CRS Frameworks for Gender Equality

EXCERPT FROM CRS GLOBAL GENDER STRATEGY 2020-2030

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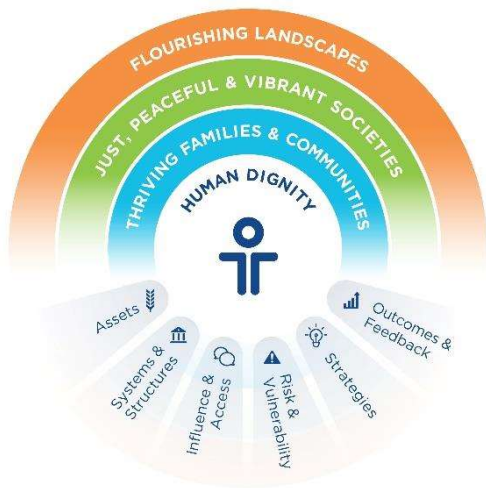
GENDER EQUALITY AND CRS

CRS recognizes that gender inequality critically impacts and intersects with trends of poverty, vulnerability and injustice—key areas where CRS seeks transformational change. CRS also knows that if gender roles, norms and dynamics are not considered, projects likely miss opportunities to maximize impact and may even deepen existing gender inequalities. CRS in maximize achievement and impact in our aspirations toward IHD and our agency goal areas[1] when gender inequality is systematically addressed both internally and, in the communities, where we work.

GENDER INTEGRATION

Involves identifying and then addressing gender differences, inequalities and opportunities across project design, implementation & Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning (MEAL).

CRS uses three broad categories of gender integration: gender neutral (blind}, gender-sensitive (responsive) and gender transformative. CPS commits *to a minimum* of *gender* responsive programming to *ensure* our *programs* are *effective and* "do no *harm." However,* we *strive, where* appropriate, for gender *transformative* outcomes *as this is where we maximize impact, sustainability and IHD.*

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[1] Goal Area 1: All People Live in Just and Peaceful Societies; Goal Area 2: All People Survive and Thrive in the Face of Disasters; Goal Area 3: A|| People Achieve Dignified and Resilient Livelihoods in Flourishing Landscapes; Goal Area 4: All Children Reach Their Full Health and Development Potential in Safe and Nurturing Families' Goal Area 5: All Youth Thrive. To learn more visit here.

Above: CRS' Integral Human Development Framework

CRS' IHD framework frames the way CRS approaches work toward gender equality.[2] IHD places the dignity of the human person, female and male, at the center of all that CRS does. It is based on the idea that human development is holistic and multidimensional— and that personal well-being and true equality can only be achieved in the context of just and peaceful relationships. IHD, when viewed with a gender lens, highlights the importance of addressing the specific needs, vulnerabilities and risks of wo men, men, boys and girls (WMBGs) as well as gender-based inequalities in systems and structures and availability of, and access to, assets. The IHD framework is reflected in the gender equality conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 on page 9.

The focus on equity and inclusion in internal systems and structures is aligned not only with CRS' agency values and IHD but also with industry best practices. Our systems and structures must create a work environment that is welcoming, supportive and safe for both female and male staff at all levels to reflect our agency values. Female staff must see a path to multiple opportunities to exercise leadership in the agency, and our programs and partners should be prepared to empower women and men equitably to contribute to reaching their full potential.

INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (IHD) AND GENDER

- Increase availability of **assets** to women and girls.
- Reform systems and **structures** to protect women and girl's rights.
- Influence **access to** sustainable gender equality solutions.
- Identify **vulnerabilities and risks** to the livelihoods of WMBGs.
- Engage WMBGs in **strategic** responses.
- Seek feedback from WMBGs to identify different constraints and opportunities and monitor progress.
- Consider specific needs and opportunities of WMBGs to ensure the most effective and sustainable development **outcomes.**
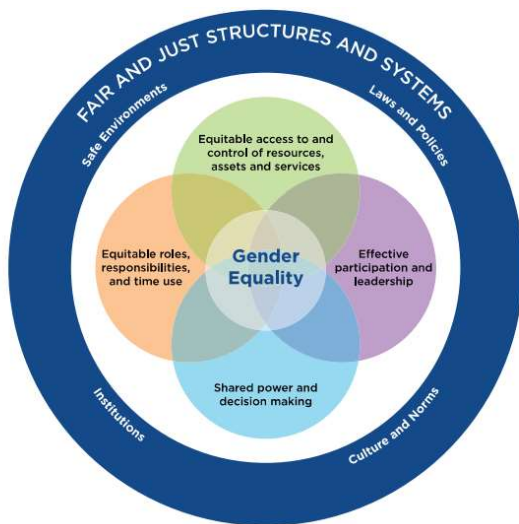
Above: CRS' Conceptual Framework for Gender Equality

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The strategy uses a gender equality conceptual framework, based on CRS' I HD framework, to highlight the interplay of key domains impacting gender equality. The framework posits that gender equality is an important goal in and of itself and will be achieved when there is equity in the critical domains explained below.[3]

Specifically, in order to achieve **gender equality**, WMBGs of all ages and abilities must have the support of **fair and just structures and systems** that allow for **1) equitable access to and control of resources, assets and services; 2J effective participation and leadership; 3) shared power and decision-making; and 4) equitable roles, responsibilities, workload and time use.** These domains are often interconnected.

The conceptual framework for gender equality recognizes that the systems and structures we operate within are crucial for the realization of the other domains. Creating an enabling environment within the context of fair and just systems includes activities at multiple levels that promote safety and security of all people, just laws and policies that underpin equal rights for all members of society, strong

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[2] The CRS Gender Foundations course on CRS Learns includes a succinct explanation of how IHD can be viewed using a gender lens.

[3] "Gender equality" and "gender equity" are sometimes used interchangeably, but they mean different things. Gender equality refers to a state where men and women have equal rights, opportunities, and access to services, etc. Whereas gender equity refers to the process of being fair to men and women based on different vulnerabilities and historical and social disadvantages. To ensure an equitable approach, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent WNI BGs from operating on a level playing field. In sum, gender equality is our end goal and equity is the means to get there.

and equitable institutions and cultural and societal norms that respect and promote equality, freedom and the dignity of all people. Though it's possible to achieve success in the other domains within unjust structures and systems, the change will likely be difficult to sustain.

Equitable access to, and control over, resources, assets and services is critical for the achievement of gender equality and **empowerment of women.** Gender equality in the distribution and access of resources has positive multiplier effects for a range of key development goals, including poverty reduction and the welfare of children.

In many contexts where CRS works, women and girls have disproportionately low access to services (e.g. formal financial institutions, agricultural extension services). Ensuring more equitable levels of access to services, however, will only partially contribute to gender equality. Programming teams must also look at levels of **control, or the ability to make decisions on the use of a certain resource, information or asset.** For example, a project can work to increase women's access to income through small income-generating projects, but if it does not look at women's control (or ability to decides on its use) of this income, the project may not make progress toward its stated objectives. Many programs influence levels of access for women and girls, yet only see nominal changes in levels of their control or decision- making power over these assets and resources.

Likewise, women and girls lack **decision-making power** relative to men (and boys) in several areas. Across all societies there are myriad examples of unequal control over decision-making—from how to spend income earned by women or the family to what a family should produce, sell or buy. In the area of health and nutrition, particularly that of young children (most vulnerable to malnutrition), a mother may be responsible for care and feeding of the child, but a male partner or family member has ultimate decision-making power over how the household's agricultural production is managed and/or whether money can be spent to buy nutritious foods or seek health services. Patterns of household power and decision-making are closely linked to levels of access and control. In some cases, we know that an increase in access to important assets can lead to more household decision-making power for women. An employed and educated woman is much more likely to be able to exercise choice in terms of marriage, acceptance of marriage, acceptance of violence, etc. and this has a direct inn pact on her well-being and that of her family.

Women and girls generally also face inequality in **participation and leadership,** particularly in terms of decision-making or leadership roles in public fora and governance entities. Discriminatory laws, rules and practices hold women and girls back, as do limits on education and income.

Roles, responsibilities and time use refer to the socially accepted roles for both men and women and the inequities that occur when these roles are unbalanced. Globally, women tend to have far more roles and responsibilities than men, particularly with regard to household and reproductive work. This imbalance disempowers women and girls from participating fully in economic, education and governance opportunities, further contributing to their marginalization and subordinate status. Around the globe most women play three essential roles—reproductive (household, care work), productive (for food or income) and community roles. These multiple roles incur a significant **time burden** for women and are very challenging for women (and girls) to fulfill adequately leading to poor health outcomes, stress and household conflict. Lack of free time impacts the ability of women to participate or lead effectively in other areas of life and can make it difficult to invest in the accumulation of assets in order to shift patterns of access and household power.

CRS recognizes that gender inequality cannot be understood and effectively confronted in isolation from the myriad other forms of vulnerabilities. Any use of the conceptual framework, therefore, must also approach the analysis of patterns within each of the domains with a focus on intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to the way in which multiple forms of discrimination—based on tender, race, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic class, etc.—overlap and interact with one another and how these intersecting vulnerabilities shape how different individuals and groups experience discrimination.
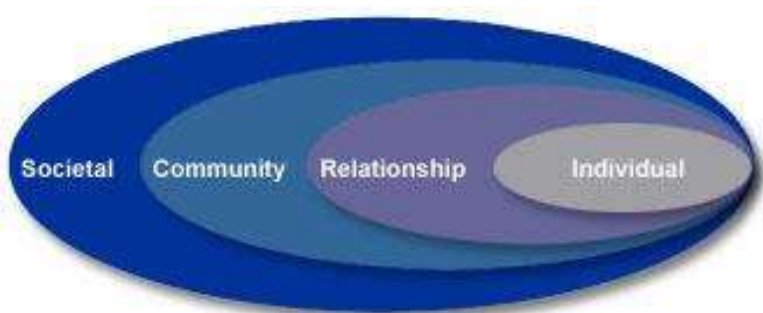
SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In addition to the gender equality conceptual framework the gender strategy draws on the socio-ecological framework (SEF). Truly transformative programming requires working at the different, mutually reinforcing levels of the SEF (see below) which help, broadly, to understand dynamic interrelations among various personal and environmental factors. Besides helping to clarify these factors, the SEF also suggests that, in order to work toward gender equality, it is necessary to act across multiple levels. This is based in evidence that has shown that working simultaneously on different levels is more effective than focusing on interventions at one single level. There is a growing body of evidence that multi-sectoral programs informed by the SEF contribute to gender equality outcomes with more success than approaches that focus solely on the individual level. Here is a list to see gender approaches mapped along the socio-ecological framework.

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK (SEF) LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Individual	▪ Biological and personal history factors such as ape, education, religious or ethnic identity, income and health as well as individual knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and behaviors.
Relationships	▪ Formal (and informal social networks and social support systems that can influence individuals' behaviors including family, intimate partners, friends, religious leaders, peers etc.
Community	▪ Community contexts in which social relationships and interactions occur, such as schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, faith-based organizations, community associations, etc.
Societal / Systems	▪ The economic and social policies at national, state or local levels and socio-cultural structures and norms, patterns and availability of resources that impact gender equality (such as existence of laws related to women's land tenure or legal age of marriage) and/or community cultural beliefs and gender norms.

ABOVE: Description of the Socio-ecological framework levels