policy, which applies to programming.

Frameworks

ChildFund Australia's work to promote and enable gender equality is linked to Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" in order to achieve global sustainable development.

ChildFund Australia is further guided by the following human rights standards:

- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), which establishes the principle of equality between women and men, and obligations on States to eradicate discrimination against women and girls in all areas of life.
- Article 2, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which specifies non-discrimination against any child on the basis of their or their parent's or legal guardian's sex.
- Article 6, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which recognises that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination. States, therefore, have obligations to take all appropriate measures to ensure their full development, advancement and empowerment to exercise their human rights.
- Joint General Recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ General Comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices, which identifies practices such as the neglect of girls (linked with preferential treatment for boys), virginity related practices, child marriage and corporal punishment. States have obligations to effectively address harmful practices and uphold the rights of women and children to live free of such practices.
- Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (2007), which recommends that States should address discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and take appropriate measures to “secure adequate advancement of persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities” so that these groups can equally enjoy their human rights.

Key Principles

Gender transformative: Gender inequality becomes ingrained and normalised from early childhood. Efforts to address gender inequality can only be sustainable and effective if they understand and respond to the root causes for this inequality. These are the power imbalances, norms and beliefs embedded in people's behaviours, that result in discrimination, exclusion and violence between genders. A transformative approach works at all levels, from the individual to family and community to systems, to bring about long-lasting change. The change to gender relations and structures is that equal rights, opportunities and outcomes between all genders becomes embedded as a fundamental part of children's experience of a safe and happy childhood.

Contextualised and culturally grounded: Ideas of gender roles, beliefs, expectations and norms, and gender practices differ from culture to culture. Working towards gender equality must be based on a deep understanding of the local culture/s and customs, and how to build on cultural concepts and values that support gender equality and work in culturally grounded ways to dialogue and progress gender equality.

Do No Harm: A “Do No Harm” approach to gender equality requires that projects and programs examine the potential risks of unintentionally perpetuating or reinforcing gender inequalities, including gender-based violence, in the context of the intervention. They should proactively monitor risks, and take corrective/compensatory measures if applicable.

Intersectionality: Gender interacts and intersects with other social characteristics, such as age, disability, race, ethnicity, class, religion, and sexual orientation. Therefore, programming and activities should understand and respond to the ways in which these intersections of gender and

other characteristics, and the power relations embedded in them, result in different experiences of privilege/advantage and discrimination/ exclusion.

Right to meaningful participation: All genders have the right to access information, share their views and opinions, and actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Programming and activities should be structured to ensure the equitable and meaningful participation of all genders.

Agency and leadership: Programming for gender equality should support the individual and collective agency of, and create leadership opportunities for, all genders, especially marginalised women and girls. This would enable them to claim their rights, lead initiatives by and for children and young people, and contribute to shifting gender relations.

Policy Statement

ChildFund Australia will work to address gender inequalities and power imbalances between genders to enable gender equality and equity especially for girls and women. We are committed to a transformative approach to programming to ensure that all genders can equally participate in, and benefit from, programs and projects we support and that our programs contribute to embedding gender equality in social norms, practices and systems.

Policy Commitments

ChildFund Australia will:

- Apply a human rights-based approach to all programming that advances gender equality in accordance with the international standards set out in the frameworks section of this policy.
- Ensure that the programs aspects of the Strategic Plan, Country Strategic Alignment Papers and program policies reflect the organisation's understanding of, and commitment to, addressing gender inequality that prevents children, especially girls, from achieving their full rights and potential through their childhood and later lives.
- Put adequate time, budget and human resources in place to enable staff to understand the importance of gender equality and equity and how to address power imbalances between genders and build the power of girls and women when implementing projects and programs. This includes promoting gender equality in the hiring or composition of project teams where appropriate.
- Ensure that a gender analysis is undertaken for all projects to identify the different risks, barriers and strategies for responding to the needs and priorities of different genders. Gender analysis should be holistic, and explore the system around children of different genders, including service providers and community groups, because of the impact they may have on children.
- Design 'twin-track' projects and programs across all sectors that enable both gender specific actions and investments targeted at specific genders, and gender mainstreamed actions that ensure activities engage all genders equally. Program and project designs should reflect the priorities identified in the gender analysis and establish clear gender equality outcomes, indicators and targets.

- Identify opportunities for developing long-term strategies for social norms change and addressing systemic barriers to gender equality, and strive to integrate appropriate strategies into programs and projects.
- Engage men and boys in support of gender equality in line with program and project objectives, and build understanding among all genders that gender equality is everyone's responsibility.
- Ensure girls and women are consulted and participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects, including on feedback and complaints mechanisms.
- Dedicate appropriate funding to fulfil gender equality commitments in programs and projects.
- Identify and monitor potential risks for different genders throughout the program/project cycle and take steps to mitigate any unintended consequences, including any backlash or gender-based violence.
- Monitor and evaluate ChildFund's work to achieve gender equality, including through using participatory data collection methods, collecting and analysing gender disaggregated data, and ensuring evaluations assess progress towards gender equality outcomes.
- Build partnerships and networks with local women's rights organisations, LGBTQI+ organisations and INGOs with demonstrated experience in gender transformative programming to work towards shared goals.
- Build and strengthen partnerships that promote respect for gender equality, by exploring new partners' attitudes to and experience with gender programming, prioritising capacity strengthening on gender equality for partners, and integrating a commitment to gender equality in all partnership agreements.
- Report to participants, donors and the public on progress on gender equality in ChildFund's work, including program related advocacy and communications that uphold our commitment to gender equality, including being respectful, using inclusive and positive language and images and avoiding gender stereotypes.
- Undertake periodic assessments of our own and implementing partners' gender practices, at least every three-five (3-5) years, including the degree to which this policy is being implemented and the ongoing quality of the policy and practices.

Guidance Notes

Please refer to the ChildFund Australia Program Handbook for supporting documents, such as Gender Equality Guidance Notes containing template and checklists, and other resources to assist with the implementation of this policy.

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