



# Gender Equality

*Position paper*

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ChildFund®  
Alliance

## About the ChildFund Alliance

ChildFund Alliance is a global network of 11 child-focused development organizations that helps nearly 13 million children and their families in more than 60 countries. We work to end violence and exploitation against children and to overcome poverty and the underlying conditions that prevent children from achieving their full potential. The Alliance network supports long-term community development, promotes children's rights and child protection, prepares for natural disasters, and responds to humanitarian emergencies. We work in partnership with children and their communities to create lasting change, and the participation of children themselves is a key component of our approach.

## Members of ChildFund Alliance

Barnfonden (Sweden)  
ChildFund Australia  
ChildFund Deutschland  
ChildFund International  
ChildFund Ireland  
ChildFund Japan  
ChildFund Korea  
ChildFund New Zealand  
Children Believe (Canada)  
Educo (Spain)  
Un Enfant Par La Main (France)





## Introduction

This paper outlines ChildFund Alliance's position on gender equality and defines how our commitment to support gender equality will be put into action. It is inspired by ChildFund's overarching goals and priorities and reflects the experience of those in the field in addition to ChildFund Alliance Program Standards and accountability commitments. This report further aims to promote and support the design and implementation of gender-specific and gender-integrated actions by ChildFund Alliance members. It should ultimately serve as guidance for strengthening learning, best practices and accountability in ChildFund Alliance members' programmatic strategies.



## ChildFund's gender equality vision

ChildFund Alliance's vision is a world in which all children enjoy their rights and achieve their full potential. Together with children, each member organization creates sustainable solutions that protect and advance the rights of children and their well-being.<sup>1</sup> We recognize that children, daily, must confront gender inequalities. Attitudinal gender barriers exist at home, within communities, and within government structures that serve children. These impede the realization of children's most basic human rights. ChildFund Alliance members are therefore aware that gender inequalities impact all of our work.

Gender equality is an essential pre-condition to sustainable development and poverty reduction and the goals attached to it will only be reached if people of all genders have the opportunity and capacity to participate equitably. All actors must challenge existing systems and promote gender equality to achieve social justice and to ensure all children and adults have equal rights and opportunities. This includes governments, corporates, civil society actors, education systems, health systems, etc.

ChildFund Alliance recognizes that while girls and boys may share similar experiences, they also are affected in "significantly different ways".<sup>2</sup> The "differentiated impact"<sup>3</sup> that characterizes deprivation, exclusion and vulnerability is due in large part to the different socially constructed identities, roles and responsibilities of women, men, girls and boys.<sup>4</sup> Differentiated impact entrenches the replication of gender inequalities experienced by boys and girls as they grow, and limits their possibilities to make choices and access the same opportunities.

This position statement represents the collective commitment to ChildFund Alliance members to take a cohesive and coordinated approach to gender equality and to incorporate it in our work as both a human right and an essential pre-condition to achieve our mission. In doing so, we take into consideration the fact that gender refers to a spectrum of identities, whether it is male, female or any gender identity other than the sex assigned at birth. Reference to gender in this paper includes women and men, girls and boys, as well as people who identify beyond the binary (such as transgender, intersex, questioning and non-conforming genders).

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- 1 ChildFund Alliance, 2016, *Toward a Safe World for Children. Five-Year Strategic Plan 2016-2021*.
  - 2 Mazurana, D., Benelli, P., Gupta, H., and Walker, P., 2011, *Sex and Age Matter: Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies*.
  - 3 McAskie, C., 2000, *Gender, Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict Resolution, Statement to the UN Commission on the Status of Women*.
  - 4 Shteir, S., 2013, *Gendered Crises, Gender Responses: The Necessity and Utility of a Gender Perspective in Armed Conflicts and Natural Disasters - An introductory Overview, Civil-Military Occasional Papers*.





## ChildFund's approach to gender

### Core definitions:

**Gender equity** means fairness of treatment across all genders, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

**Gender equality** is the aim, requiring that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes or predetermined gender roles. It is about equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for all genders related to a person's identity. It does not mean that women and men are the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on the gender assigned to them at birth.

Both strategies of gender equality and gender equity aim to address unequal power distribution between women and men, discrimination in laws, policies and institutions, and social relations that normalize inequalities. Inequality results from disparities in access to, control over and benefits from resources, wealth, opportunities and services (economic, social, political and cultural). Women (and LGBTQI<sup>1</sup>), and often the children in their care, thus become secondary beneficiaries of - or are even excluded from - development processes.

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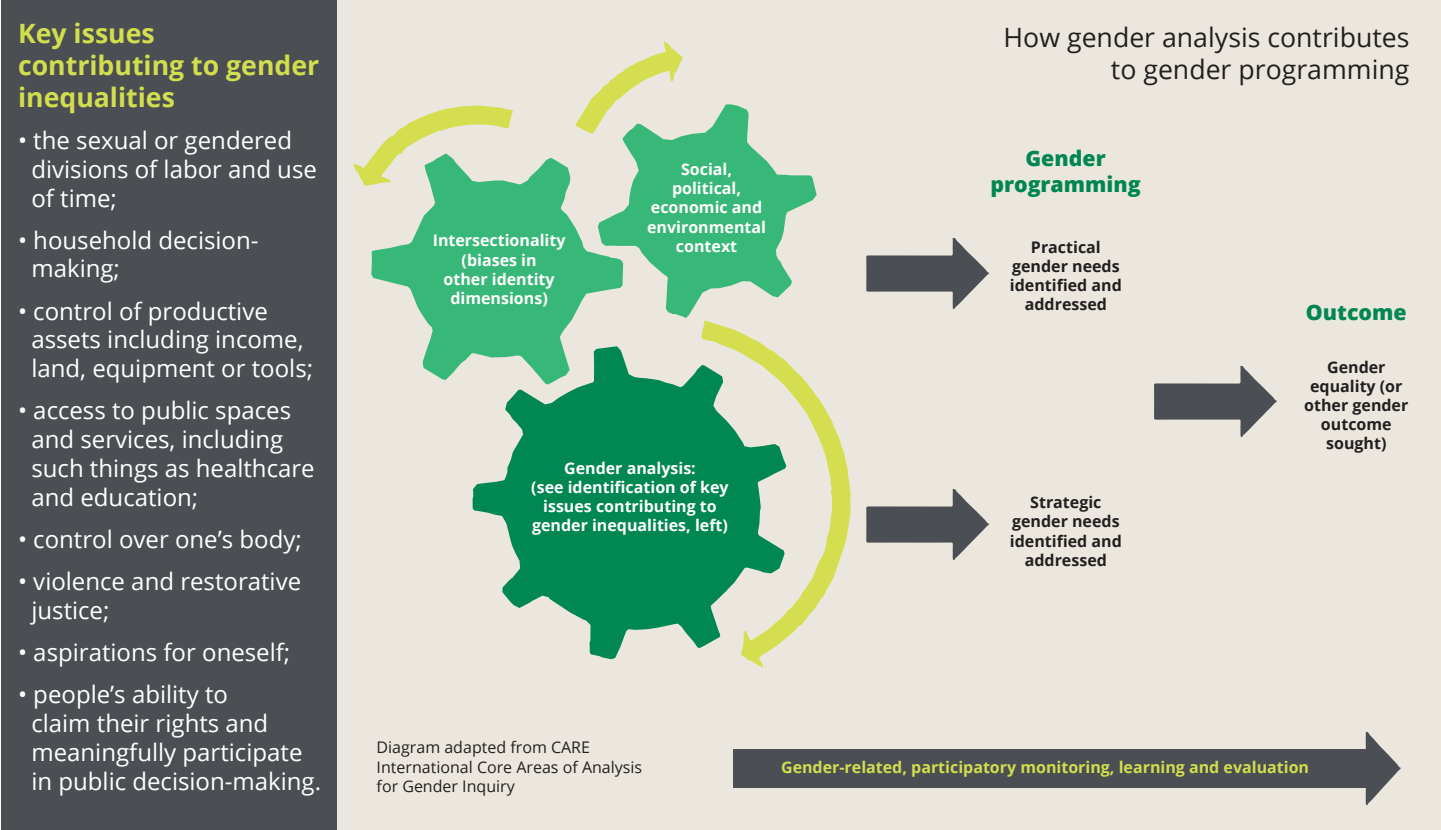
1 LGBTQI stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and intersex.



# Gender equality as a human right

ChildFund Alliance understands that gender equality is first and foremost a universal human right. The member organization’s goal is not simply to engage with and target the development needs of children, whatever their gender. It also seeks to transform their future into a world where equality can be assured as they grow into adults and take on the responsibilities of shaping their own future, as well as the future of their family and their community. This means we must address gender at a number of levels, from national and international legal conventions and policies, to within the communities and families we work with, and the realities of how peoples’ perceptions of gender affect relationships and lives.

We acknowledge gender equality as a power dynamic. We acknowledge that men and women experience poverty differently and understand that gender influences how power and resources are distributed, accessed and experienced. By applying a gender approach to our work, we enable identification of the role that gender plays in shaping power as it relates to the change we want to influence. Our work on gender equality therefore aims to address unequal gender norms that constrain women, men, girls and boys, as well as all other gender identities.





## Gender and development approach

ChildFund Alliance members believe that equal participation - while important - is not enough in itself. To attain the goal of equality, we must understand and address the multiple and complex issues related to gender discrimination. We need to investigate the issues inhibiting an individual's sense of power, resilience and well-being as they relate to people's gender and their ability to apply their rights. As such, ChildFund's approach aligns with Gender and Development discourse.

A **gender analysis** is the preferred foundation to guide planning, design, implementation, monitoring and learning. A gender analysis is the systematic attempt to identify key issues contributing to gender inequalities, many of which also contribute to poor development outcomes. In identifying these issues (see *Key Issues* diagram), we must also be alert to other **intersectional biases** that impact on people relative to gender, such as ageism, ethnicity, caste, class, religion, ableism, colonial history and sexual orientation. The social, environmental, political and economic context of a community, and the intersectional influences as noted above, are constantly interacting with and influencing gender inequalities and power relations.

The next step is to identify practical and strategic needs and solutions.

Practical gender needs seek solutions that make people's everyday life easier.

*Examples of ChildFund's work in this sphere includes bringing water closer to people's homes, or building toilets in schools (a key obstacle to girls' attendance). Another example is the creation of a helpline for survivors of gender-based violence, or the creation of village-based savings and loans schemes targeted specifically to women. These solutions will not directly challenge gender-power relations, but may remove important obstacles to women and girls' empowerment.*

Strategic gender needs refer to the actions women, men, girls or boys require in order to improve their position or status in regard to each other. These actions would place them in greater control over their own lives instead of limiting them to the restrictions imposed by socially defined roles. These might include such actions as influencing national legislation in regards to gender-based violence, providing equal access to credit and financial services, or increasing participation of women in decision-making.

*Examples of ChildFund's strategic gender work includes supporting community research and advocacy on gender-based violence (another aspect of the helpline project noted above), or educating on female genital mutilation to change harmful traditional practices. Another example is ChildFund Pass It Back - a project that introduces girls to rugby and is supported by a life-skills program to build resilience and leadership.*





## Gender integration (or mainstreaming)

ChildFund Alliance members are committed **to integrating gender equality into every aspect of our work** in order to reach our common vision and programmatic objectives. Gender integration (or mainstreaming) is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including programs, policies or legislations, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of people of different genders an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs or policies. Under gender integration, everyone benefits equally, and relational and structural inequalities are not perpetuated.<sup>1</sup> This approach recognizes the need to consider the interdependent or complementary roles of different genders, and to take differences between them into account (whether social, economic or other) to ensure that the proposed programs or policies have intended, fair results for all.<sup>2</sup>

By integrating gender equality into activities and programs, ChildFund Alliance aims to:

- Understand and address how gender norms influence children throughout their life-course, from birth to adulthood;
- Address inequalities exacerbated by ongoing discrimination, discrimination in laws, policies and institutions, budgets, investments and social relations that normalize inequality;
- Facilitate equal access to, and control of, the benefits of development actions to people of all genders to promote gender equality and therefore enable children to grow up healthy, happy and safe;
- Empower women and girls by removing barriers that hold them back from exercising their rights and achieving their full potential;
- Support boys to embrace positive masculinities to achieve meaningful results in their lives, while also removing the barriers that prevent them from supporting and promoting gender equality;
- Contribute to the reduction of gender disparities in development processes by considering the diversity of girls and boys when identifying and responding to their needs and interests;
- Engage in programming that proactively acknowledges fairness of treatment for people of all genders, according to their respective needs.

In addition to integrating gender into programming, ChildFund Alliance members will, when appropriate, address gender inequalities through the **implementation of gender-targeted activities or projects**. These include actions that state gender equality and/or women's empowerment as their principle objective and, which focus on developing gender-specific services, capacities or communications.

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1 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Gender Equality Policy*, 2011.

2 Global Affairs Canada, *Mainstreaming of a Gender Perspective* webpage, available on <https://www.international.gc.ca/>.





## Program recommendations

ChildFund Alliance members commit to being guided by the following principles and programmatic processes:

- **Supporting country and international commitments such as UNCRC, CEDAW, as well as Sustainable Development Goal 5 and all gender-related targets** in program implementation, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- **Facilitating equal access** and control over services and benefits and building agency in recognition that this may require a change of social norms. This may also lead to gender-targeted actions to tackle certain disparities.
- **Promoting the active involvement and leadership of women and girls** across all levels of the project cycle and decision-making, and in the leadership structures of our own organizations and those with whom we partner.
- **Influencing a shift in norms** that perpetuate gender inequality, including the power dynamics and structures that reinforce inequalities (whether within homes, communities or at national levels). This may include ChildFund's involvement in advocacy at national and international levels to change legal conventions and policies that perpetuate inequality.
- **Analyzing the gender dynamics of every partner community** and referencing these dynamics in relation to every project throughout the project cycle.
- **Measuring performance and progress** (including gender outcomes). Where possible, this should include a baseline data parameter that ensures disaggregated data, gender sensitive targets, etc. This measurement should combine quantitative and qualitative data.
- **Developing a partnership strategy** by discussing and agreeing with partners and stakeholders on the importance of gender. The strategy should be designed to: 1) support partners in improving their institutional capacities to support gender equality and 2) hold implementing partners responsible for integrating gender into programming to develop indicators and consistently report on results and outcomes.
- **Contributing to the development of a gender equity culture**, which consists of a wider organizational change process. This includes building staff capacity on gender equality, and sharing our lessons within the ChildFund Alliance and externally, so we may contribute to a growing understanding of why and how inequalities form, and help build effective approaches for ending inequalities. In order to be able to undertake robust gender analysis, program design and M&E strategy, the organization and our partners must be sensitive to norms, relations and power in terms of gender (and other axes of power) and social relations.



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