



Gender Balance Policy

I. Introduction

Cultural Survival focuses on Indigenous Peoples in their totality. We understand that colonization has twisted our collective worldview, and as a result, we live today in a world where gender relationships are out of balance. This imbalance has left women and other marginalized groups in a vulnerable position, which has resulted in problems like violence, femicide and inequity in communities. Much of the violence and inequities have been caused by a disruption in the continuity of ancestral values and traditions that held together the cohesiveness of communities. This disconnection has been caused by the violence of colonial invasions. Examples of violence that impact well-being also include women's lack of access to land in communities where property is not held collectively and less access to education by women in comparison with men. We are also aware of the complexity of the ways in which outside forces have imposed harmful ideologies on Indigenous communities, and the concepts, practices, and consequences of inequality, discrimination, and violence that exist as a result. This gender policy aims to recognize the various ways that diverse societies relate to each other and to the environment, constantly seeking balance. This policy does not aim to uplift or center one gender or identity over another, but recognizes the imbalances of power, voice, and respect that exist across the gender spectrum.


Indigenous Peoples' views and understandings of gender are just as diverse as their cultures are. However, it bears highlighting that there is a fundamental difference between Indigenous Peoples' approaches to issues of gender equity and that of western societies. While western societies glorify the individual, Indigenous Peoples prioritize the communal. We believe that within this communal living, Indigenous Peoples can best develop the tools needed to assert their rights and achieve gender equity.

Cultural Survival's attention to gender does not begin with this policy. For many years, Cultural Survival's programs have prioritized projects centering women and engaging women's and girls' leadership. At the time of drafting this policy, 17 of our 25 total staff members, and 8 of 13 board members are women. Indigenous women's leadership and empowerment is fundamental to our work. For example, our programs work to amplify the voices of Indigenous women and promote Indigenous women's leadership.

We recognize that violence, including physical, psychological, and in the form of exclusion and marginalization, takes place against Indigenous Peoples in general, and in communities there is also violence against more vulnerable groups such as women, transgender people, non-binary people, intersex people, Two-Spirit people, and people of other genders¹; lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, and queer people and people with other sexual orientations; people with disabilities; elders; and children. We also recognize that there are differences among the genders and the roles that are practiced within communities as part of community structures and ways of life. The division of roles along gender lines in each unique cultural context does not necessarily imply injustice and inequity; rather, it represents the value of complementarity. We acknowledge that it is important to understand whether these differences are part of a given culture versus a result of external influences, such as colonialism and imperial religions.

Cultural Survival rejects all forms of violence, including specific violence against women, transgender people, non-binary people, intersex people, Two-Spirit people, and people of other genders, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, and queer people and people with other sexual orientations. We choose to do this work internally within the organization and with the

¹ Throughout the policy, we refer to "people of all genders." In all cases, this includes cisgender women and men, Two-Spirit people, non-binary people, trans people, intersex people, and people who have other gender identities.



Indigenous partners, communities, organizations, and projects with which we collaborate. The objective of this statement is to recognize the mentioned imbalances and share some examples of Indigenous cosmovisions which understand gender balance holistically and inclusively, to reflect on how our organization relates to our partners and allies in different parts of the world, as well as how we relate internally within the organization.

Indigenous Peoples have diverse ways of understanding the concept of gender, and the different genders, in community life. Some consider the sacred feminine to be an element to be strengthened; other Peoples are structured through matrilineal systems. Others recognize a third or more genders. The term Two-Spirit was adopted by the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island (North America) as an umbrella term to “refer to another gender role believed to be common among most, if not all, first peoples of Turtle Island (Canada and the US), one that had a proper and accepted place within Native societies. This acceptance was rooted in the spiritual teachings that say all life is sacred.”² Another example of a third gender are the muxhes from the Binnizá People of Oaxaca, Mexico. These gender categories must be recognized within their unique cultural contexts. It is also important to mention that Indigenous languages vary dramatically in their treatment of gender, some entirely lacking gender distinctions, others with one, two, or many more genders, and some containing grammatical forms specific to who is speaking or relationships among the people.

CS considers it essential to recognize and celebrate the contributions women make in the social, economic, and political lives of their communities, in spite of the fact that this participation may not be completely visible from external perspectives. We recognize that women’s participation has been an essential part of Indigenous resistance movements even if they have not been recognized as movements with women’s leadership. We consider views of women’s participation that do not incorporate holistic understanding of the cultural context to be dangerous, because they do not recognize women’s participation in all aspects of community life, such as participation in the tending of seeds; transmission of language; cultivation and preparation of food and transmission of foodways; community education; preservation of traditional dress; and transmission of spirituality. In some Peoples, there are women guardians of their clans who are the narrators of original stories, caregivers, and educators. In this context, grandmothers are jewels of their multigenerational households and maintain balance inside the home, throughout their communities, and across their Nations.

According to the cosmovisions of Indigenous cultures, women have certain roles based on cycles, events, and relations with nature. These cycles have been broken due to the intrusion of outside forces and we have fallen into imbalance in the natural processes of women, nature, and life. In this sense, our approach to our fellow Indigenous communities seeks to achieve balanced and equitable participation and to promote leadership, access, safety, and rights for people of all genders, guided by the specific priorities and struggles of our Indigenous community partners.

It is important to mention that community changes towards equity are possible and many communities are making them happen on an ongoing basis, with processes and timelines that occur over generations. As an organization, it is our job to identify the ways that we can contribute which are sensitive to community processes, as well as how we can collaborate in the long term and in accordance with community time frames without contributing to the destabilization of community and family structures. We must acknowledge that cultural roles derive from cosmovisions that make sense in the community context.

² <https://www.them.us/story/inqueery-two-spirit>

Cultural Survival understands the importance of institutionalizing and articulating our commitment to gender justice grounded in Indigenous worldviews. Cultural Survival has a team that is open and in a constant learning process regarding gender issues and the ways in which they manifest in different contexts and cultures. Cultural Survival's approach to gender equity and balance is rooted in Indigenous cosmovisions and in an understanding that gender concepts vary across space, time, and culture. Thus, addressing these issues is essential to our mission to promote Indigenous rights and sovereignty as a response to calls from these communities. As part of that, we see it as imperative to recognize the ways in which all genders have been affected by forces including colonialism, capitalism and other external economic frameworks, and genocide, while acknowledging that people of some genders have experienced exclusion and violence in a more explicit way as individuals and collectively.

Cultural Survival defends the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples regarding their ways of life and works in collaboration with communities for a better world. Cultural Survival defends the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples regarding their gender definitions, relations, and participation. Many Indigenous community decision-making structures are collective and respect diverse ways of being, knowing, and living in a reciprocal relationship with nature and for the collective benefit. It is Indigenous Peoples themselves who identify the problems they face and define solutions. We support women's leadership in and for their communities.



General Goal for the Policy

We are seeking balance and equilibrium in all social and community relations, including gender relations, relations with nature, and spiritual relations. Recognizing that external forces have disrupted the balance of these relationships, our programs, communications, and internal policies seek to support work that heals these relationships, in alignment with Indigenous cosmovisions.



Objectives

- 1 Establish a common internal framework for understanding gender, as it relates to personnel experience, program work, and all CS operations in the larger Indigenous rights field, even as we recognize that each individual staff member will relate to and understand gender differently.
- 2 Articulate Cultural Survival's awareness of gender diversity as a culturally specific concept and our intention of openness to the complexity of addressing issues of gender equity as an international organization operating alongside diverse Indigenous communities worldwide.
- 3 Establish an explicit baseline for accountability of values and principles of CS as it relates to gender balance and gender equity at Cultural Survival.
- 4 Serve as a catalyst for updating existing Cultural Survival policies and creating new policies to reflect the organization's emerging, explicit recognition of the values, principles, and dynamics described in this document.
- 5 Establish guidance for addressing gender- and sexual orientation-based harassment, discrimination, and sexual harassment-related concerns and complaints, and demonstrate that safety of staff and program participants is important to Cultural Survival by:
 1. Guiding the development of a common understanding of what these terms mean, what they entail, and how to avoid them.
 2. Guiding the development of a transparent procedure for addressing concerns and complaints with a focus on building trust and consistency.
 3. Building trust among staff by articulating existing gender-related dynamics and empowering staff with tools to better advocate for themselves and others and avoid experiencing negative impacts due to gender.
- 6 Provide a model for other organizations seeking to address issues of gender equity in a cross-cultural Indigenous context.

Program Work

Cultural Survival commits to:

- 1** Review the ways in which gender and sexual orientation may impact the experiences of people internally and externally involved in each program and consider this in the selection, planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects. When developing annual program plans, program managers and their teams will develop goals related to gender inclusion, balance, and justice based on the objectives and values outlined in this policy.
- 2** Continue to develop specific programming for women and those with other marginalized genders and/or sexual orientations, with consideration for their social and political realities given their gender experiences.
- 3** Empower all staff to understand the ways in which gender relates to their work and our programs, and take action to proactively adapt programming to welcome people of all genders and sexual orientations and to address issues when they arise. Empowering staff in this way involves ongoing staff training, capacity-building, and evaluation on gender diversity and equitable participation.
- 4** Inform NGO partners, funders, grassroots partners of gender policy and principles in advance of establishing partnerships.
- 5** Prioritize relationships with program partners, such as grantees, who are leading and addressing gender equity and healing work, as well as those open to developing their capacity for this sort of approach.
- 6** Establish collective agreements at the beginning of workshops, events, and meetings we facilitate, ensuring inclusion of elements of our gender and sexual harassment policies.

Organizational Next Steps

1

All CS personnel-related policies will be reviewed to consider the ways in which they may have different impacts on people of different genders and/or may unintentionally exclude people of any gender or sexual orientation, and to address these inequities. We recognize that people, as well as the communities that they are part of and represent, have vulnerabilities and past experiences of trauma, and we honor and make space for that in allowing staff to self-determine how their workplaces, including travel can be, or feel, safest for them.

Recommendation: *Develop and propose a review process for all personnel-related policies including who, when and how these policies will be reviewed (next 6-8 months).*

A first and simple review of all organizational policies will ensure that language is updated as soon as possible to include all people, replacing instances of “men and women” with “people of all genders,” and replacing gendered statements such as “his or her” with “their” or other gender-inclusive pronouns depending on the sentence. As policies are frequently updated, they should be reviewed for inclusive language in an ongoing way. Note: This update was made to the general personnel policy and will be proposed for review at the May 2021 board meeting.

Current versions of each policy will be sent to each board and staff member any time they are updated, along with a note as to where on the server they can be found for reference and notes on which portions have been updated. This will include clear indications as to which version on the server is the current version. All policies, including updates, will be available in both English and Spanish at the time they are activated. If at any point in the future another language becomes a primary language used internally at Cultural Survival, all policies will be made available in that language as well.

Specific existing policies to be reviewed include (including action items on):

- a. General personnel policy.
- b. Sexual harassment policy. Among elements to review, we highlight the need to:
 - i. Ensure that the procedure for launching a complaint is transparent, accessible, and includes several possible staff point people to address. It must always be possible for a staff member to reach out to someone who is not their supervisor. The human resources manager should be explicitly indicated as an option.
 - ii. Define to whom the policy applies.

Recommendation: *The policy should specifically state its application to staff and non-staff and procedures for addressing situations involving non-staff members (e.g., volunteers, temporary staff, partner organization staff, event participants, grantees, funders, etc.). It must lay out logistics of how to address problems with non-CS staff at events, in other spaces, and must acknowledge power dynamics among the parties.*

- iii. Be sufficiently open to meet the unique situations of different communities, while being sufficiently clear so that staff are not faced with developing a policy in the moment of an incident.
- iv. Articulate that the policy protects people of all genders and sexual orientations against harassment and holds people of all genders and sexual orientations accountable.
- v. Articulate restorative justice options, in which the person bringing forward the complaint has the option to decide whether they would like to engage in a restorative process.

Recommendation: *Develop principles and broad steps for this process which can be adapted to different situations (next 6-8 months).*

- vi. Develop language for contracts with partners.

Recommendation for language for contracts with partners: *Cultural Survival embraces gender inclusion and safer spaces for all, and thus we reject all acts of violence and harassment based on gender, sexual orientation, culture, and other identities within the communities, organizations and projects with which we collaborate. Cases will be investigated and evaluated based on Cultural Survival policies and the cultural context of each community so we can decide whether to continue the partnership or not and what kind of process may be required.*

- c. Risk management policy. Among elements to review, we highlight the need to:
 - i. Review and finalize the risk management policy and circulate to all staff.
 - ii. Articulate procedures for staff to feel comfortable addressing supervisors about safety concerns, related and unrelated to gender.
 - iii. Articulate procedures for assigning travel partners according to safety needs of staff involved. For example, when assigning and budgeting for travel, supervisors/ project planners should consult with the staff who will be traveling about whether they want a travel buddy, specific gender requested, if they wish to exclude specific potential travel buddies for various reasons including but not limited to gender (if they prefer to have their own room, etc.). The budget must be adequate to provide the safest possible conditions. The purpose of this point is to recognize power dynamics. While this is a gender policy, we recognize that gender does not exist in isolation from other identities and exists within a vast matrix of identities with various levels of privilege, power, and oppression.
 - iv. Staff who are traveling have a right to bring a SPOT GPS device or similar technology if they choose so that they are guaranteed access to emergency communication service. The cost of such a device would be covered by Cultural Survival.
- d. Parental leave policy.
 - i. Make very explicit that it applies to men to assist overcoming taboos. The policy must explicitly apply to people of all genders and be clear that nobody who chooses to take the parental leave they are due will experience retribution.

2

Hiring processes will be analyzed in the context of a gender approach. This includes:

- a. Reviewing language in job postings to ensure inclusivity, as well as specifically inviting people of marginalized gender identities and sexual orientations to apply, while being transparent about the status of the organization as being in the process of improving its policies and practices in this regard.
- b. Evaluate criteria for positions to ensure they do not favor specific genders based on stereotypes.
- c. Analyze internal language and infrastructure to identify elements that might, unintentionally, make the work culture unwelcoming to people based on their gender.

***Recommendation:** Implement proposed Transgender Employment Policy whose purpose is to clarify the law and help our organization welcome and include transgender, gender non-conforming, two-spirit, and transitioning employees to feel safer and welcome in our workplace.*

3

Workshops, trainings, and conversations will be organized on a regular basis to build staff capacity. These include, but are not limited to, the following interrelated topics:

- a. Trainings on the broader impacts of colonialism and white supremacy on Indigenous gender relations, including negative impacts on men.
- b. Trainings on allyship to women, people of other genders, and people of all sexual orientations, given the current reality of inequality and violence faced by many.
- c. Trainings on gender-related terminology, concepts, and power dynamics.
- d. Cultural exchanges on gender in different Indigenous cultures and languages.
- e. Restorative justice approaches to gender justice work.
- f. Trainings on ability/disability and intersections with gender, Indigenous identity, and other identities.

4

Supervisors are responsible for proactively considering gender implications of new travel, projects, and partnerships and will check in with staff regularly to consult about safety concerns. Because of the power dynamics that are likely to exist among supervisors and staff, it is important that supervisors take this affirmative approach. Staff should also be made to feel safe to raise these issues proactively on their own.

5

Funding.

- a. The fundraising/development team will keep this policy in mind when seeking funding and will devote time to seeking funding specifically to resource the practical implications of these policies, under guidance from CS Executive leadership. For budgeting restricted to programs, Program Managers should ensure that expenses related to implementing this gender policy within their programs are communicated to the fundraising team for inclusion in proposal budgets.

6

Grievance processes should include transparent procedures and should include as values not just warnings and repercussions, but the possibility for reparations and education (restorative justice).

***Recommendation:** Elaborate and propose a detailed grievance mechanism in the next 8-12 months.*

Communications

Cultural Survival will:

- 1** **Ensure that publications reflect our respect for diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, and our commitment to gender justice. This includes:**
 - a. Reviewing the ways in which gendered language is currently used in communications and replacing it with gender-inclusive language, including, but not limited to, replacing “he or she” with “they” or “he/she/they”. and “men and women” with “men, women, and people of all genders” or “people of all genders.” These multiple options are intended to meet the need for both situations in which gender-neutral language is sufficient, and for situations where it is desired to highlight the participation of people of distinct genders. When dealing with specific situations, e.g., an event in the past where only women and men participated, then it should be described as it was.
 - b. Avoiding generalizations; speaking precisely about cultures and people without assuming the application of specific gender roles and relations to other contexts.
 - c. Committing to continuous learning about the gender-neutral language and expressions in English, Spanish and other CS working languages.
- 2** **Present this policy publicly so as to model our values related to gender and Indigenous rights.**
- 3** **Ensure that gender-diverse voices are included in all publications, not exclusively in pieces or publications explicitly on gender-related issues.**
- 4** **Continue to develop procedures for consulting with all parties (e.g., donors) about how they would like to be addressed (honorifics, pronouns).**
- 5** **Develop internal language norms to ensure gender inclusivity. This includes:**
 - a. Gender neutral language forms.
 - b. Before using gendered group pronouns such as “ladies,” “guys,” “men and women,” etc., check in with staff about how they feel about these words. Consider all-gender inclusive replacements for “ladies,” “guys,” “men and women,” etc., such as “folks,” “team,” “everyone,” “colleagues,” etc.
 - c. Providing all staff with information on why people share their gender pronouns, and inviting and encouraging staff to add gender pronouns to their email signatures and share them in different spaces. This contributes to a culture in which we do not assume gender but rather ask others’ pronouns, respect their identities, and each person is comfortably able to affirm their own.

Implementation and Evaluation

- 1 This policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis (every other year) in a process to ensure that we are in compliance and/or making progress toward goals and to review areas in need of updating.
- 2 The Gender Policy Working Group will spearhead follow-up activities, including annual evaluation of compliance, staff surveys, and trainings, and as point people for concerns, questions, and to address issues.
 - a. Part of this follow-up will include development of procedures to address concerns and complaints.
- 3 Program managers will review programming and publications in an ongoing way to ensure application of gender justice frameworks.

Recommendation: *A full-time Human Resources professional should be hired to lead the implementation of this policy as well as human resources needs.*
