OCIC WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

Approved by the Board of Directors June 2018

Preamble

OCIC's work, both internally and as a collective of members, is grounded in our shared vision of global social justice, human dignity and participation for all. Our policies are designed to meet OCIC's internal needs as an organization, however they are guided by ideals about anti-oppression, human rights, international cooperation, and the appropriate meeting of human needs articulated in a multitude of places by multilateral bodies, states, and civil society groups.

All OCIC policies and activities are informed by our Vision, Mission, Mandate, and Strategic Directions. Mindfulness of the spirit and letter of these documents is central to the integrity of the Council, as is compliance with the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) Code of Ethics, the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness, and OCIC's Anti-Oppression Policy and Women's Rights and Gender Equality Policy.

This policy is adapted from the Canadian Council for International Co-operation Women's Rights and Gender Equality Policy last approved by its Board of Directors in May 2018.

1. Definitions

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 feminist: 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 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/conceptsandefinitions.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.

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*].

2. Review
As per OCIC's 3-year review policy, this policy is to be reviewed and/or updated by the Governance Committee by June 2021.

3. Policy Principle
The responsibility to advance women's rights and gender equality is the responsibility of all. This policy applies both to OCIC's role as both an employer and as a non-profit organization, and to its mission, which includes supporting its members. As such, the policy applies to all members of the Board of Directors and all staff and volunteers of OCIC, and to the programming and policy work of the organization.

4. Context
OCIC and its members accept and promote the basic principles found in the CCIC Code of Ethics, including that development should "foster and promote the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms" and "should reflect the concerns, perspectives, and experience of women…". Within this vision, the realization of women's rights and gender equality is not only a goal in and of itself, it is also crucial for the achievement of other development objectives.

Furthermore, 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.

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.

As stated in our Anti-Oppression Policy, OCIC recognizes that gender inequalities are intersectional, complex 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.

5. Strategy
OCIC will 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 the Council's commitment to women's rights and gender equality. The Council will make efforts to mobilize appropriate resources to help put this policy into practice.

OCIC will also support members' efforts to advance women's rights and gender equality globally, through mutual collaboration, amplifying the voices of members, partnering with like-minded networks, and offering or sharing training on gender equality, policy analysis, advocacy and research, in order to empower them to integrate these considerations in the services and programmes which members implement globally. In order to embed gender equality in all aspects of it's work, OCIC will focus on the following:

a) <u>Governance</u>
OCIC will ensure that its governance structures facilitate and reflect its commitment to women's rights and gender equality. In support of this objective, OCIC 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 all their diversities, in OCIC's Board, 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 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 Board discussions and decisions are given due consideration.

b) <u>Programming</u>

OCIC will strengthen its internal capacities and work to strengthen those of its members 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, OCIC will strive to:

- Provide training for OCIC 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 experts in Canada to help inform OCIC's work and realize the objectives of this policy.
- Analyse members' needs and recommend resources, in particular in the context of the Feminist International Assistance Policy.
- Support members' analysis and advocacy efforts related to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Strengthen gender analysis to incorporate on-going and explicit attention to women's rights and intersectional perspectives, and to realize gender transformative outcomes in the programmatic work of OCIC, 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, support the creation of ally networks, 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.
- Hold the Canadian government accountable to addressing gender inequalities across all international initiatives in diplomacy, aid, trade and defence, 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
OCIC 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, OCIC 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 reinforcing existing mechanisms in OCIC's Personnel Policy which 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, and promotions are grounded in a concern for gender equity, as well as other historical workplace inequalities.
- Ensure that OCIC's policies and practices are responsive to and reflect OCIC'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 OCIC-led activities encourage a gender balance in terms of participants, and guarantee gender equity in terms of presenters.

6. Accountability
The following responsibilities and reporting requirements apply to this policy:

- The Board of Directors and Executive Director are ultimately responsible for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring that staff have the time, knowledge and resources to fulfil this mandate. The Board should review the policy at least every three years, or sooner when there are significant changes in the organization.
- 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.
- The Executive Director will report to the Board annually on the implementation of the Policy, and dedicate time for Board-Staff reflection and review on achievements, gaps, challenges and lessons-learned. This reflection may lead to further recommendations and changes to the Policy.
- Where possible, relevant data collected as part of accountability provisions in this policy should be sex-disaggregated and consider additional disaggregated indicators.