

CanWaCH Gender Policy

Approved: November 2019

1. Preamble

This policy serves as a foundation and guiding framework to guide CanWaCH's approach on gender equality, and represents an organizational commitment to gender equality at all levels of the organization - both internal (procedures and operations) and external (programming, projects, and initiatives). The policy serves to outline CanWaCH's principles, values, and commitments related to promoting and supporting gender equality across our responsibilities as an employer, as a partner and member-based organization, and in programming.

CanWaCH believes that:

- A rights-based approach to development is essential in creating a world based on equity, equality, and justice.
- Gender equality is essential and foundational to improving health outcomes.
- All individuals have the right to be free from all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of gender identity.
- Equitable partnership, founded on collaboration and trust, and which places women¹ as equal partners, is integral to achieving our mission and vision.

As such, CanWaCH commits to the following approaches:

- Being **inclusive** and **intersectional**; we will reflect the diverse and intersecting nature of identities and we will value diverse ways of knowing and learning.
- Developing strategies and solutions that are **co-created** and **user-driven**; we will create together with, and by, members and communities.
- Being **participatory** and **interconnected**; we will include diverse stakeholders and show a commitment to sharing power with a bottom-up, non-hierarchical approach.
- Being **action-oriented** and **change driven**; we will commit to driving social change by sharing data, solutions and training openly and widely.

To this end, CanWaCH will build an organization in which:

¹ Throughout this policy, the use of the term 'women' refers to women in all of their diversity, including gender diverse people

- All employees, irrespective of gender, have the opportunity to contribute to CanWaCH in a meaningful way.
- Organizational expertise in gender equality and gender analysis is developed, maintained, and held as a common value amongst all employees.
- Leadership is demonstrated to engage in discourse, reciprocal learning and knowledge sharing with members and stakeholders regarding gender.
- Partnerships are developed and aligned with the above mentioned approaches.

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy rests with the CanWaCH Board of Directors, CEO, COO and the senior management team. Effective implementation requires engagement from all staff.

This policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis.

2. Definitions

Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women, men, girls and boys—including the norms, roles, behaviours, activities, attributes, and relationships that exist between them. Gender identity is not binary. Inherent in the examination of gender is the need to recognize power differentials between men and women.

Gender equality is a rights-based approach. Gender equality in health means that, regardless of gender, across the life-course and in all their diversity, individuals have equal status, opportunities and access to realize their full rights and potential to be healthy, contribute to health development and benefit from the results.

Gender equity is a needs-based approach. Fairness of treatment, regardless of gender, according to respective needs. Achieving gender equality in health often requires specific measures to remove barriers based on gender and ensure ease of access to gender-specific health services.

Gender mainstreaming involves integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programs, with a view to promoting gender equality.

Feminism is advocacy for women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes. It is based on the principle that women and men should have equal rights and opportunities.

Intersectionality addresses the interconnected nature of gender, race, ethnicity, class, income, education, occupation, disability, caste and other status which create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and inequality that give rise to exclusion and subordination.

3. Implementation and Monitoring

In employment:

- CanWaCH acknowledges that women face barriers that hinder a successful and straightforward career path. To mitigate such barriers, CanWaCH will develop strategies to recognize and promote the leadership of women across all career levels within CanWaCH. ensuring that a gender lens is incorporated across all pillars of work, work-plans and respective strategies.
- CanWaCH will review all operational policies and procedures to ensure alignment with this policy and establish consistent language and actions related to gender equality.
- CanWaCH commits to establishing clear expectations for staff regarding gender equality, diversity and inclusion and supporting these with transparent policies and processes.
- CanWaCH will provide staff with the opportunity to raise gender equity issues through surveys and bilateral discussions, and to investigate and address issues that arise.

In partnerships and member services:

- CanWaCH commits to utilizing equitable models of partnership, that prioritizes active participation, inclusivity, and co-creation.
- CanWaCH commits to building capacity and sharing knowledge with members on gender equality and equity.
- As part of the recruitment of a wider global health and gender equality movement, CanWaCH will actively encourage the recruitment of new members, funders, and allies who are gender sensitive.

In programing and communications:

- CanWaCH programming will incorporate a gender lens as a mandatory program or project design feature.
- CanWaCH will strive to ensure that there is diversity in all communications and messaging shared to internal and external audiences.
- CanWaCH commits to placing gender as central to the development of all marketing, fundraising, sponsorship and campaign work, including the incorporation of gender-sensitive language and images, as well as challenging gender stereotypes and recognizing diversity.
- CanWaCH commits to informing members about CanWaCH's gender goals and objectives and providing positive examples of CanWaCH's gender work.

Appendix A: Gender Equality Policy Statement

As an appendix to CanWaCH's Gender Equality Policy, CanWaCH commits to reviewing this policy statement regularly.

Gender is a primary facet through which power and privilege is enacted. For women, girls, and gender diverse people, discrimination and inequity is informed by their gender, with real-life implications on their ability to realise rights, to survive and thrive. Lived experiences of discrimination are compounded by multiple intersecting forms of discrimination.

No individual or entity is neutral or apolitical. As such, CanWaCH will take an active role, within our scope of work, and as it relates to our mission and vision, to engage with members and partners in a responsible manner to ensure that women, girls and gender diverse individuals' voices and experiences are presented in a way that recognizes their diversity and challenges stereotypes.

Power differentials between the Global North and Global South can result in the simplification and misrepresentation issues. Women and children have been overrepresented as the victims of poverty. NGOs, as mediating institution of how poverty and gender are represented, have a responsibility to engage constructively with dominant discourses and not perpetuate stereotypes and misinformation.

Collaborative and inclusive partnerships are important in order to achieve more sustainable results. Partnerships built on trust, inclusion, integrity and accountability will generate better ideas. Those with lived experience, including women, youth, and gender-diverse people must be seen as equal partners in development, enabling their inclusion in dialogue and decision-making.

Globally, health systems often do not address the particular health needs and rights of women. Gender insensitive health systems produce differential health outcomes and an inability to realise rights. Gender inequality further intersects with this reality and stalls progress being made for women, girls and gender-diverse peoples' health and well-being.

Gender-based challenges remain in Canada. Within Canada, gender discrimination limits women and girls' ability to access their rights and fully realise their potential. Women in Canada continue to earn less than men, in 2018 earning \$0.87 for every dollar earned by men². Women in Canada continue to face higher rates of gender based violence³. Women face inequitable treatment in health care⁴, with indigenous women in particular facing inequitable access to health care⁵.

² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-004-m/75-004-m2019004-eng.htm>

³ <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/knowledge-connaissance/about-a-propos-en.html>

⁴ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-theres-a-health-gap-in-canada-and-women-are-falling-through-it/>

⁵ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2018/02/28/why-are-canadas-first-nations-women-dying-at-such-an-alarming-rate/>