

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Approved by the Board of Directors on March 31, 2015



The mission of CECI is to combat poverty and exclusion through sustainable development projects in Africa, Asia and the Americas since 1958.

INTRODUCTION

This Policy was developed with technical assistance from a group of students in the Master of Environmental Studies program at *Université de Sherbrooke* in Canada, as part of course “ENV 803 *Projet intégrateur en environnement*.” This group was selected after CECI issued a call for proposals from a number of Quebec universities. A team of three CECI employees¹ collaborated with the students during their mandate.

CECI is an organization dedicated to fighting poverty and exclusion by building the developmental capacities of disadvantaged communities. In response to global economic, social and environmental issues, we have decided to clearly integrate the concept of sustainable development into our vision and activities. By drafting this Sustainable Development Policy, we are reaffirming our commitment to sustainable development and encouraging all stakeholders to follow our lead.

CECI’s Sustainable Development Policy officially sets out our vision for sustainable development within the organization and in all of our activities. It is intended to help us rise to the challenge of promoting social equity through sustainable economic development, while protecting the environment.

To ensure the success of this Policy, we must first assess various aspects of sustainable development across the organization and consider how they affect our projects and programs. Next, we must integrate these aspects into CECI’s social responsibility efforts by applying them to the day-to-day activities of our organization and its employees. The success of the Policy therefore relies on the invaluable contributions of CECI’s internal stakeholders—Board of Directors, Executive Director, regional directors, national offices and staff—and the communities it serves.

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1. François Louis Scylla, Philippe Fragnier and Marcel Monette.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY



BACKGROUND

CECI's commitment to integrating sustainable development principles into its strategic planning will guide our organization's actions over the long term.

CECI currently faces a number of major challenges, which were set out in its 2014-2019 strategic plan. First off, the organization is decentralizing its activities. The head office in Montreal wants to promote the autonomy of the country teams and their transformation into national entities in charge of developing their own programming, while cooperating and working in synergy with them. CECI also aims to diversify funding sources for its activities and programs by complying with the increasingly strict standards and regulations of major donor agencies, which generally require that sustainable development practices be integrated into the projects and programs they finance. It is essential for CECI to respond to this trend. In this way, we will enhance our visibility by presenting a stronger and more distinctive image to potential donors, political representatives and operational partners, both in Canada and in the countries where we operate. By adopting this Sustainable Development Policy, CECI is undertaking a proactive approach that goes above and beyond established standards.

CECI's mission is to combat poverty and exclusion. To achieve our goals, we mobilize key agents for change, both in the North and the South, to promote sustainable socioeconomic development, reduce poverty, establish greater gender equality and increase security for the most vulnerable populations. All of our activities are aligned with the principles of CECI's Sustainable Development Policy and with our vision, values and goals. Cooperation, respect, equity, engagement and integrity are our guiding words for every action we take as an organization. Another challenge we face is reconciling the principles of sustainable development with the necessity of protecting and preserving the environment. CECI is dedicated to acting responsibly and being recognized for its commitment to the environment.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY



1. DEFINITIONS

Sustainable development: Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is based on a long-term approach and applies both locally and internationally. It aims to improve overall conditions for the majority, while taking into account the need to balance social, cultural, environmental, economic and governance concerns.²

Governance: “Corporate governance is a set of legal, regulatory and practical provisions that limit the powers and responsibilities of those charged with directing the sustainability of [an organization]. Directing [an organization] means making and following up on decisions that have a significant impact on its sustainability and long-term performance.”³

Environment: The physical, chemical and biological elements that interact with geographic, economic and social factors. The environment affects living organisms, health and well-being; it influences human activities and is influenced by them.⁴

Social responsibility: “The responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment through transparent and ethical behaviour that contributes to sustainable development, including the health and welfare of society; takes into account the expectations of stakeholders; is in compliance with applicable laws and consistent with international norms of behaviour; and is integrated throughout the organization and practised in its relationships.”⁵

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our guiding principles are based on Quebec’s *Sustainable Development Act*. In keeping with CECI’s mission, this Policy was developed according to the *Bureau de Normalisation du Québec* (BNQ) 21000 standard, which determined its three key objectives. The standard also proceeds from the *Sustainable Development Act*. CECI’s Sustainable Development Policy was further inspired by the Millennium Development Goals and the Global Compact.

We must fight poverty and hunger, in keeping with CECI’s mission

Sustainable development must be integrated into CECI’s mission of combating poverty and exclusion. By taking action against poverty and hunger, we can improve the health and quality of life of the people we serve over the long term.

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2. France Diplomatie, 1987; Université de Sherbrooke, 2005

3. Cadieux et Dion, 2012

4. Office québécois de la langue française (2013). Vocabulaire du développement durable.

5. Ibid.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Protecting the environment fulfils CECI's commitment to social responsibility

Protecting the environment is an integral aspect of the sustainable development process. CECI's actions must therefore aim to preserve and improve the quality of the environment.

Biodiversity and ecosystems must be protected, as they are the cornerstones of future prosperity

Protecting biodiversity, preserving species and respecting the carrying capacity of ecosystems are all essential aspects of CECI's sustainable development process. We aim to ensure quality of life for current and future generations.

Responsible production and consumption is crucial to CECI's vision

CECI needs to ensure efficient resource use by avoiding waste and overuse and limiting our impact on society and the environment.

Promoting gender equality and empowering women are key drivers of social equity

Sustainable development must advocate actions that eliminate gender inequality and ensure fair access to education, employment and professional careers.

Social equity, solidarity and global cooperation are among the core values of the organization and support peace initiatives

Sustainable development actions must mobilize local people and foster equality, while taking into account generational, cultural, religious, gender and other differences and promoting social equity, solidarity and cooperation on a national and international scale.

Providing access to information and exchanging knowledge strengthens the development capacity of disadvantaged communities

CECI members and partners must be trained and informed to help them integrate and apply sustainable development concepts.

Participation and commitment: All members of the organization must take full ownership of their mission, their commitments and the resulting responsibilities

CECI members must unite around a shared vision and definition of sustainable development. They must consider environmental, social, economic and governance concerns while working together to ensure it can be maintained over the long term.

Subsidiarity is a key component of CECI's value of respect

Powers and responsibilities must be delegated to the appropriate level of authority. No agent has the right to exceed its powers. Furthermore, to foster development, all stakeholders concerned must be integrated into the decision-making process whenever possible.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY



Protecting cultural heritage is an essential aspect of international cooperation and communication

Landscapes, sites, traditions and knowledge are passed on from one generation to the next. That's why it's vital for CECI to make sure cultural heritage is protected, maintained and promoted.

Precaution must be exercised in all areas of operation

As part of its sustainable development efforts, CECI can adopt measures to mitigate risk and prevent damage without having full scientific certainty of the existence of a threat.

3. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This Policy targets our head office in Montreal, our offices abroad and all CECI partners worldwide. It commits the organization's staff and stakeholders to achieving our sustainable development objectives. It applies to all of our programs, projects and operations and involves all partners, individuals and communities supported by CECI.

CECI's Sustainable Development Policy is directly aimed at our management, staff, volunteer cooperation programs, interns and volunteers. It indirectly addresses our local and international partners, financial donors, service providers and any agents who directly or indirectly participate in the organization's activities.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

The primary objective of the Policy is to integrate sustainable development into all of CECI's activities across the organization, while ensuring all of our actions incorporate the principle of gender equality.

4.1. Integrate sustainable development into CECI's programming

- Support economic projects that improve quality of life for the target populations via local governance that respects the environment and human rights.
- Promote projects and activities that have minimal impact on the local environment.
- Encourage sustainable agriculture that limits environmental impact, permits economic and social development, and allows for the equitable distribution of profits to all parties involved.
- Implement measures for selecting responsible new service providers, while raising awareness among our existing service providers and helping them adopt sustainable practices aligned with CECI's objectives.
- Provide humanitarian aid as a springboard for sustainable social and economic development.

4.2. Integrate sustainable development into CECI's day-to-day activities

- Offer further training to improve the overall skills of CECI employees and partners.
- Provide safe work environments that meet labour standards while promoting the personal development and well-being of employees.
- Pursue efforts to ensure representation and pay transparency without distinction of employee gender or origin.
- Implement measures for selecting responsible new service providers, while raising awareness among our existing service providers and helping them adopt sustainable practices aligned with CECI's objectives.
- Encourage sustainable initiatives that foster continuous improvement.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

4.3. Adopt management practices that respect the environment and responsible habits that incorporate the principles of sustainable development

- Manage sourcing and residual materials within CECI by applying the 5 Rs (rethink, reduce, reuse, recycle, recover).
- Reduce energy use and improve energy management.
- Reduce water use and improve water management.
- Manage greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and other types of pollution.

5. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Under the responsibility of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director and the Management Committee, CECI will:

- Enforce this Policy with the assistance of a Sustainable Development Committee.
- Follow up on an Action Plan to achieve the Policy's objectives.
- Maintain continuous improvement via concrete action.
- Mobilize the human, financial and material resources needed to execute the Action Plan.
- Make sure all of CECI's general policies and strategies are compatible with this Sustainable Development Policy.

Under the responsibility of the Executive Director, a Sustainable Development Committee will be created to ensure compliance with the Policy. The Sustainable Development Committee will:

- Support the directives required to make sure this Policy is applied.
- Take any appropriate measures to ensure compliance with this Policy and the related directives.
- Make sure that an action plan that takes into account the social, cultural, environmental, economic and governance aspects of sustainable development is integrated into each project. These projects will be supported by the general objectives and guiding principles of this Policy.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY



6. ADMINISTRATION

This Policy falls under the responsibility of the Board of Directors. The Executive Director, assisted by the Sustainable Development Committee, is responsible for ensuring the Policy is applied. The administrators of each of our offices abroad are also responsible for applying this policy.

7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Policy takes effect upon its adoption by CECI's Board of Directors. (March 31, 2015).