



Gender Policy

IPRI upholds the principle of gender equality in general and the rights of women in particular, as affirmed and protected by an international human rights instrument. It states that “The human rights of women and girls are an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social, and cultural life, at the national, regional, and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex, are priority objectives for the international community.”¹

Likewise, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) stresses the responsibility of States to “take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.”² IPRI, the Organization, is thereby committed to advance this provision as part of its core advocacy; and to ensure that gender equality and equity is integral in its decision-making processes and in the implementation of its programs.

I. Background and context

Indigenous Peoples are among the most marginalized and vulnerable groups due to historical injustices and systemic discrimination. Within indigenous communities, majority of women experience gender discrimination largely due to internal and external patriarchal systems. While indigenous women’s status varies from one community to another as indigenous persons and as women, they experience racism, and are confronted with multiple forms of discrimination from the dominant cultures and nation-states in general, and many of them remain excluded in decision-making in their own traditional systems of governance.

Indigenous women, compared to indigenous men, have lower levels of access to appropriate education, basic health services and employment. The given difficult conditions of indigenous communities in terms of access to basic social services are compounded by their own, as well as larger society’s traditional view that men are more deserving of education. The denial of education to indigenous girls would lead to lesser opportunities for better employment and compensation compared to educated men. Also, the specific reproductive health of indigenous women is not given due consideration. This situation makes indigenous women even more vulnerable to illiteracy, health problems, unequal opportunities that curtail their overall development. Specific and multiple sources of discrimination combine in complex forms and require specific and appropriate responses.

¹ Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, July 1993.

² Article 22.2.



As an indigenous rights advocacy organization, IPRI is concerned with equity, non-discrimination and social justice in general, and gender equality and equity in particular. Therefore, IPRI has to ensure that these principles are promoted and carried forward by its governance bodies, programs and work ethics as a matter of commitment, practice and accountability.

The Gender Policy consists of basic principles and operational guidelines to be carried out by the Organization's governing body and staff members. IPRI shall encourage its partner-organizations to adopt and implement their own Gender Policy.

II. Understanding gender equality and gender equity

People are born and identified biologically as either female or male, and growing as girls and boys, they learn socially constructed roles, behaviors, and attributes that are considered appropriate for men and women. This learned behavior makes up gender identity and determines gender roles. Thus, gender is defined by society based on characteristics of women and men, female or male categories, or some combination of these, depending on specific cultures. Those who do not identify as neither masculine nor feminine, may identify as non-binary.

In this policy, **gender equality** is understood here as **encompassing both equality and equity**, which are defined as follows:

- **Equality** means treating all individuals equally in spite of individual differences.
- **Equity** means treating each individual according to their individual differences, thus providing them support and assistance according to their requirement and specific condition.

Gender equity means fair treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or different treatment but that which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.³ To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must be available to compensate for women's historical and social disadvantages that prevent them and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality.

Gender equality means that all genders are free to pursue whatever career, lifestyle choice, and abilities they want without discrimination. Their rights, opportunities, and access to society are not different based on their gender. Gender equality does not necessarily mean that everyone is treated exactly the same. Their different needs and dreams are valued equally. Gender equity is often discussed at the same time as gender equality for this reason. Since society has favored men for so long, men have many advantages.⁴

³ <https://omegaaccelerator.com/what-is-gender-equity-gender-equity-vs-gender-equality/>

⁴ <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/what-does-gender-equality-mean/>



Therefore, **an essential and integral aspect of promoting gender equality is women's empowerment.** This will focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives. Gender equality does not mean that men and women become the same; only that access to opportunities and life changes is neither dependent on, nor constrained by, their gender. Achieving gender equality requires women's empowerment to ensure that decision-making at private and public levels and access to resources are no longer weighted in men's favor, so that both women and men can fully participate as equal partners in productive and reproductive life.⁵

For indigenous women, gender equality and empowerment also refer to the enjoyment of both their individual and collective rights as Indigenous Peoples. Further, it strengthens the equitable entitlements, role and contributions of indigenous women in indigenous societies especially on sustainable resource management, community development and maintenance of social cohesion, among others.

III. Aims and Objectives of the Policy

Through the adoption of this Gender Policy, IPRI aims to contribute to empowering indigenous women and promoting their rights and wellbeing. It also aims to ensure and increase their participation in decision-making of IPRI. To achieve this, IPRI seeks to ensure that:

- the principle of gender equality is consistently applied in all decision-making bodies and processes, actions and programs at all levels of the Organization;
- partners are encouraged to develop and adopt their own gender policy;
- there are standards against which IPRI office bearers and staff can be held accountable.

IPRI's gender policy aims to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are ethical and political principles that shall guide the Organization in its governance and programs, and implementation mechanisms as well as the general work culture.

IV. STRATEGIES

a. A gender perspective is applied in all stages of program and project development processes as follows:

- Applying a gender analysis in the project cycle, in planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning, impact assessment, and ensuring data disaggregation in preparing reports, etc.;
- Where appropriate, formulating measurable gender indicators/sex-disaggregated social and economic indicators and targets and conversely, assessing opportunities to reduce gender inequalities/inequities;

⁵ http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_difference_between_Gender_Equality_and_Gender_Equity



- Ensuring participation of indigenous women in project development, as well as in different IPRI activities; and
- Making special efforts to give women the possibility to express themselves and be heard directly in all the different activities and programs of the organization.

b. A culturally sensitive approach is applied in addressing gender issues. IPRI respects the different roles, responsibilities, rights, obligations, knowledge and skills of men and women who are involved in or who are affected by IPRI's programs and projects. In this context, the specific needs and circumstances of indigenous women that affect their effective participation to IPRI activities shall be addressed.

c. Where appropriate, examine how relevant national, regional and global laws, policies, programs and institutions affect gender equity, and explore possibilities for promoting gender equity within these.

f. Strengthen the advocacy and mainstreaming of indigenous women's rights and empowerment at all levels in all the programs of IPRI.

g. Promote and ensure involvement of men in gender and women's rights activities in all programs of IPRI.

h. Ensure that all data gathered in the context of activities undertaken by IPRI staff are gender-disaggregated and analyzed and the situation of women is documented regularly.

V. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

a. Policy making and advisory bodies

- Ensure gender balance in the composition of the Board and Advisory Group. Ensure indigenous women's membership in the Advisory Group to ensure the integration of women's perspectives, views and concerns in the Group's deliberations and decisions.
- Safeguard gender balance in IPRI's governance bodies and related mechanisms.
- Ensure that IPRI's programs reflect the strategies of this Gender Policy.

b. Management and organizational leadership

- Ensure gender balance among IPRI's staff and other coordination mechanisms established by IPRI.
- Ensure that IPRI's work culture in the Management and Global Secretariat is based on mutual respect, civility and shared key values of gender equality, good governance, accountability and transparency.



- Guarantee zero tolerance on all forms of violence in the Management, and Global Secretariat and other mechanisms and structures of the Organization. Sanctions shall be imposed by the Management Committee or the IPRI Board on cases of this nature, subject to due process. Depending on the severity of the case, sanctions shall include but not limited to strong warning, suspension, termination of contract and monetary compensation, and legal action where appropriate.
- Ensure that staff members are aware of the IPRI Gender Policy and the need for respect in work and management styles; that discriminatory practices are prevented which include gender stereotyping and all forms of violence.
- Promote and implement gender balance in all programs and other activities; and address specific concerns of indigenous women to facilitate their active participation.
- Ensure that a gender perspective is applied in the conduct of planning, monitoring, assessment and evaluation of IPRI programs and activities.
- In ensuring gender balance in its funded activities to the extent possible, the Global Secretariat shall inform its partners on the Gender Policy of IPRI. IPRI reserves the right not to fund nominated participants to IPRI activities if gender balance is not observed.
- Ensure data disaggregation and inclusion of women's perspective in the activity and program reports of the Global Secretariat.
- Develop gender-sensitive approaches and methods of work/methodologies.
- Be responsible for coordinating gender awareness training for the Secretariat and assess and review any on-going needs in this area.
- Oversee the evaluation and review of the implementation of the Gender Policy.
- Promote this Gender Policy to partner-organizations for them to undertake their best efforts to carry forward this Gender Policy within their own organization.
- Where appropriate, formulate further guidelines for the implementation of this Gender Policy.

VI. Redress mechanism

IPRI's complaint mechanism as provided in its Operations Manual shall govern any matter relating to the violation of this policy.