Justice for women

Development and Peace
CARITAS CANADA

"Developments in legislation should... be directed to protecting [the woman's] proper vocation and at the same time recognizing her independence as a person, and her equal rights to participate in cultural, economic, social and political life."
— Pope Paul VI, Octogesima Adveniens, 13

What does justice for women really mean?

It means recognizing the dignity God has given them and their full equality as partners alongside men. It also means transforming the power dynamics and structures that perpetuate discrimination against them, so that all women can exercise their rights fully.

Causes of the current situation

Despite the progress made in recent decades, the fundamental rights of many women around the world continue to be violated. These injustices are linked to various economic, social and cultural structures that reinforce one another:

- **An unequal and sexist economic model** that devalues women's unpaid work and confines them to **precarious jobs or the informal sector**. They earn barely more than **half of what men earn** and shoulder the burden of **three times as much unpaid and caregiving work** as men.
- **Unequal access to education and decision-making forums.** Worldwide, some **133 million girls are out of school and almost two-thirds of adults unable to read are women** This contributes to the **underrepresentation of women in positions of power**.
- **Limited access to land and resources.** **Women account for 43 per cent of the agricultural workforce in developing countries, but less than a fifth of the world's landholders**. Climate change exacerbates their vulnerability by undermining their food security and livelihoods.
- **Gender-based violence and discrimination.** **Nearly one in three women have experienced gender-based physical or sexual violence**, which undermines their rights, dignity and participation in society.
- **Inequalities in reproductive health.** Discrimination limits women's access to health care. Every year, **thousands of women and girls in the Global South die from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth**.
- **Patriarchy and unequal power dynamics.** The concentration of power and wealth in the hands of certain men perpetuates gender-based discrimination and violence.
- **The legacies of colonialism** and contemporary forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance combine with sexism and exacerbate the discrimination experienced by many women.
- **Intersectionality.** Age, ethnic origin, disability and sexual orientation can overlap to multiply the forms of discrimination experienced by women.

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Main communities affected

At Development and Peace — Caritas Canada, we believe in the fundamental dignity of all human beings. Women are not a homogeneous group. In all their diversity, women and girls at the heart of our programs include:



WOMEN IN RURAL AND FARMING COMMUNITIES,

who face barriers to accessing land and resources despite playing an essential role in food security.



INDIGENOUS AND RACIALIZED WOMEN,

who face discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and the legacies of colonialism.



WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES,

who face additional barriers to accessing education, health care, employment and social participation.



MIGRANT, REFUGEE AND STATELESS WOMEN,

who are more vulnerable to discrimination and violence and face greater barriers to exercising their rights.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVOCATES AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

that mobilize communities and help transform power dynamics.

Men and boys: Essential partners in change
They help transform power dynamics and challenge stereotypes to build relationships based on equality and respect.

Working for social change

We empower women and girls by developing their self-esteem, skills, participation and leadership. Working with social groups and movements in the Global South and North, we encourage collective action so that women can fully participate in decisions that affect them. Justice for women is at the heart of our programming, which aims to build more just, peaceful and equitable societies. We aim to:



Support women's movements and organizations to strengthen their autonomy, their place in society and their ability to contribute to change in their communities.



Strengthen women's economic and political empowerment through small business creation, microfinance, entrepreneurship and education on civic participation.



Improve women's access to and control over resources by promoting sustainable agriculture and agroecology that build on traditional and Indigenous knowledge while preserving biodiversity.



Increase women's agency, participation and leadership in decision-making spaces and strengthen their capacity to defend their rights and engage with decision-makers.



Combat all forms of violence against women and girls by challenging the attitudes and stereotypes that perpetuate inequalities.



Promote access to justice and education through the greater representation of women in the justice sector, vocational training and awareness-raising and/or functional literacy programs.

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