



Canadian International  
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de  
développement international

# Gender Equality and Humanitarian Assistance:

A guide to  
the issues

International Humanitarian Assistance Division  
Multilateral Programs Branch

Canada



## Message from the Minister

Gender equality is about promoting equality between women and men in all aspects of our work in development. It is about giving people the opportunity to build a better life for themselves, their families, and their communities.

At the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), gender equality is an integral part of our work. In fact, CIDA was a development leader in championing the role that women can play as full partners in their society's development.

The question of gender equality is not a single issue, but one closely tied to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals—be it protecting the environment, improving health, or achieving universal primary education. The role of gender in reducing poverty and supporting sustainable development is pivotal.

I am pleased to launch CIDA's gender equality toolkit, *Gender Equality and Humanitarian Assistance: A guide to the issues*. The toolkit highlights the importance of bringing a gender perspective more directly into humanitarian assistance work.

The toolkit is being launched at the same time as the 2004 United Nations Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeals Process, which draws attention to the humanitarian needs of countries in conflict. Sexual and gender-based violence has been a serious problem in many of these conflicts, and the victims are often women and children.

Taking gender considerations into account in our relief efforts means being more sensitive to victims' needs, ensuring that they are fully engaged in the design, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of humanitarian assistance programs.

The launch of this toolkit is important. It urges humanitarian assistance workers to better understand the dynamics within communities under stress.

The toolkit is intended to provide CIDA and humanitarian assistance workers with a greater knowledge of gender perspectives in the field so they can make a difference for those who are most vulnerable.



The Honourable Susan Whelan  
Minister for International Cooperation



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CIDA Photo: Bruce Paton

A Mozambican girl who was a victim of  
abuse during the war.

## Acronyms

<b>ALNAP</b>	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in humanitarian action
<b>CIDA</b>	Canadian International Development Agency
<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>IHA</b>	International Humanitarian Assistance Division (CIDA)
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme (UN)





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## 1. Introduction to this Guide



CIDA Photo: Roger LeMoyné

Humanitarian assistance is carried out in urgent situations. Organizations move quickly to save lives, deliver supplies, protect rights, and provide security. In the midst of this complexity, the appeal to ‘pay attention to gender issues’ may seem irrelevant. It isn’t. Experience shows that understanding the gender dynamics in communities is a crucial element for effective relief. This guide explores what is involved in integrating a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance.

This guide covers the ‘why?’ of using a gender perspective in relief efforts, draws attention to current issues, sets out questions to ask when reviewing submissions and reports, and includes a list of tools.

This guide was prepared to assist the Canadian International Development Agency’s International Humanitarian Assistance (CIDA/IHA) staff incorporate gender equality perspectives in humanitarian assistance.<sup>1</sup> In discussions, staff said they wanted to understand how and why gender perspectives were relevant in relief initiatives and how to dialogue with partners engaged in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. A longer version of this guide, with expanded discussions and more references, will be posted on the CIDA/IHA website. Given this primary audience, we are assuming a basic familiarity with CIDA’s working definitions of gender and gender equality (available on the CIDA website: [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/equality](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/equality)). This guide is a companion to CIDA’s *Operational Framework on Gender Equality and Peacebuilding*. Given the target audience, this document does not provide field-level assistance for the design and implementation of humanitarian assistance programs.

We hope that other humanitarian assistance actors, including Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations, find this guide useful, even though they are not its primary targets.

By the mid-1990s, the Angolan crisis had led to over one million displaced persons within the country. Information about the location and condition of displaced people was fragmented. By looking at the data in relation to gender and age, a socio-demographic study alerted agencies to concentrations of women, teenagers and girls who were vulnerable. The findings permitted more precise targeting of program efforts to ensure that women’s status and views were considered. It was discovered that in one province, women headed some 63% of households.

- IASC (2002). *Growing the Sheltering Tree: Protecting Rights Through Humanitarian Action*

1. This guide was prepared by Beth Woroniuk, consultant to Multilateral Programs Branch, CIDA, with input from CIDA/IHA staff. We are grateful to representatives of the Mennonite Central Committee, Development and Peace, and Care Canada who provided constructive input to an earlier draft.

## 2. Gender Equality and Humanitarian Assistance

### 2.1 Why is CIDA's IHA Program concerned with gender equality and gender issues?

The mandate of CIDA's IHA Program is to help ease human suffering resulting from conflicts and natural disasters in developing countries. In general, humanitarian assistance acts quickly and effectively in an emergency to ensure that fewer people die, become sick, or suffer deprivation.<sup>2</sup>

The commitment of CIDA's IHA Program to ensure that all initiatives integrate a gender perspective is based on the following elements:

- ◆ it is effective;
- ◆ it is consistent with international goals and standards;
- ◆ it is Canadian policy; and
- ◆ it is overdue.

#### *Using a gender perspective supports more effective humanitarian assistance*

Using a gender perspective can strengthen humanitarian assistance in various ways:

- ◆ *It supports a more accurate understanding of the situation.* Understanding that 'internally displaced people' or other vulnerable groups have different needs or priorities based on gender differences and



CIDA Photo: Roger LeMoyné

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2. See Deborah Clifton and Fiona Gell (2001). "Saving and protecting lives by empowering women." *Gender and Development*. Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 8-18.

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inequalities is part of good analysis. It can ensure that people are not neglected and that all needs and vulnerabilities are taken into account.

- ◆ *It facilitates the design of more appropriate responses.* Understanding that potential beneficiaries face different obstacles when participating in programs (and can mobilize different resources, have different responsibilities, etc.) can facilitate the development of more effective programming. In other words, it can ensure that needs are met.
- ◆ *It highlights opportunities and resources.* Women are more than a ‘vulnerable group’. They are an important resource in delivering assistance, establishing peace, and rebuilding societies. They cannot play these roles if their basic security needs are unmet, if decision-makers ignore them, and if they fail to receive support (such as appropriate food and medical assistance).
- ◆ *It draws attention to issues of power.* By urging a consideration of inequalities between and among women and men, efforts to integrate a gender perspective can also highlight other power imbalances. Humanitarian workers can try to understand who holds power, who speaks for whom, and dynamics within communities.
- ◆ *It provides a link between humanitarian assistance and longer-term development assistance.* One IHA partner explained:

“In our humanitarian response to the crisis in Afghanistan, we found it very difficult to get all our related agencies around the table to understand how to use a gender perspective in the initial emergency relief programme. All agreed that the issue of women's rights and their equal participation in the reconstruction of the country would be very important, but few understood that if we didn't start looking at the humanitarian assistance from a gender perspective it would be very, very difficult to eventually shift to development programmes and parachute women's issues onto the agenda at that point. As a result, the reconstruction programme also omitted many questions and failed to develop solutions with the women or from their point of view.”

Can using a gender perspective hinder effective responses? Another IHA partner thought this could be the case in some circumstances:

“Although I am a strong advocate for gender sensitive approaches to programming, I am also quite practical in terms of what can be done on the ground, particularly with rapid, onset emergencies. In some cases (but definitely not the majority), the focus on ensuring gender equity (as with many rights-based approaches) in programming can be slow and frustrating, leading to a delay in carrying out immediate programming needs that focus on saving lives.”

The call to be attentive to gender equality concerns is not meant to be unreasonable nor an obstacle to effective relief efforts. In most cases, however, a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance can help save lives. It can assist in the profiling and understanding of vulnerabilities and capacities, assist

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agencies channel resources to those most in need, and also assist in the mobilization of a significant proportion of the population whose capacities are often underestimated.

## *Using a gender perspective is consistent with international commitments*



CIDA Photo: Bruce Paton

There are numerous international commitments, policies, and agreements to work toward equality between women and men. These have been made by states, NGOs, United Nations (UN) agencies and other international organizations. A current strategy to support gender equality is 'gender mainstreaming'. Based on the insights that gender differences and equalities are relevant in all situations, this strategy works to ensure that attention to gender differences and equalities is part of all initiatives, policies, and projects.

There are also particular commitments—made by states, UN agencies and other international organizations—to use a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance. These cover assistance to refugees, sexual violence, reproductive health, peace-support operations, as well as a general commitment to view gender issues across the range of emergency-assistance initiatives.

## *Supporting equality between women and men and using a gender perspective are commitments of the Canadian government generally, and CIDA specifically*

The Canadian government has made commitments to equality between women and men and to using gender-based analysis in all its policies and programs. As well, CIDA has a clear gender policy that has implications for its work in humanitarian assistance. See the Annex for specific references.

## *To date, humanitarian assistance programs have paid insufficient attention to gender relations, inequalities, and dynamics*

Although there has not been a major review or evaluation of how humanitarian assistance programs do or do not incorporate gender perspectives, the conclusions of the ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in humanitarian action) annual reviews of evaluations of humanitarian assistance programs are revealing. The two most recent reviews have concluded that there has been inadequate attention paid to gender

Gender equality continues to be poorly covered by evaluation reports with gender perspectives systematically ignored by many programmes. Attention to gender equality was among the weaker areas in reports. Evaluators appeared for the most part unaware of the meaning of gender equality. Gender mainstreaming was most often equated with the need for special attention to women, failing to make a link between this and relations between men and women, the core issue in gender equality.

- ALNAP Annual Review 2002: *Humanitarian Action – Improving Performance Through Improved Learning*

issues in evaluations. This suggests that humanitarian assistance programs, in general, do not adequately address and incorporate these issues.

## 2.2 A gender perspective in humanitarian assistance: what does it mean?

Concern over gender issues involves looking at relations, divisions, differences, connections, and inequalities between and among women, girls, boys, and men. These relationships, responsibilities, and identities take different forms in each situation, and are often thrown into flux in times of conflict or emergency. The focus is often on women and girls, as their needs, priorities, and interests tend to be overlooked in assessments and assistance programs. Yet the situation of women and girls cannot be understood without considering the situation of men and boys (and of the community in general). It is crucial to understand how people relate to each other, share tasks, and divide responsibilities. As well, it is important to try to appreciate how the gender identities of men and boys also influence their needs and roles in times of crisis.

In broad strokes, gender relations and inequalities influence both vulnerabilities and capacities (including people's ability to respond). Vulnerability is influenced by social attitudes, economic inequalities between women and men, and the division of labour within the family. For example, women tend to be less educated, have less experience dealing with authorities, have access to fewer economic resources and, in many countries, have more restrictions on their mobility than men. In some disasters, being outdoors increases the risk of death and injury and, in these cases, men are more likely to be affected. These and other factors all shape both the impact of disaster on individuals and their ability to respond to relief efforts.



CIDA Photo: David Barbour

As well, gender identities, relations, and responsibilities influence people's ability to respond in emergency situations—in both natural disasters and conflict situations. Education levels, mobility, access to resources, responsibilities, social stereotypes, and work experience can all vary along gender lines. For example, in several natural disasters, men's control over household decision making can mean that women feel unable to leave their homes without their husbands' permission. These differences and inequalities influence what resources people can draw upon and mobilize in a post-crisis situation. They can also influence whether people benefit from humanitarian assistance initiatives.

It is important to understand:

◆ *The differences in men's and women's security and protection needs*

Given gender differences and social attitudes, women and girls tend to define 'security' differently than men. The prerequisites for their personal safety are different than those of men. The most

Protection is also linked to other dimensions including the ability to participate in emergency assistance and reconstruction efforts. For example, a report by Afghan-Canadian women stated:

"... we agreed that the central and fundamental barrier to women's full participation in Afghanistan is the lack of personal safety and security. We felt that the weakness of the current government to ensure law and order was a barrier to personal safety and security. Reliable reports confirm that women throughout the country—especially in rural areas—continue to be victims of physical—including sexual—violence."

- *A Stone in the Water* Report of the Roundtables with Afghan-Canadian Women on the Question of the Application of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Afghanistan. July 2002.

often-cited differences are the higher risk faced by women and girls for sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation, as well as human trafficking—both during and after emergencies. For example, studies have shown that domestic violence tends to increase in post-disaster and post-conflict situations.

Protection initiatives also have different implications for women and men or boys and girls and should ensure that vulnerable populations have access to material assistance. It also involves ensuring compliance with international law (that violations of human rights, humanitarian, and refugee laws are prevented or redressed) and dealing directly with physical or safety/security issues (i.e., hostile or repressive acts).

Protection is multifaceted. It is not always clear that certain decisions regarding humanitarian supplies will have security implications. For example, Refugees International reported that, in July 2000, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) ran out of funds to purchase soap for approximately half a million refugees in Tanzania. Not only did girls—who relied on the soap for personal hygiene—drop out of school, but it was also noted that girls having sex in exchange for soap increased.<sup>3</sup>

◆ *Who holds what responsibilities, who does what work and who controls resources*

The gender division of labour often changes in crisis and post-crisis situations. Women's role as family caregiver generally translates into an increased workload during disaster situations. Destruction of homes, shortages of food and fuel, and sick family members can all result in more work for women and girls. Furthermore, the number of women-headed households tends to rise in emergencies.

3. Refugees International (2001). *Notes from the Field: The Impact of Soap Shortages on Female Refugees in Tanzania*. Available at [www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/s/6B796C3F5520220785256A9B00486314](http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/s/6B796C3F5520220785256A9B00486314)



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As well, it is important to not overlook women's productive work. Humanitarian assistance workers should not make assumptions about who does what work and who holds what responsibilities—relating to agricultural work or small-scale productive activities. Women and men tend not to have the same control over resources.

These differences and inequalities can be important in accessing assistance and supplies. The World Food Programme (WFP) notes that women usually have more difficulty than men in obtaining emergency entitlements (food, blankets, fuel, soap, shelter, etc.) as a result of discriminatory practices in registration, women's lack of access to information regarding benefits, and the frequent absence of consultation with women about resource distribution.<sup>4</sup>

Women-headed agricultural households, particularly those headed by widows and divorcées, often lacked the resources to purchase seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, and starter livestock. In Cambodia and Rwanda international donors provided seeds and simple implements to subsistence farmers. These efforts, though not always adequate, gave relief to many women farmers. However, except in Rwanda, such assistance was not available to all women farmers. Moreover, because of food shortages, some women farmers consumed the seeds instead of planting them... Women farmers also experienced shortages of farm labour. Lacking the resources to hire workers, women often had to depend on the generosity of their relatives and friends, which was not always forthcoming.

- Krishna Kumar (ed) (2001). *Women and Civil War: Impact, Organization and Action*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Press

◆ *The differences (as well as commonalities) in women's, men's, boys' and girls' priorities*

Given different responsibilities—primarily the division of labour within the family—women may place greater urgency on meeting different needs than the men in their community or those defined by humanitarian assistance staff, who are often male.

For example, in one community in Nicaragua following Hurricane Mitch, men ranked the worst impact of the disaster as 'decreased coffee production', while most women put 'fear' at the top of their list. Women also listed 'higher food prices' and 'less basic grains' as important impacts, while men listed 'less income' and 'more work' as important.<sup>5</sup>



CIDA Photo: Bruce Paton

4. WFP (nd). *Food Aid and Gender in Emergencies*.

5. Delaney, P. and E. Shrader. *Gender and Post-Disaster Reconstruction: The Case of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Nicaragua*. The World Bank. January 2000.

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## ◆ *How women are currently organized or participating in social, economic, political, and religious structures*

Women's organizations—both informal and formal—are often overlooked by outside humanitarian assistance workers. It is important to seek out these structures, understand them, and appropriately build on them. Often, the immediate impulse is to set up a new organization rather than strengthening that which already exists.

The UN Development Fund for Women's (UNIFEM's) assessment of gender mainstreaming in post-conflict support to Rwanda found that:

“The existing tradition of women's organizing is a key area on which to build. The humanitarian assistance provided by these organisations proved crucial in the post-conflict period in protecting widows and displaced people, health promotion and fighting violence against women and girls.”<sup>6</sup>

## ◆ *The capacities of women, men, girls, and boys to participate in decision-making processes and reconstruction*

Women (and youth) tend to be excluded from decision making around emergency planning, reconstruction, and formal peace processes. Yet they make up at least half the population. This is a significant group to leave out of processes for reconstructing societies, economies, and political structures. There is growing evidence that women with an understanding of social justice, and of

the ways that gender inequality hinders human development, can make peace negotiations and reconstruction efforts more constructive, more inclusive, and more sustainable.

... women are more likely to volunteer for programs in their communities for works related to emergency management and women also tend to outnumber men in grassroots organizations on community disaster issues. However, the pattern is reversed in more formal, emergency planning organizations. This leads to the exclusion of women from participation in key planning and preparedness decisions.

- S. Kumar-Range (2001). *Environmental Management and Disaster Risk Reduction: A Gender Perspective*. Prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on Environmental Management and the Mitigation of Natural Disasters: A Gender Perspective.



CIDA Photo: Bruce Paton

6. UNIFEM (2002). *Report of the Learning-Oriented Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment Strategies in Rwanda*.

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## ◆ *How men's gender identities influence their vulnerabilities, needs, and priorities*

Although much of the focus of gender analysis centres on women, it is important to consider men for at least two reasons. First, men's gender identities can influence men's perceptions and priorities. There can be a loss of self-esteem when men are unable to provide for or protect their families. Expectations around masculinity can increase tensions. Second, it is difficult to understand the situation of girls and women without understanding the situation of men, families, and communities. It is not helpful to look at women in isolation from their social setting.



CIDA Photo: Clive Shirley

One study looked at how life in a refugee camp has changed men's gender identities:

“A recurring subject [of discussions was] ... the men lamenting that the women no longer respect them. The reason allegedly being that the men no longer can provide for their wives and children. It is the UNHCR—or merely the wazungu (white people)—that provides food, medicine and plastic sheeting for building blindés (huts). And UNHCR provides the same amount to men, women, and children alike. ‘The UNHCR is a better husband’ the women say, according to the men at least.”<sup>7</sup>

## ◆ *The differences among women (as well as among men)*

Not all women are the same. There are divisions along class, ethnic, rural/urban, and other lines, just as there are among men. It should not be assumed that all women share the same interests or priorities. In addition to ethnic and religious differences, women often have different priorities depending on whether or not they have a spouse or partner.

## ◆ *The opportunities to narrow gender gaps and support women's equitable participation in decision making.*

A gender perspective involves more than recognizing the differences between women and men. It also involves identifying opportunities to narrow gender inequalities and strengthen respect for women's human rights. This process is not always easy, but it is possible. One CIDA/IHA partner wrote:

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7. Simon Turner (1999). “Angry Young Men in Camps: gender, age and class relations among Burundian refugees in Tanzania”. *New Issues in Refugee Research*. Working Paper No. 9.

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“We realized that we couldn’t bring a gender perspective into humanitarian assistance just because we wanted to, and we couldn’t bring it in exactly how we would like to. We learned to be very aware of the resources available, what the women were willing to do, how they were willing to work with us, but that we had an important role in creating the circumstances for them to participate.”

In summary, an understanding of how gender inequalities and relations influence both capacities and vulnerabilities involves looking at:

- ◆ the difference between men’s and women’s security and protection needs;
- ◆ who holds what responsibilities, who does what work, and who controls resources;
- ◆ the differences (as well as commonalities) in women’s, men’s, boys’, and girls’ priorities;
- ◆ how women are currently organized or participating in social, economic, political, and religious structures;
- ◆ the capacities of women, men, girls, and boys to participate in decision-making processes and reconstruction;
- ◆ how men’s gender identities influence their vulnerabilities, needs, and priorities;
- ◆ the differences among women (as well as among men); and
- ◆ the opportunities to narrow gender gaps and support women’s equitable participation in decision making.



CIDA Photo: Roger LeMoynes

## 2.3 Myths around gender mainstreaming strategies in humanitarian assistance

Despite years of discussion there are still misconceptions about exactly what is entailed in ‘gender mainstreaming’. Some of the most common myths and the reality include:

Myths	Reality
“Inserting one section on women fulfils the mandate to mainstream a gender perspective.”	Mainstreaming a gender perspective involves changing how situations are analysed. A brief profile of how and why women’s needs are different from those of men’s should be the starting point of the analysis, not the end. These basic insights should influence the understanding of the context and raise issues to be explored in each project component.
“We have a women’s project and therefore we have mainstreamed gender.”	A gender mainstreaming strategy involves bringing a gender analysis to all initiatives, not just developing one minor, isolated sub-component or project.
“We’ve mainstreamed gender, therefore we can’t have specific initiatives targeting women.”	A mainstreaming strategy does not preclude specific initiatives that are either targeted at women or at narrowing gender inequalities. In fact, concrete investments are generally required to protect women’s rights, provide capacity building to women’s NGOs, work with men on gender issues, etc. Many of these types of initiatives can best be funded through a separate initiative rather than as a sub-component of a larger project.
“We’re here to save lives, not ask whether or not someone is a woman or a man before we provide assistance or to give priority to women over men.”	Using a gender perspective involves incorporating an understanding of how being male or female in a specific situation contributes to vulnerability and defines capacities. It is not a screening process to exclude those who need assistance from receiving support. There may be times when, given their different priorities and needs, women and men will best be served through the provision of different resources. Furthermore, it may be necessary to make additional investments to ensure that women’s voices are heard (given inequalities in societies). But a gender mainstreaming strategy does not call for the ‘favouring’ of women over men.
“All this talk of gender, but what they really mean is women.”	It is true that a lot of the work on gender in humanitarian assistance focusses on girls and women. That is primarily because it is women’s needs and interests that tend to be neglected by the international community. However, it is important that the analysis and discussion consider both sides of the gender equation. More research and attention is needed to understand how men’s roles, strategies, responsibilities, and options are shaped by gender expectations during times of conflict and emergency.

### 3. Reviewing Proposals and Reports

The following table outlines, from a gender perspective, what to look for and questions to ask when reviewing submissions and reports. It is intended as a guide for CIDA staff when reviewing documentation submitted by partner organizations. Other more specific issues could be raised depending on the sector or focus of the initiative.

Questions to ask		Why ask these questions?
Participation and consultation	<p>How have women and men been consulted on priorities and needs?</p> <p>Have women and men been involved in the design of this initiative?</p> <p>Have women's organizations been consulted? Have the results of that consultation influenced the initiative's focus or design?</p>	<p>Although time is often 'of the essence' when delivering humanitarian assistance, there are situations where it is possible to involve communities, consult with target beneficiaries, and use participatory planning tools. In these situations, it is important to ensure that women's needs, priorities, and voices are heard. This includes individual women as well as representatives of women's organizations.</p>
Gender analysis	<p>Does the project design indicate that there has been a consideration of the different needs, priorities, and interests of women and men?</p>	<p>Often, it is assumed that an entire population will benefit from new resources or a specific initiative. Experience dictates that, unless there is an awareness of how gender inequalities and differences come into play, women may not benefit to the same extent as men from humanitarian assistance.</p>
Indicators	<p>How are the proposed indicators to be disaggregated on the basis of sex?</p>	<p>Although providing disaggregated indicators may be time-consuming and expensive, general trends should be available. For example, the organization should have an approximate idea of who is receiving resources (e.g., what percentage women/men).</p>
Women as only a 'vulnerable group'	<p>Are women only perceived as a 'vulnerable group'?</p> <p>How does the initiative recognize and build on women's capacities as well as vulnerabilities?</p> <p>Are the gender differences and inequalities of all vulnerable groups understood?</p>	<p>In many discussions of gender issues in humanitarian assistance, the focus is exclusively on women's vulnerability. Although it is important to understand how people's vulnerability is shaped by gender inequalities, it is essential to not overlook women's capacities.</p> <p>Women have important roles within families, communities, and organizations. International organizations can support women in these roles.</p>

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Questions to ask		Why ask these questions?
Objectives or intended results	<p>Is there a specific result that relates to the objectives in CIDA's Gender Equality Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensuring women's equitable access and control over resources/benefits?</li> <li>- Ensuring women's equitable participation in decision making?</li> <li>- Supporting respect for the human rights of girls and women?</li> </ul>	<p>All projects should be based on an understanding of gender relations and inequalities.</p> <p>It may be possible to develop a specific result that aims to narrow inequalities between women and men.</p>
Potential for sexual abuse and exploitation	<p>Has the initiative been reviewed with an eye to minimize the possibility of or potential for sexual abuse or exploitation?</p>	<p>Power inequalities in crisis situations can unfortunately lead to abuses of power. Minimizing opportunities for this to occur is part of good project design.</p>
Differences among women	<p>Does the project assume that all women have the same needs, priorities, and interests?</p> <p>Does the project recognize that most 'groups' (such as displaced people, survivors of landmines, landless, or child soldiers) are composed of women, men, boys, and girls and that there will be gender differences within these groups?</p>	<p>It is important to not think of 'women' as a single category. Women—just like men—are divided along racial, educational, class, ethnic, religious, and other lines.</p> <p>Lists of vulnerable groups often categorize women as a separate group and fail to acknowledge that there are women/men, boys/girls within all other categories as well. There are gender issues to be looked at within specific groups.</p>
Capacity of partner organizations (organizations submitting proposals) involved to work on gender equality issues	<p>Do the organizations involved have a solid track record on gender issues? Do they have a gender policy? Does staff have the capacity to work on these issues? Do they have links with women's organizations?</p> <p>Are they familiar with and use on a regular basis international guidelines and standards relating to key gender issues (reproductive health, sexual violence, etc.)</p>	<p>While good past practice does not guarantee good current practice, it is an indicator of organizational capacity.</p>

## 4. Sector-Specific Considerations

This table looks at questions that could be asked about projects that deliver humanitarian assistance in specific sectors. Not all the questions may be appropriate all of the time, but these examples provide starting points to explore gender dimensions in particular sectors.

Some international guidelines attempt to ensure that a gender perspective has been integrated. For example, efforts have been made to ‘engender’ the Sphere standards. However, given that organizations still have difficulties working with a gender framework, it may be necessary to ask specific questions.

Programming sector	Examples of questions to ask
Protection and human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Is there access to all people—especially women and girls? In situations of limited access, is there an awareness of potential barriers to reaching certain groups?</li> <li>◆ Is there explicit recognition that women have human rights? Do human rights programs explicitly target women’s rights?</li> <li>◆ Do human rights workers/protection workers have experience in dealing with abuses of women’s rights?</li> <li>◆ Does staff have the capacity to deal appropriately with gender-based violence?</li> <li>◆ Has the crisis produced a shifting in gender roles that has exacerbated women’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation, domestic violence, and rape?</li> <li>◆ Is there capacity building for both women’s organizations and human rights organizations on women’s rights?</li> <li>◆ In addition to addressing past violations, is there an analysis of possible strategies to minimize new violations?</li> <li>◆ Are initiatives consistent with the UNHCR’s 2003 Guidelines against Sexual Violence?</li> <li>◆ Is there recognition of the different situations, needs, and resources of girls and boys?</li> </ul>
Food and agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have there been separate consultations with women and men on priorities and issues?</li> <li>◆ Have men and women been consulted in the design and distribution of food aid?<sup>8</sup></li> <li>◆ Has there been a recognition of the roles of women, in caring for families and dependents, in decisions regarding size of rations, appropriateness of rations, distribution channels, and monitoring of distribution?</li> <li>◆ How are households registered? Is there consideration of the types of households and household structures (including women-headed households)?</li> <li>◆ Is there an assumption that all households will have fuel, as well as cooking and food-preparation utensils?</li> <li>◆ Have women’s roles in agriculture been identified and supported?</li> <li>◆ Consider whether or not women’s lack of access to agricultural land endangers food security for specific groups?</li> </ul>

8. One recommendation is that 80 percent of relief food aid should be distributed directly to women.



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Programming sector	Examples of questions to ask
Food and agriculture (cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Do food security programs draw attention to laws or customs that deny or restrict women's access to land?</li> <li>◆ Are boys and girls equally nourished?</li> <li>◆ What indicators of food security are being used and are they disaggregated on the basis of sex?</li> <li>◆ Have food distribution programs been reviewed with the goal of minimizing the potential for sexual abuse and exploitation?</li> </ul>
Water and sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Are water and sanitation programs based on an understanding of the roles, responsibilities and needs of women and girls in ensuring domestic water supplies (these vary from place to place)?</li> <li>◆ Women often hold the primary responsibility for water collection and use. Have they been involved in setting priorities and making decisions about water supply programs?</li> <li>◆ Are water supplies accessible and safe for women as well as men? Is there access to containers for storage and collection of water, and is water accessible to women with limited mobility?</li> <li>◆ One prerequisite for successful sanitation programs in 'ordinary circumstances' is women's involvement. Has this 'lesson learned' been applied?</li> <li>◆ Do bathing, washing, and laundry facilities ensure the privacy and security of women and girls?</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Is there recognition of women's and men's roles and needs relating to reproductive health care? Have international standards relating to reproductive health been met (such as the Minimum Initial Services Package)?</li> <li>◆ Are the resources allocated to meet agency guidelines on reproductive health (e.g., as outlined in the inter-agency field manual)? Have staff received training in use of the manual?</li> <li>◆ Are the health priorities of women who are not mothers taken into consideration?</li> <li>◆ Have the menstrual needs of women been taken care of?</li> <li>◆ Has there been attention to the psychosocial well-being of women and men?</li> <li>◆ Have health care workers been trained to deal with the sensitivities of HIV/AIDS and sexual and gender-based violence?</li> <li>◆ Do HIV/AIDS programs recognize and respond to women's and men's needs and situations?</li> <li>◆ Is it appropriate to involve women's organizations in health monitoring and surveillance activities?</li> <li>◆ Has there been consultation with (and involvement of) traditional medical practitioners (women and men) as appropriate to promote helpful (and to eliminate harmful) health practices?</li> <li>◆ Has there been consideration of the health implications of gender-based crimes of violence?</li> <li>◆ Have women been consulted on the hours of opening of health facilities?</li> <li>◆ Are health education messages directed at both women and men?</li> <li>◆ Does the male/female profile of health staff reflect the composition of the client population?</li> </ul>

Programming sector	Examples of questions to ask
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Do education programs reach girls as well as boys (issues include social attitudes, hours classes are offered, child-care provision for younger siblings, safety, gender of teachers, and location of 'schools')?</li> <li>◆ Has attention been paid to obstacles faced by girls and boys in attending schools? There may be a need to target children of minorities, children with disabilities, and children formerly recruited by the military, with attention to gender differences in all these groups.</li> <li>◆ Are both women and men mobilized as teachers?</li> <li>◆ What actions are in place to accommodate the education needs of disabled, orphaned, separated, or otherwise-unaccompanied girls and boys?</li> <li>◆ Do adult educational/vocational training programs target both women and men?</li> <li>◆ Do education programs recognize and build on existing skills of displaced women and women refugees?</li> </ul>
Economic recovery and reconstruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Has there been consideration of changes in family roles and responsibilities? Is there an increase in women-headed households?</li> <li>◆ Do economic resources (seeds, tools, relief commodities, etc.) reach women as well as men? Are the packages provided relevant to the type of skills and work women do (as well as those of men)?</li> <li>◆ Will inequalities relating to land access and ownership have an impact on who benefits from a specific initiative? Do mainstream economic-reconstruction programs provide opportunities for women as well as men? Are there strategies to minimize obstacles to their participation?</li> <li>◆ Are there opportunities for women to learn skills in non-traditional fields?</li> </ul>

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## Annex - Canadian Policies

### The Canadian government generally

The equality of women and men is a fundamental element of Canada's foreign and domestic policies. These Canadian values find expression in the equality provisions of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (available at: [www.canada.justice.gc.ca/Loireg/charte/const\\_en.html](http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca/Loireg/charte/const_en.html)) and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

In 1995, the Government of Canada adopted the *Federal Plan for Gender Equality*. Among other elements, this Plan requires the application of Gender-Based Analysis in the policy development and analysis process. All federal departments and agencies now are required to analyze their policies and legislation to take into account their differing impacts on women and men. The Plan is available at: [www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/publish/fedpln-e.html](http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/publish/fedpln-e.html)

### CIDA's Gender Equality Policy

Approved in March 1999, CIDA's Gender Equality Policy has the following goal: "To support the achievement of equality between women and men to ensure sustainable development."

The objectives of the policy are:

- ◆ to advance women's equal participation with men as decision-makers in shaping the sustainable development of their societies;
- ◆ to support women and girls in the realization of their full human rights; and
- ◆ to reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over the resources and benefits of development.

Full text and background information is available at: [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/equality](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/equality)

### CIDA's Framework for Assessing Gender Equality Results

In June 2003, CIDA adopted a new framework to be used to assess progress toward the implementation of CIDA's Gender Equality Policy. It sets out a framework for the review of programs, focusing on the achievement of results related to the three objectives of the policy. It also provides elements to rate institutional strategies of institutions and organizations receiving core funding from CIDA. These elements are:

- ◆ *Gender equality results*. A substantial proportion of institutional programming contributes toward gender equality development results.

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- ◆ *Shift to a gender equality focus.* The institution's approach reflects the international consensus reached in the Beijing Platform for Action on gender equality and women's empowerment as integral to development.
- ◆ *Supportive institutional framework.* Gender equality perspectives are incorporated in a substantive way in major policy documents guiding the working of the institution.
- ◆ *Institutional enabling environment.* The approach to gender equality is institutionally based and systematic (e.g., reflected in decision-making processes, knowledge/skills of staff, operational manuals, availability of expertise, budget allocations, partnerships with women's organizations).
- ◆ *Institutional commitment.* Continuing commitment to pursue gender equality objectives and continuing evaluation of approaches and experience.