

Policy on Gender Equality

The purpose of this policy document is to provide Caritas Norway with a framework to guide its efforts to achieve gender equality within the organisation and in all its technical work, activities and practice in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls - and international human rights law.

1. Why a policy on gender equality?

A fundamental principle of the United Nations Charter adopted by world leaders in 1945 is "equal rights of men and women". Protecting and promoting women's human rights is the responsibility of all states. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has been ratified by most UN member states.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has mainstreamed gender equality into its goals, in addition to a specific goal on gender equality: SDG 5.

Reducing poverty and eliminating hunger can only be achieved if every woman, man, girl and boy has equal opportunities, equal access to resources and the possibility to participate in decisions that concern them in their households, communities and societies. Women show great ability to overcome poverty for themselves and for their families, thus supporting their communities and nations. Research indicates that economic development, self-sufficiency and income of families depend on women being integrated into the formal economy.

At the global level, also in Europe, the impact of poverty on women is greater than on men. In many parts of the world, women and girls are being systematically discriminated against and do not have the same opportunities as men and boys for education, work, participation and a dignified life, as culture and traditional belief systems hinder gender equality.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 100 million girls were expected to marry before their eighteenth birthday in the next decade. Now, up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of becoming child brides as a result of the pandemic¹. In developing countries, complications from pregnancy and childbirth is the most common cause of death for girls between 15 and 19 years of age. Many children who live in poverty and lack access to food, healthcare and education have single parents – mostly single mothers. Women and girls are hit hard by wars, conflicts, environmental problems and natural disasters.

Dignity of the human person, economic justice, and the preferential option for the poor are the three pillars of [Catholic Social Teaching](#) (CST) that guide the work of Caritas. The dignity of every person, independent of ethnicity, creed, gender, sexuality, age or ability is the foundation of CST. With this as our vision, we cannot accept that women and girls lag behind in all sectors of development.

¹ [UNICEF, Child Marriages.](#)

2. Terms and definitions

Gender equality (equality between women and men/ girls and boys)

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue, but should concern and engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for and indicator of sustainable, people-centred development².

Gender equity

Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels, and a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality³.

3. Gender equality and the Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching says that all humans have an integral and inalienable dignity. It teaches us that true love is also about justice, and that solidarity is one of the most important principles. For the situation of women, the issue of subsidiarity is also central. Decisions are to be made by those most affected by them, thereby giving people the possibility to decide about their own lives.

Key human rights conventions have a lot in common with Catholic Social Teaching. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the CRPD all promote respect for human dignity, expressed in a specific and tangible way, and should be recognised as necessary tools in the work of the Church and Caritas.

Since in many places the burden of poverty falls disproportionately on the shoulders of women, the concept of the Church's 'preferential option for the poor' is also relevant in the context of gender equality. For the Church to create an option for the poor means to make the needs of the poor a focus of love and attention, and to allow the perspective of the poor to shape the Church's own thinking and practice.

² [The UN Women Training Centre's Glossary](#)

³ [UN Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\)](#)

4. Caritas Norway's approach

Gender equality is a priority cross-cutting theme in Caritas Norway's work, both nationally and internationally.

Principles:

- Throughout the organisation, we will base our work on a common understanding that gender equality is key to overcoming social inequality, poverty and suffering.
- We will work with both women and men to address the specific ideas and beliefs that create and reinforce gender-related poverty.
- Women and girls will be empowered through all aspects of our programmes and ways of working, and we will often prioritise work which raises the status of women.
- Our internal practices and ways of working will reflect our commitment to gender equality.
- Caritas' work, both nationally and internationally, will be founded on the belief that all individuals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, age, religion and sexual orientation have equal access to knowledge, education and information.
- In all poverty-reduction and humanitarian assistance, measures to increase freedom of choice and self-determination will be incorporated.

5. Programme-specific implications

Gender equality should be considered in all phases of a Caritas Norway project or programme cycle.

Caritas Norway works primarily in the areas of food security and livelihoods, emergency relief and migration; gender equality and women's empowerment must be considered in each of them.

Food security and livelihoods

Women produce 60-70 percent of food in the world, but own less than 20 percent of farmland and obtain lower yields⁴. If female farmers had equal opportunities and access to resources as men, 100-150 million less people would be hungry or malnourished in the world. The failure to prioritise women small-scale farmers is an obstacle not only to the development of women, but also to entire societies.

Women's right to own, inherit and receive credit based on agricultural property is central to development in rural areas. For food safety in environmentally-friendly and climate-smart frameworks to become a reality, it is necessary to include a gender and women's perspective on food production, local and regional markets, sales channels and price setting.

Reducing gender inequalities in the agriculture sector holds great promise for Caritas Norway's mandate of reducing hunger, poverty and injustice in the world.

- ***Caritas Norway will mainstream gender equality into all our development and food security programmes. This entails ensuring that both women and men are involved in the entire programme cycle, and that women benefit equally from the intervention.***

⁴ [Levelling the field – Improving opportunities for women farmers in Africa](#)

- **Capacity-building plans and activities for Caritas Norway's partners will aim to strengthen local capacity on gender equality and women's empowerment.**
- **Caritas Norway will provide gender-disaggregated data in our food security and livelihood programmes.**

Practical resources:

- [ECHO's Gender and Age marker toolkit](#)
- Caritas Uganda, *Equal Opportunities for All in Caritas' Programmes and Projects. Handbook for Field Coordinators*
- [Food Security Information Network, Gender and Food Security Resources](#)

Humanitarian assistance

During a humanitarian crisis, the needs of women, men, girls and boys are different and distinct. Addressing gender equality during a humanitarian crisis means planning and implementing protection and assistance according to the needs of the different groups in a community. This ensures that the humanitarian response benefits all people affected equally and avoids putting some at greater risk.

Women and girls face heightened risks due to displacement and breakdown of normal protection structures and support. They also face increased care-related tasks, such as providing food and water, and caring for the sick⁵. As with all humanitarian emergencies, women and girls are among the most vulnerable. Women and girls face a significantly increased risk for unwanted pregnancy, gender-based sexual violence, sexually transmitted infections and maternal mortality⁶. Disasters such as droughts, floods and storms kill more women than men due to structural gender inequalities⁷.

- **Caritas Norway will mainstream gender equality in all our humanitarian aid programs. This entails ensuring that protection and assistance needs of men and women, boys and girls are analysed, that both women and men are involved in the entire programme cycle, and that women are benefitting equally from the program.**
- **Capacity-building plans and activities for Caritas Norway's partners will aim to strengthen local capacity on gender in emergencies.**
- **Caritas Norway will provide gender-disaggregated data in our emergency programmes.**
- **Caritas Norway shall follow the SPHERE minimum standards in emergency response, which highlight gender as a cross-cutting issue.**

Practical resources:

- [The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action](#)
- [ECHO's Gender and Age marker toolkit](#)
- [IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action](#)

Migration

⁵ [UN Women, Facts and figures: Humanitarian action](#)

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

It is now understood that a person's sex, gender identity and sexual orientation shape every stage of the migration experience. Gender affects reasons for migrating, who migrates, the social networks migrants use to move, integration experiences and job opportunities at destination, and relations with the country of origin. Risks, vulnerabilities and needs are also shaped in large part by one's gender, and often vary drastically from group to group. Roles, expectations, relationships and power dynamics associated with being a man, a woman, a boy or a girl have impact on all aspects of the migration process, and can also be affected in new ways by migration⁸.

Paid work for both men and women in the formal economy is the best way to prevent poverty. Migrant women are often particularly vulnerable in the labour market. They have caregiving responsibilities, either in their country of origin or in the country they have migrated to. In the labour market, they are often faced with triple vulnerability: 1) general discrimination of women in the labour market; 2) migrants' general vulnerability in the labour market; and 3) reduced flexibility resulting from caregiving tasks and family commitments.

Poor migrant women are to a larger degree at risk of human trafficking related to forced labour or prostitution – because of their gender, their weaker position in the labour market and their responsibility for family and children. Protection of the human rights of all migrants including men, women, boys and girls, is an essential component of good migration management. It is important both as an end in itself and as a condition for harnessing the benefits of migration for migrants and societies.

- ***Caritas Norway will ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed in all programming and activities related to migration, internationally and in Norway.***
- ***This includes ensuring that both women and men, girls and boys participate in and benefit equally from activities offered by the Caritas Resource Centres and activities implemented by Caritas in Norwegian Reception Centres.***
- ***Caritas' national work will be based on Norwegian family policy, as outlined in White Paper 24 (2015-2016).***
- ***Caritas Norway will provide gender-disaggregated data in all our programmes and activities related to migration and integration in Norway.***

Practical resources:

- Recommendations for Caritas Norway's work on gender and family – *Policynotat. Caritas' familie- og likestillingspolitikk*, 24 November 2016.

6. Organisational implications

Caritas Norway commits to the following measures and principles within our own organisation:

- Human Resources policies and practices and the Code of Ethics will adequately address gender equality. We are committed to equal opportunities and non-discrimination in our employment profile, as well as in policy- and staff-development practices.
- We strive to build gender awareness and equality in our management, organisation and committee structures, and in everyday working practices; to be accountable for, and to track results on, gender balance in staffing and in the Board.

⁸ [IOM – Making migration work for all](#)

- Gender-sensitive organisational culture, i.e. a work-atmosphere that is safe, respectful, caring and free from harassment and abuse of authority, where staff members feel empowered and where, to the extent possible, a balance between work pressures and personal life can be created.
- Provision of specific training for staff on gender equality and women's empowerment in programming (domestic and international).
- Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment within the Caritas Network.
- Including considerations and proposals that strengthen women's rights and benefits in policy inputs.
- Using gender equality as a consistent message in Caritas Norway's communications, including advocacy, educational, promotional and fundraising work.
- Promoting gender equality in photographic and written communications, and avoiding reinforcing stereotypes, using inclusive language and ensuring a balanced representation.

Practical resources:

- [Personnel Handbook](#)