



Gender Equality Policy

approved by Board of Directors October 5, 2019, next revision October 2021

• Introduction

Crossroads International (“Crossroads” or “the Organization”) has been working with local, international and Canadian partners and volunteers to advance equality for more than six decades. In 2005, Crossroads identified women’s rights as a primary focus for its programming. In 2006, it adopted its first gender equality policy and in 2009, adopted the current vision:

ONE WORLD where poverty is eliminated, equality prevails and the rights of women and girls are fulfilled.

Today, Crossroads’ holistic approach is advancing women’s leadership, economic empowerment and the right to live free from violence. At the heart of this approach is the understanding that advancing gender equality requires periodic reflection and critical analysis on how values are translated into practice.

This policy embodies a deep and inclusive approach to advance gender equality, as articulated in our Mission:

To create a more equitable and sustainable world by engaging and strengthening individuals, organizations and communities through mutual learning, solidarity and collective action.

and Values:

- Active global citizenship
- Equity and diversity
- Solidarity – North and South
- Innovation and Learning
- Transparency and Accountability

• Context

Crossroads International recognizes the tireless work of **women’s rights organizations** and activists, often at great personal peril to themselves, that have enabled societies, communities and women around the world to gain ground. Locally owned processes of change are necessary to transform deeply entrenched social and cultural norms that contribute to gender-based violence and discrimination.



Evidence shows that women’s rights activism and movements are the key drivers of legal change and policy implementation addressing gender inequality nationally and regionally¹. The achievements of women’s movements and activism have resulted in international commitments that are the foundation of Crossroads’ rights-based approach, including the following:

- ***The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*** (1979), ratified by 189 countries, which first defined discrimination as “Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”
- **The Beijing Platform for Action** (1995) The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between men and women are matters of human rights and conditions for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace.
- **Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security adopted by the Security Council** (2000).
- **The Maputo Protocol** (2003) on rights of Women in Africa, includes the right to take part in the political process, to social and political equality with men, improved autonomy in their reproductive health decisions, and an end to female genital mutilation.
- Recent global commitments such as the **United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals** and **Canada’s Feminist International Aid Policy** have also galvanized support and funding for gender equality.

• Goal and Objectives

Goal:

The goal of Crossroads International’s Gender Equality Policy is to support the achievement of gender equality and women and girls’ rights, to eliminate all forms of discrimination and ensure sustainable and inclusive development as well as the full exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Objectives:

- Strive for the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination, particularly against women and girls, by examining the intersecting systems of oppression, such as racism, colonialism, heterosexism, class stratification, gender inequality, fundamentalism, and ableism that create inequalities and reinforce exclusion.
- Advance women’s equal participation with men as decision-makers and leaders in shaping the sustainable and inclusive development of their societies.
- Increase women and girls’ access to and control over the resources and benefits of development and promote women’s economic empowerment.

¹Htun, M. and Weldon, S.L. 2012. ‘The civic origins of progressive policy change: combatting violence against women in global perspective’, 1975- 2005. *American Political Science Review*, 106 (3), 548-569.



- Transform power relations, gender roles and behaviors at the individual, community and institutional levels.

• Approach

Crossroads International implements a holistic, rights-based, transformative approach to advancing gender equality and women’s rights which is based on three pillars.

Firstly, Crossroads seeks to **end sexual and gender-based violence**. This goal involves engaging men and women in rights education, dialogue and shared decision-making in order to transform harmful socio-cultural norms and practices. Furthermore, *Access to justice* is essential for the full realization of rights by individuals, and is a fundamental requirement of any democratic society, along with the rule of law and other systems of accountability.

Secondly, Crossroads works to increase **women's leadership and political participation**, which includes equal representation as well as women’s participation in decision-making. This component is key to women’s empowerment, and their ability to exercise strategic forms of choice, voice and influence.

Thirdly, Crossroads seeks to **strengthen women's economic power** and address root causes of gender-based inequalities and discrimination that limit women’s ability to participate in and benefit from the economy.

This holistic approach is based on a partnership model animated with the spirit of feminist analysis by which Crossroads acknowledges the power dynamics inherent to “development”. An advocate for a model of international solidarity, Crossroads works in partnership with overseas and Canadian civil society organizations sharing decision-making power and responsibility to advance women’s rights. The concept of reciprocity is rooted in the recognition of local expertise and experience, key to developing solutions defined by and for women.

Crossroads’ model is also based on the understanding that diverse strategies are necessary to achieve sustainable change. Crossroads specifically supports women’s rights organizations to implement a targeted approach to gender equality. The Organization also accompanies local civil society organizations and government institutions to strengthen their commitment and capacities to mainstream gender and intersectionality in their work. Finally, Crossroads supports advocacy and collective action to change systems, policies and practices at the local, national and international levels.

• Principles

- Crossroads recognizes that achieving gender equality is a deeply political process. This process involves applying a **rights-based approach** to programming, which extends to promoting, protecting and defending women’s rights, including strengthening women’s rights organizations’



capacity to participate in and influence policy formulation and hold accountable those who have a duty to act.

- The process requires an **intersectional approach**. Intersectionality identifies, analyzes and remedies systems of oppression based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, caste, age and ability.
- Promoting the equal participation of women as **agents of change** in economic, social and political processes is essential. Equal participation goes beyond numbers. Such participation involves women's equal right to articulate their needs, interests and vision of society, as well as to shape the decisions that affect their lives in whatever cultural context they inhabit. Partnership with women's organizations and other groups working for gender equality is necessary to empower and support women's capacity to make informed choices about their own lives.²
- Crossroads seeks transformative change to eliminate gender inequalities, discrimination and violence against women and girls. Specific measures must be developed to address the policies, laws, procedures, social norms, beliefs, traditions, gendered roles, practices, behaviors and attitudes that maintain gender inequality.
- Women and men must work together as allies in transforming social and organizational norms, structures and power relations that perpetuate gender inequality.
- Gender equality is essential to achieving sustainable development results. A commitment to women's rights and gender equality ensures that the different needs, interests and experiences of women and men are considered in every decision taken by Crossroads.
- Every policy, program project and activity affects women and men differently. Crossroads International's policies, programs and projects address the differences in experiences and situations between and among women and men. This approach applies but is not limited to our programming, partnerships, public engagement, external relations, fundraising, finance and administration, human resources, and our work with partners and volunteers.

• **Commitments**

At the organizational level, Crossroads International makes the following commitments:

- Implement the Gender Equality Policy by establishing concrete mechanisms of accountability, such as an updated annual action plan.
- Allocate sufficient human and financial resources to the implementation of the Gender Equality Policy action plan.



- Ensure the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality as a shared responsibility at all levels of the organization so that every staff member, partner organization, board member and volunteer is a Gender Equality Champion.
- Provide training to all Crossroads International staff, partners, volunteers and board members on gender equality and intersectional analysis in order to ensure that all are able to consider and integrate a gender approach in their work.
- Recognize and empower focal points working on gender equality.
- Encourage groups and forums across the organization to share learning and best practices on gender transformative approaches.
- Pursue family-friendly work practices within the Organization, which enable both men and women to achieve work/life balance.

• **GE Definition (*EG en français*)**

Gender equality refers to the full exercise of rights, autonomy and control over resources by women, girls, boys and men:

- *Rights*: social, economic, political and legal rights; freedom from discrimination and violence.
- *Resources*: control over productive resources, including education, land, information and financial resources
- *Autonomy*: self-determination, freedom of choice, leadership, voice, power and agency to influence decision-making in the home, in the community, and at the national level.

Advancing gender equality is a deeply personal and political endeavor. Crossroads International recognizes and supports the vital work of **women's organizations** and women’s rights movements around the world, which are paramount to the **transformation of power relations** between men and women, and those inherent to society’s structures, systems and institutions.

Intrinsic to Crossroad International’s approach to gender equality is **intersectionality**. Intersectionality is the recognition and analysis of the interconnected nature of identity categories, such as race, ethnicity, class, caste, gender, ability, as well as sexual identity and orientation, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of oppression, discrimination and exclusion.