

A Gender Policy for the ICCA Consortium

(November 2018)

The policy was approved at the Consortium program level during the [2018 General Assembly](#).

Why a gender policy for the ICCA Consortium?

Gender norms crucially influence the relationships among people, the impact of people on the environment, and the access to and power over natural resources. In this policy, the ICCA Consortium commits to confronting systemic barriers and structural inequalities that cause and exacerbate disrespect and violence among genders, and **pursues equality and equity for all humans, and therefore all genders.**

Throughout its work, the ICCA Consortium has observed that **women are primary actors** in providing food security and sovereignty, quality of life for their families and communities, including health care, and in generating knowledge and commitment and applying practices for the conservation of nature and the sustainable use of natural resources. The work women do to conserve nature, use natural resources in sustainable ways, maintain cultures alive and nourish the evolution of traditional knowledge and skills for governing and managing natural resources is enormous. Despite this, they are often excluded from participating in decisions and in policy-making regarding natural resources. Also, as underscored by the [Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition](#), women who are environmental and human rights defenders are more and more vulnerable and face multiple types of human rights violations. The ICCA Consortium supports the organisations currently working toward a regulatory framework for the protection of women defenders. This is also valid for non-gender-conforming environmental and human rights defenders.

The objective of the gender policy of the Consortium is to promote respect and equitable treatment for all existing genders, as perceived in all cultural contexts. In this, the ICCA Consortium promotes a **gender approach** rather than an exclusively women-focused approach, seeking to engaging all genders and broadly encouraging gender-awareness. A crucial element of diversity is the existence of **more than two genders**, particularly in many indigenous cultures and spiritual traditions. The Consortium will thus not define gender by merely separating what is 'feminine' by what is 'masculine'. It will rather seek to include and consider non-binary genders and non-gender-conforming identities, in particular with regards to patterns of stewardship for nature.

Genders and gender roles are themselves **a source of diversity** within indigenous peoples and local communities, as there are **unique types of knowledge, practices and relationships with biological diversity among women, men and other genders in local territories and areas.** Diverse roles in the governance and management of biodiversity should be recognized and

celebrated as a source of pride within communities. And yet, traditional gender roles are also at the origin of inequalities and violation of basic human rights. The vulnerability of non-heteronormative groups should not be forgotten because of a broad discourse of respect for diversity and cultural relativism. A balance between gender-related traditions and human rights should be sought.

The approach of the ICCA Consortium

The vision and mission of the Consortium are specified in its Statutes and other documents available at www.iccaconsortium.org. The 2006 [Code of Ethics](#) of the International Society of Ethnobiology - which stresses **mindfulness, recognition of traditional and customary laws, and meaningful collaboration and reciprocal responsibility** – also serves as a broadly accepted reference for the operational guidelines of the ICCA Consortium.

The ICCA Consortium has a transformative agenda towards the effective recognition of, and support to, the territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities. Underlying all these statements are the principles of **engagement for the common good, equity, integrity, and fair and due process for each individual, regardless of gender**. Members, Honorary members, and the Secretariat are committed to making every effort to respect these principles, and to incorporate gender consideration, gender equality and – wherever feasible – gender equity throughout the work of the ICCA Consortium. Because of the extent and severity of the discrimination of women, this policy naturally centres on a strong commitment to upholding women rights, capacities and opportunities, but it also includes a commitment to resist inequalities and inequities against all genders. The policy is oriented toward action and good practices sharing.

Individuals and groups who face gender inequalities often face a range of other civil, political, economic, social and/or cultural inequalities as well. This may relate to ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, ability, marital status and age. These overlapping and interdependent systems of inequality, discrimination and disadvantage are most often at the basis of the systems of exclusion. Efforts to mainstream gender and address gender inequalities should thus focus on **highlighting compounded and interconnected forms of inequality**.

The ICCA Consortium is also aware of the **debate around women's rights and cultural relativism**, including the argument that international law (particularly human rights law) is attempting to impose Western law on other societies and legal systems, including indigenous customary laws. The ICCA Consortium acknowledges the potential tensions, conflicts and synergies between customary laws, knowledge and practices and international law and standards on women's rights and gender equality. Cultures are living phenomena and change over time, but change should be guided by the concerned indigenous peoples and communities themselves.

Goals and objectives of a gender policy for the ICCA Consortium

The goal of the Consortium gender policy is the **elimination of all forms of gender discrimination and violence**. This is central to the mission of the ICCA Consortium and the promotion of socially, culturally, economically, and ecologically sustainable livelihoods for all. We understand “all” to mean all women, men, and any other gender, of all ages, social classes, ethnicity, and other characteristics, in all parts of the world.

Objectives:

- Throughout the work of the Consortium, gender equity is promoted through **affirmative action programs concerning ICCAs**. If relevant, the debate on such matters will be encouraged and facilitated or supported if needed.
- Regardless of gender, **all those who feel, live, and demonstrate a strong, custodian connection with ICCAs are empowered** to participate in their governance and management.
- The **capacity and role of each ICCA custodian is acknowledged and celebrated**, regardless of its gender.
- **Discriminatory gender practices in governing ICCAs, and gender-related violence in ICCAs are eliminated**
- The **human rights and the satisfaction of the development needs of all genders are understood and promoted as crucial to the strength and health of the ICCA custodian communities**.
- In the international arena, the gender perspective is used in each relevant instance and a specific mechanism is implemented to protect women and non-binary genders environment and human right defenders.
- Throughout the work of the Consortium, gender equity is promoted through **affirmative action programs concerning the Consortium governance structures and secretariat**
- **No discriminatory gender practices or violence is tolerated** in the governance and management of the ICCA Consortium.

Implementing the policy

At the request of the Member of the Council with special responsibility about ICCAs and gender, a **Voluntary Committee on gender** comprising both members of governance bodies and secretariat will accompany, guide and monitor the implementation of this gender policy.

A. At the Program level

- ✓ The Voluntary Committee on gender will open a space of work on ICCAs and gender issues in which actions, opportunities or projects within the network will be systematised.
- ✓ The ICCAs Consortium will **identify and promote the good practices of those ICCAs that demonstrate positive gender considerations and perspectives, and provide models of gender equity in ICCAs**. In particular, good practices will be highlighted where women and other discriminated genders play a positive role in governing and managing ICCAs.

- ✓ The **Voluntary Committee on Gender** will offer each year, on the occasion of the General Assembly, a brief report on the ICCA Consortium work on gender issues.
- ✓ **Annual action plans** will incorporate gender considerations and concerns.
- ✓ **No promotions or donations will be accepted from organizations that fail to respect gender equality.**
- ✓ The Consortium will observe what is written and said regarding gender issues in its own work or on its own behalf. It will promote a proper understanding of gender considerations and an orientation towards affirmative action.
- ✓ The Consortium will strive for gender equity through **affirmative action**, wherever feasible in all its initiatives and advocacies, at each level of its work, that are local, national, regional and international levels. This will be done struggling to avoid imposing western-oriented dominant or neo-colonial cultural approaches.

B. For the Consortium as an organization

- ✓ The Consortium **will not tolerate any gender-related violent action or attitude** within its organization.
- ✓ As part of this policy, one person, belonging to the Voluntary Committee on Gender, will be designated as **gender security keeper** within the Consortium. To this individual, anyone will be able to address a concern in case any gender violence is seen or perceived. It will be entitled to suggest haven, if needed, to the victim, and steps toward a resolution of the problem or sanctions, as appropriate.
- ✓ If any kind of gender related violence occurs, a **relevant response, including sanctions**, will be decided by the Council. This may include legal measures.
- ✓ The Consortium will carry out a regular **gender analysis of its governance structure** and of its practices in recruiting personnel and consultants. No gender-related discrimination will be acceptable concerning compensation for work, travel, working conditions, or visibility within the organization. Regardless of gender, all personnel within the organization should be encouraged to participate actively, express views, and have their needs and concerns valued and included.

C. For the Membership of the ICCA Consortium

- ✓ Regions and Members define the **implementation** of this policy at their level, according to their **own specific local realities**. It must be done if desire within this policy principles and objectives. Latin America, South East Asia and Central and West Asia and Caucasus, already approved the policy at their level.

Accountability mechanisms

- ✓ The General Assembly ensures that its gender policy is reflected in the work and functioning of the Consortium.
- ✓ Open and transparent communication between Membership, Council and Secretariat further ensure that the Consortium's core values and gender perspective are upheld in its program and throughout its organizational structure and practices.

- ✓ At the request of the Member of the Council with special responsibility about ICCAs and gender and/or of the Gender Voluntary Committee, **space for an analysis of “gender sensitive indicators within ICCAs” is made during the annual General Assembly**, and Consortium Members are asked to volunteer to offer such an independent analysis.
- ✓ **Each year**, on the occasion of the General Assembly, the Gender Voluntary Committee is asked to make a **report on the gender-related actions and perspectives of the ICCA Consortium**.

Time frame

This policy was revised during the 2017 General Assembly and the 2018 Extraordinary General Assembly. It was approved at the 2018 General Assembly in Bishoftu, Ehtiopia. A trial period of one and a half year will then begin, during which Members will be encouraged to submit suggested improvements to Council. The operational plan for 2020 will make sure that the finally approved gender policy is incorporated within all Consortium activities.

Relevant concepts

Gender:

Gender is the set of social, cultural, political, psychological, legal, and economic characteristics that society assigns to each individual as part of its socially constructed and biologically determined identity as female or male (or variations on those). Gender roles and behaviours, and intra- and inter-gender relationships are dynamic, changing over time and varying widely within and across cultures. While for some, gender is a binomial factor (male/female), for others, gender refers to a multi-variable continuum of characteristics that enrich and enliven our being in the world.

Gender perspective:

A perspective that goes beyond the "no harm" principle, and focuses on overcoming historical gender biases. Actions planned with a gender perspective in mind include measures to promote gender equality and the empowerment, inclusion, and equal opportunities of oppressed genders, such as women may be. As part of this approach, understanding gender roles and gender biases is a crucial element in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects and policies related to the environment, territories and natural resources.

Gender equality:

Gender equality is achieved when women, men and non-binary gender have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, as well as the power they wish and need to shape their own lives and contribute to society.

Gender equity:

The element of justice by which no one is unfairly favoured to the prejudice of someone else. In this light, equity is not simply synonymous with “equal opportunities” and goes beyond the prohibition of discrimination. To achieve gender equity, **positive opportunities are required to correct gender biases**. In other words, programs of **affirmative or positive action** are required.

Gender perspective in ICCAs:

A primary characteristic of territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities (ICCAs) is the strong and profound connection between a people or community and a territory or area. This characteristic is promoted and strengthened through the effective engagement in governance of all who feel, live, and demonstrate that connection. With that, goes the conservation of traditional knowledge and sustainable practices related to particular ecological contexts. A gender perspective can add the awareness of the specificities of each gender, possibly help understanding bias and if needed envisioning and implementing correction or compensation for it.

Combined with good governance practices, a gender perspective for ICCAs permits good relationships across generations, within communities, and among genders. It promotes the continuation and evolution of traditional knowledge in all sectors of a community, along with stronger capacities and social recognition and respect.