



Gender Policy & Strategy



Introduction

ICEP contributes to efforts that alleviate poverty in developing countries. We are convinced that global development can only work on a sustainable basis if people can be included in economic cycles and be given the opportunity to conduct a self-determined life on the basis of their own work. To this end, in our efforts to alleviate poverty, we rely on the powers of market economics. Our conviction is that the benefits of globalization must be accessible to all, regardless of gender.

"Women and girls represent half of the world's population and, therefore, also half of its potential. Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development. Moreover, it has been shown that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth."

United Nations on Gender Equality

Gender equity and social inclusion means that all people, regardless of their ethnic identity, social position, sexual orientation, disability and their gender, should enjoy the same status in society, have the same entitlements and rights, enjoy the same level of respect in the community and have the same opportunities to shape their lives. Each person has unique needs and priorities, faces different constraints and opportunities. To effectively address these differences, ICEP acknowledges the importance of considering the intersecting identities of individuals when designing strategies, policies, programs, and services to create structures that provide poor people with access to education, training and financing that allows them to improve their standards of living. ICEP's gender equity approach is a deliberate process aimed at achieving fairness and equal and measurable outcomes for all people.

A photograph of an elderly woman with dark hair, smiling and holding a bunch of fresh green vegetables, including broccoli and leafy greens. She is wearing a white lace-trimmed blouse over a colorful floral patterned top. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

Core Principles

The principles and the objectives ICEP strives for are largely based on this gender policy.

Gender equality entails the concept that all people, women and men, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally (UN Women). This implies that the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men should not be determined by their gender. ICEP's commitment to gender equality is grounded in international and regional standards, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, Goal 5 of the SDGs calls for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, which is a key ambition for ICEP.

Accountability

All ICEP employees and collaborators, regardless of function or location, are responsible for the implementation of the requirements outlined in this policy.

ICEP management must ensure that all employees and collaborators understand and comply with this policy. They are also responsible for adequate recruitment, induction, and training and for identifying actions to be taken in the future.

To support accountability for this policy, ICEP is committed to regularly review and monitor the implementation of this policy and seek to adapt and improve it if required.



Corporate Practices

In order to reach its self-defined objectives on gender equality, ICEP recognizes that the first responsibility is to incorporate a gender perspective into its own work and structure. We acknowledge that gender sensitivity is an ongoing process that requires sustained commitment, time, and resources. ICEP commits to the following measures to ensure gender equality in its own work and structure:

HUMAN RESOURCES

ICEP strives for gender balance within its team in Austria and to pass this idea on to its partner organizations. Linked to this target are HR practices that incorporate gender-equitable practices in recruitment, performance evaluations, and remuneration.

POLICY & COMMUNICATION

ICEP fosters a gender-sensitive attitude within the organization and incorporates gender equality principles into its policies and language. These principles are communicated to all employees and collaborators.

AWARENESS

ICEP targets gender-sensitivity in its daily work processes to maintain the importance of gender equity as a constant focus in its operations.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

ICEP reviews all of its work from the perspective of achieving gender equality and inclusion to improve programming and contribute to continuous learning.



Implementation Strategy for the ICEP Development Program

ICEP aims to achieve the policy's goals through targeted actions in its corporate practices and programs, in collaboration with its project partners in developing countries.

ICEP concentrates its activities regarding gender empowerment and gender equality to all regions of its development program: East and West Africa, Central America, Central and South-East Asia, and Eastern Europe. Additionally, ICEP will apply all or parts of its Gender strategy to any other countries or regions where ICEP programs are being implemented.

ICEP's Empowerment Strategy follows two main thematic priorities:

- Qualification for the labour market
- Support for micro enterprises

Additionally, ICEP integrates two cross-sectional topics into all or some of its projects.

- Empowerment of women
- Improving income in Rural Areas



Gender Equality, Environmental Protection, and Climate Action are cross-cutting issues that are integral to all ICEP project activities. These issues must be respected and considered by all stakeholders involved in ICEP projects and programs.

Since ICEP implements its development work in emerging and developing countries always in partnerships with mostly local institutions and organisations and in line with the ICEP Empowerment Strategy, an important part of the strategy to increase gender mainstreaming and gender equality is through education and training. The education and training are implemented both indirectly to the end beneficiaries (capacity building) and, in this case much more importantly, directly to local partners on an institutional level (capacity development).

The details of this strategy are detailed in ICEP's development strategy *Empowerment for People*.





Development Program

ICEP's policy and strategy are grounded in a systemic perspective that encompasses a diverse range of actors from the education and training sector, as well as the private and public sectors. Partnerships are the main vehicle to implement the present policy and to achieve gender equity and social inclusion in our interventions. As such gender equity and social inclusion are significant components in defining the conditions of these partnerships. Gender mainstreaming, which ensures equal benefits for women and men and prevents the perpetuation of inequality, and interventions that specifically promote gender equality are complementary strategies that can be implemented together or individually.

ICEP has identified a number of specific steps to work toward gender mainstreaming and gender equality. These include:

GENDER ANALYSES

Analyses regarding the different needs and priorities, constraints and aspirations, and different ways to contribute to development between men and women are the foundation for developing programs tackling gender-based injustices. In cooperation with its partner organizations ICEP will deploy and continuously improve tools to successfully analyze gender differences and their impact on regional societies. For this, sex-disaggregated data collection is indispensable.

GENDER EQUITY-BASED PROGRAMMING

ICEP designs, implements, monitors and evaluates programs that promote gender equity through their operations. The focus is on long-term strategies to provide equal access and equitable economic and social benefits for both men and women. Select project focus exclusively on the empowerment of women and girls.

CONSCIOUS PARTNERSHIPS

ICEP strengthens and builds partnerships with local institutions that promote respect for gender equality and inclusion and engages partners in joint approaches to promote gender equity.

MOBILIZATION

ICEP arranges for the appropriate/necessary human, technical and financial resources to meet ICEP's commitments to gender equity and inclusion.

Operationally, ICEP includes gender mainstreaming, gender equality and the empowerment of women as an integral component of all programs and projects. Specific intervention strategies to foster the role of women in society, ICEP has devised practical approaches within the ICEP Strategy for Social Impact and Development. These include:

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH TECHNICAL TRAINING

While enrolment in primary school education is almost the same for boys and girls, the gap between the share of boys continuing to secondary education and girls widens. The women enrolled in secondary education often find themselves in gender-typical trainings and upon graduation are unlikely to receive equal opportunities in the labor market. In countries where informal employment is an important part of the economy, this is particularly challenging for women who often find themselves in at times unsafe and insecure environments due to the lack of access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and a lack of access to apprenticeships. Both the vocational training sector and private sector are characterized by gender biases and unequal opportunities. ICEP therefore seeks to implement projects that increase women's access, participation, and performance in TVET.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING

In developing and emerging countries, women face cultural and economic barriers to education, further education, and training, hindering their ability to generate income. Despite these challenges, women often sustain their families but lack opportunities and access to training, negatively impacting their children's development and education. Women frequently have to fend for themselves and their families under culturally unsupportive conditions, mainly through domestic work and farming, without the chance to obtain technical or entrepreneurial training. Providing opportunities specifically for women not only allows this marginalized segment of society to reach its potential but also brings long-term benefits for the next generation by facilitating better care, nutrition, education, and health for children. A viable strategy to support women is to focus on their specific needs and grant them access to training in technical or entrepreneurial skills. However, women often need additional, less obvious support. In traditional societies, women's roles are often limited to taking care of the household and children. To enable women to participate in the economy, a series of interventions is required, which can include: raising awareness among women that pursuing income-generating activities is possible and permitted; sensitizing husbands to the benefits of economically active wives; and addressing intimidation from male peers or a hostile environment, including competitors, clients, partners, or employees. Therefore, a special focus on adapting training and training structures to the needs and circumstances of women is often necessary to complement these efforts.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS

Traditional patriarchal cultures are more pronounced in rural areas. Development work often needs to start by convincing women and girls, as well as men, that women have a right to self-determination and can be actors of their own development. The lack of awareness about women's potential development accentuates the need for development strategies that include gender equality and women empowerment. ICEP projects and programs include special consideration regarding gender mainstreaming and gender equality in line with this policy and strategy.

ICEP is an independent Austrian development organisation with a clear goal: to bring people to business and business to the people. ICEP advises partners in developing countries as well as companies on how to integrate poor people into economic cycles, and implements projects worldwide.





ICEP is an independent Austrian development organisation with a business-oriented focus. ICEP works with partner organisations in Africa and Latin America as well as with Austrian companies and implements projects worldwide with the aim of getting more people actively involved in economic life. The corporAID platform is an initiative of ICEP.

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ICEP | Möllwaldplatz 5, 1040 Vienna, Austria | Tel. 01/9690254 | icep@icep.at



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