

CESE –Coordenadoria Ecumênica de Serviço (*Ecumenical Coordination of Service*) **Institutional Gender Equity Policy**

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INTRODUCTION

CESE is an ecumenical organization, established through the will of the churches of which it is composed, committed to the unity of these churches and the Christian peoples, with Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, in dialogue and collaboration with other expressions of faith, and with, amongst others, Afro-Brazilians and indigenous peoples, so as to affirm life. Its mission is “to strengthen grassroots groups and movements and other organizations engaged in the struggle for the political, economic and social transformations that drive the structures in which democracy with justice from a human rights perspective can prevail”.

CESE recognizes the persistence of gender inequalities in Brazil as an obstacle to guaranteeing women’s human rights, in particular, those of women from the grassroots sectors, and which impacts most significantly on black and indigenous women. It therefore understands gender equality as an ethical guiding principle in its activities, challenging itself to adopt a gender perspective in both its internal relationships and its relationships with its partners.

As observed in the external evaluation carried out in 2004, “there is an historical process for the institutionalization of an approach to gender in the Projects Service and, more recently, in CESE’s dialogue and networking activities” (CAMURÇA, 2004, p.43). The evaluator emphasized that, over the evaluation period, the institutionalization of the issue had been satisfactory and was made explicit in the 2001-2005 five-year planning document, in which gender equality was a target for effective planning, monitoring and evaluation.

In 2006, a process of internal reflection on gender took place in CESE, in consultation with the SOS Corpo – Instituto Feminista para a Democracia (Feminist Institute for Democracy) and the Papai Institute, involving all departments, resulting in *activities*, such as the review of the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) instruments of the Small Projects Programme and *recommendations*, such as progress in incorporating gender in its benchmark policies.

In 2016, the need to draft a document which records CESE’s conceptions and practices in relation to gender was established in a process that involved all those working at the organization. The importance of an Institutional Policy for Gender Equality is recognized by both the staff team and the Institutional Board and it is understood that this relates to other institutional guidelines, such as those referring to identity, its mission and benchmark policies, in particular the benchmark policy of the Right to Identity in Diversity.

The drafting of the institutional policy for gender equity is the result of this process and, more recently, has been incorporated into the drafting of CESE’s three-year plan, still ongoing in 2016. Two workshops have recently taken place with the team, with support from Carmen Silva, an SOS Corpo instructor. The first workshop took place on 29/09/2016 and was attended by all departments, while the second took place on 20/10/2016 and was attended by Coordinators and Advisors. The first version of the

text has also been discussed and validated by CESE's Institutional Board, whose suggestions have been incorporated into the final text. Here, we present CESE's concepts regarding gender equality; guidelines for institutional practices; and the pathway to policy implementation.

When systematizing the institutional policy for gender equity, the team understood that a similar process of debate must take place in order to ensure the necessary institutionalization to combat racism.

CONCEPTION OF GENDER EQUITY

CESE argues for a political focus in addressing the issue of gender, distinct from the "technical and bureaucratic prescription" adopted by many institutions that work in development (CAMURÇA, 2004, p.44). It understands that gender inequalities persist in various spheres of social and political life and takes gender equality to be an ethical principal, in other words, a value that guides its activities and its own constitution. It understands that gender equity not only concerns equality of opportunity but also fair and equal access to material resources and the exercise of power in all spheres of life, so as to reverse historically constructed inequalities. Furthermore, it considers gender equity to be a constitutional element of its mission, since human rights and democracy with justice, central to the formulation of its institutional mission, may only be ensured when gender equity also exists.

CESE adopts a feminist conception of the social relations of gender, understanding that these express inequalities of power between men and women in detriment to women and to social groups with dissident gender identities and sexual orientations. In the theological field, it seeks to dialogue with the richness of theological production and grassroots struggles, taking feminist theology and hermeneutics, amongst others, as a reference point, based on the assertion of the dignity of women. This means valuing feminist criticisms which recognize that inequality between men and women is caused by social structures, justified through biological differences and patriarchal interpretations of the sacred texts, as if they were divine mandates; practicing the hermeneutics of suspicion as a method for the deconstruction and reconstruction of theological readings, seeking to recognize, reclaim and value the tradition of women.

The elements that constitute CESE's approach to gender are:

- ✓ Recognition of women's right to equality and dignity before God and all humanity.
- ✓ The importance of a feminist theology, including women's participation in the churches and all its forums.
- ✓ Recognition of feminism in the construction of women's struggle for equality.
- ✓ Understanding that there is a strong link between class, gender and race/ethnicity in the configuration of inequalities in Brazil.
- ✓ Commitment to strengthening the women's grassroots movements, as the subjects of political autonomy.
- ✓ Recognition of the importance of incorporating women into management positions and project activities, without causing them additional workloads or translating this into the exploitation of a free workforce.

GUIDELINES FOR INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

Given the approach outlined above, in which the social relations of gender are understood as unequal power relations, CESE has constructed guidelines to orientate its practices in the various parts of its institutional life, seeking to contribute to a reversal of gender inequalities:

1. Management

CESE argues for the need to create the conditions for power sharing between men and women in gender-mixed organizations. Quantity is one factor for consideration, since CESE understands that there is a positive relationship between an increase in the number of women in the management sphere and an increased possibility of awareness about the problems of gender relations within organizations. Internally, it has established the following guidelines to promote the effective participation of women in its management and decision-making spheres:

- ✓ It must recommend that the associated churches include women in their assembly delegations;
- ✓ It must encourage women's participation in the Institutional Board;
- ✓ It must guarantee at least 50% of women in the composition of CESE's staff team, as well as in each internal sector or sphere, which must also be expressed in its guidelines for employing staff. These guidelines must also include ethnicity/race and inclusion of people with disabilities;
- ✓ It must give precedence to practices that support responsible and healthy maternity and paternity, taking into account the needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as mothers and fathers in other situations that require specific support;
- ✓ CESE will not tolerate sexual harassment or any other type of violence against women;
- ✓ CESE must include gender issues in its dialogue with agencies and other institutional partners, sharing information about the Brazilian context and analyses from the women's movements;
- ✓ A gender balance between partners, invitees and advisors must be observed in events and other activities run by CESE. Furthermore, women should be included in public speaking.
- ✓ Priority must be given to economic solidarity/grassroots groups composed of women for the provision of services in activities run by CESE;
- ✓ Women's movements must be represented in the meetings between CESE and the Social Movement that take place every two years, in order to collect information for CESE's PME activities;
- ✓ The staff team must receive training on gender, including a range of formats and focuses (for the whole team and for specific sectors; regarding its interface with other issues etc.);
- ✓ CESE's benchmark policies must progress in their approach to gender;
- ✓ Gender-inclusive language must be observed in all CESE documents, for both internal circulation and the public.

2. Ecumenical Relations and Inter-religious Dialogue

- ✓ CESE must promote, ongoing, theologically inspired reflections on gender, which value the contributions of feminist theologians in this field, with the churches, members of its institutional board, its team and partners;
- ✓ CESE must speak out publically on ecumenical and inter-religious issues in relation to the confrontation of gender inequalities.

3. Communication

- ✓ CESE's communication activities and materials must express CESE's conception of gender, contributing to the publication of positive and non-stereotypical images of women from grassroots groups, in particular black, indigenous, peasant and lesbian women, and disseminate theological reflections of women regarding the themes debated;
- ✓ CESE's communication activities and materials must seek to value the social, cultural, economic and political contributions of women in the movements' various human rights areas and fields of operation;
- ✓ CESE must seek to provide visibility for the struggles of women in its communication materials;
- ✓ CESE must observe gender-inclusive language in all its communication documents and materials;
- ✓ CESE's communication materials must not reinforce, rather must seek to deconstruct, the stereotypes or hierarchies linked to sexual orientation and gender identity.

4. Support to projects

The following aspects must be observed in CESE's support to projects, which is a central strategy for the strengthening of grassroots movements and organizations,:

- ✓ Prioritize the strengthening of women as political subjects, with a focus on support to women's organizations and/or initiatives for the social struggles they lead, in an emancipatory way;
- ✓ Encourage all groups supported in project programmes to advance in the way they incorporate gender, paying attention to the specificities of each group or movement;
- ✓ Periodically monitor and evaluate the results and effects reached in strengthening the way in which gender is addressed in the projects it supports, observing the specificities of each programme;
- ✓ Establish and monitor targets for the allocation of funding to projects specifically aimed at women in all programmes that support projects;
- ✓ Consider gender in all the management instruments of project programmes, seeking to constantly improve them.

5. Dialogue and Networking

CESE must remain in constant discourse with the women's movements, and be aware of their internal diversity. To this end, as well as guaranteeing women's participation in meetings between CESE and the Social Movements, it must:

- ✓ Be present at strategic times in the organization, mobilization and formulation of public policies in the women's movements;
- ✓ Follow the debates and political interventions of the women's and feminist movements, in order to improve synchronicity with their analyses and proposals;
- ✓ Encourage progress in the gender approaches adopted by these organizations in those dialogue and networking moments and arenas in which it is present, remaining attentive to the effective participation of women and their public speaking;
- ✓ Promote dialogue and networking arenas for the various aspects of gender and women's rights.

6. Training

CESE's training activities must take account of relevant guidelines. The persistence of gender inequalities, as well as conceptions and ways to confront this issue developed by the women's and feminist movements, must form part of the content and methodologies of training activities. Furthermore, CESE must:

- ✓ Promote the ongoing training of its staff team in relation to gender, promoting specific training arenas, but also remaining attentive to gender in its training on other work themes;
- ✓ Include gender as a relevant topic in training activities aimed at grassroots organizations and social movements;
- ✓ Wherever possible, support the individual training of members of its staff team in areas pertinent to human rights, including gender;
- ✓ Gender parity must be observed in all training arenas promoted by CESE;
- ✓ The contribution of women and their public speaking must be valued in any training promoted by CESE.

IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAY

The general guidelines established above must be translated into strategic and operational plans, including activities that enable their implementation in institutional life. The following is therefore required:

- ✓ This policy must be taken as a constitutive element of the institutional plan;
- ✓ Activities to implement this policy must be incorporated into annual operational plans;
- ✓ In the PME process, indicators must be included and then evaluated, so as to verify progress in policy implementation;
- ✓ In order for CESE's entire staff team to be involved in the institutionalization of this policy, discussion and training about inequalities between men and women will be organized.