

Module 1:

GENDER, GENDER CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Refreshing your Knowledge

UNDERSTANDING KEY DEFINITIONS

GENDER vs. SEX

The term “gender” is often confused with “sex”. However:

Sex refers to the biological and genetic differences between males and females which naturally cannot be changed. It refers to physical attributes pertaining to a person’s body contours, features, genitals, hormones, genes, and reproductive organs; basically, those physiological attributes that identify a person as male or female.

Gender refers to widely-shared ideas and expectations concerning women and men, including cultural, economic, social and political role subscribed to women and men because of their sexual (biological) differences. It refers to the social differences, as opposed to the biological ones, between women and men, which have been learned, are changeable over time and vary both within and between cultures. These include ideas about typically feminine/female and masculine/male characteristics and abilities, as well as common expectations about how women and men should behave in various situations or what is considered appropriate for members of each sex.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF GENDERⁱ

- ♦ Gender refers not to women or men in isolation, but to **the relationships between them** and how these relationships are socially constructed and visible in the socio-cultural perceptions and differentiation of roles, attributes and responsibilities of both women and men.
- ♦ However, as a socially constructed determinant, gender goes beyond personal relations between women and men, as it is entrenched in a **social system** that is supported by values, legislation, religion, etc. (e.g. institutionally structured).
- ♦ It is **hierarchical** because the differences established between women and men, far from being neutral, tend to attribute greater importance and value to the characteristics and activities associated with what is masculine and to produce unequal power relationships.
- ♦ Gender is **context specific** and varies depending on the context of an ethnic group, age, socio-economic group, culture, society.
- ♦ Though deeply rooted in every culture these learned social differences and social roles are **changeable** over time. Gender is determined by society and can also be changed by society.

GENDER INEQUALITY vs GENDER EQUITY

Gender equality presents the state or condition that affords women and men equal enjoyment of human rights, socially valued goods, opportunities and resources, allowing both sexes to equally contribute to, and benefit from all spheres of society (economic, political, social, and cultural).ⁱⁱ With other words, it does mean that women and men enjoy the same status within a society, being free to develop their personal abilities, and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles.ⁱⁱⁱ

Equality does not mean that women and men **are the same or have to become** the same, but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are not limited or dependable by whether they were born female or male.^{iv}

GENDER EQUALITY vs GENDER EQUITY

The terms gender “equality” and “equity” are often used interchangeably, however, they present politically different connotations.

While **gender equality** refers to the state when men and women enjoy rights, responsibilities, opportunities equally regardless of their sexes, **gender equity** refers to the differential treatment of women and men according to their respective needs, with the aim to correct initial inequalities. These measures will not necessarily be equal, but rather conducive toward equality in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. Human development paradigm for example, defined “equity,” as justice and fairness in the treatment of women and men in order to eventually achieve gender equality. In order to ensure that fairness and justice, measures must be put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from sharing a level playing field.^v

Equity leads to equality! Equity means that there is a need to continue taking differential actions to address historical inequality among men and women and achieve gender equality!

GENDER EQUALITY vs. WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Gender equality presents the state or condition that affords women and men equal enjoyment of human rights.

Furthermore, discrimination based on sex is prohibited under almost every human rights treaty - including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which under their common Article 3 provide for the rights to equality between men and women in the enjoyment of all rights. Equally, The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) defines what constitutes as discrimination against women, which is often at the root cause of gender inequality, and sets an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

Both, effectively ensuring women’s human rights as well as achieving gender equality, demands firstly, a comprehensive understanding of the social structures and power relations that frame not only laws and politics but also the economy, social dynamics and family and community life.

TRANSGENDER vs. TRANSEXUAL

Transgender: refers to those trans-people who live permanently in their preferred gender, without necessarily needing to undergo any medical intervention/s. Until recently, this term was also the primary umbrella term referring to all trans people, but this use is now losing favour to the term “trans” which is perceived to be more inclusive of all trans communities.^{vi}

Transsexual: refers to people who identify entirely with the gender role opposite to the sex assigned to at birth and seek to live permanently in the preferred gender role. This often goes along with strong rejection of their physical primary and secondary sex characteristics and wish to align their body with their preferred gender. Transsexual people might intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment treatment (which may or may not involve hormone therapy or surgery).^{vii}

PATTERNS OF GENDER INEQUALITY

Gender is an issue because of the fundamental differences and inequalities between women and men. These differences and inequalities may manifest themselves in different ways in specific countries or sectors but there are some broad patterns that point to questions that should always be considered:^{viii}

Inequalities in political power and representation: women are often underrepresented in formal decision-making structures, including governments, community councils, and policy-making institutions, making women's voices, interests and needs invisible.

In Montenegro, only 15% of parliamentarians are women, 17% of women are on ministerial positions while there has never been a female head of state^{ix}.

Inequalities in economic participation and opportunities: in most countries, women and men are distributed differently across sectors. Women are receiving lower wages for similar work, are more likely to be in low-paid jobs and unsecured work (part-time, temporary, home-based). They are also likely to have less access than men to productive assets such as education, skills, property and credit. These patterns mean that economic trends and economic policies are likely to have different implications for women and men.

In Montenegro, 52% of women participate in labour force, opposite to 66% of men. Women receive significant lower wages for similar work (Gender gap 0,71). There are 27% of female legislators, senior officials and managers, while 73% male.^x

When examining situation of women and men and patterns of inequality, we should pay attention to how factors such as sex, ethnicity, socio-economic status, race or even geographical location, influence the level of gender equality and the position and level of enjoyment of women's rights.

For example, in Montenegro, there are significant differences in employment rate of women across different municipalities. In Municipality of Rozaje, the employment rate was as low as (12%), in six municipalities less than one-fifth of women over 15 were employed, whereas the employment rates in southern municipalities of Tivat, Herceg Novi, Podgorica and Budva are in the range of 35%– 44%.^{xi}

Educational attainment, measured as literacy rate, enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education: 57 million children worldwide, including 31 million girls, are not attending school and two thirds of illiterate adults are women. In developing countries, adolescent girls are more likely to drop-out of secondary school than boys, particularly in rural areas. There are many reasons that prevent girls from going to school. Poverty, pregnancy, school-based violence, early marriage and discriminatory gender norms are some of the major obstacles to girls' education worldwide.^{xii}

Ethnicity is often one of the factors influencing gender inequality. For example, in Europe, the most vulnerable groups of population are female members of the Roma and Egyptian populations. Due to traditions and specific social, economic and cultural conditions, they suffer double discrimination and face numerous obstacles in education and the development of their abilities, which reduces their prospects for employment and economic independence.

For example in 2008 in Montenegro, the illiteracy rate of Roma and Egyptian women was 55% (42% for men). There are almost no Roma and Egyptian women in prominent positions in public life.^{xiii}

Sexual and domestic violence: Women are much more subjected to sexual and domestic violence, either in a form of a domestic violence by woman's intimate partner, sexual exploitation through trafficking and sex trade, in wars by an enemy army as a weapon of attempted "ethnic cleansing" etc.

Inequalities in the domestic/unpaid sector: In many countries it is women who shoulder most of the responsibilities and tasks related to the care and nurturing of the family. These tasks add to women's workload and are often an obstacle to engaging in political action or expanding economic activities.

Differences in legal status and entitlements: There are many instances in which equal rights to personal status, security, land, inheritance and employment opportunities are denied to women by law or practice.

Inequalities within households: Inequalities in negotiating and decision-making potential and access to resources have been documented within households, questioning policies and programmes based on the assumption that households function as units where each member benefits equally.

GENDER GAP

The **gender gap** is the difference in any area between women and men in terms of their levels of participation, access to resources, rights, power and influence, remuneration and benefits.^{xiv}

The Global Gender Gap Report 2014

The Global Gender Gap Report 2014 benchmarks national gender gaps of 142 countries on economic, political, education- and health-based criteria. This year is the 9th edition of the Index, allowing for time-series analysis on the changing patterns of gender equality around the world and comparisons between and within countries.

The rankings are designed to create greater awareness among a global audience of the challenges posed by gender gaps and the opportunities created by reducing them. The methodology and quantitative analysis behind the rankings are intended to serve as a basis for designing effective measures for reducing gender gaps.

The Index continues to track the strong correlation between country's gender gap and its national competitiveness. Because women account for one-half of country's potential talent base, a nation's competitiveness in the long term depends significantly on whether and how it educates and utilizes its women.

More is available at: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY

- ♦ **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 but entered into force as an international treaty in 1981. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life -- including the right to vote and to stand for election -- as well as education, health and employment, etc. States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national periodic reports to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.^{xv} NGOs can produce the shadow reports.
- ♦ **The Beijing Platform for Action (1995)** is the outcome documents of the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995, considered as blueprint for improving position of women and advancing women's rights. The action plan consists of six chapters and distinguishes twelve "critical areas". It defines long term goals and measures which governments, the international community, NGO's and the private sector shall undertake in order to improve women's conditions. Governments have to report every 5 years on the achievements and NGOs can produce the shadow reports.^{xvi}

ⁱ Adopted from Human Rights Education Association (HREA). On-line course on gender mainstreaming. September – November, 2014

ⁱⁱ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Training Manual on Gender Mainstreaming. Promotion of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Programme. Kampala, 2011

ⁱⁱⁱ FAO. Regional Office in Bangkok. Mainstreaming gender into project cycle in the fisheries sector, Bangkok, 2011

^{iv} Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Training Manual on Gender Mainstreaming. Promotion of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Programme. Kampala, 2011

^v United Nations Development Programme. *Guide to using the manual on "How to Prepare a Gender Strategy"*. San Salvador, 2004

^{vi} ILGA Europe. ILGA Europe – Glossary. Available at: <http://www.ilga-europe.org/home/publications/glossary>

^{vii} ILGA Europe. ILGA Europe – Glossary. Available at: <http://www.ilga-europe.org/home/publications/glossary>

^{viii} United Nations. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Gender Mainstream. An Overview*. New York, 2002.

^{ix} World Economic Forum. *Gender Gap Report 2014*. Available at: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Government of Montenegro and UN System in Montenegro. *Report on Millennium Development Goals in Montenegro 2010–2013*. Podgorica, 2014

^{xii} The Right to Education Project, Available at: <http://www.right-to-education.org/issue-page/marginalised-groups/girls-women#sthash.85xUumDe.dpuf>

^{xiii} Government of Montenegro and UN System in Montenegro. *Report on Millennium Development Goals in Montenegro 2010–2013*. Podgorica, 2014

^{xiv} International Labour Organization. *A Manual for gender audit facilitators. The ILO participatory gender audit methodology*. Geneva 2007

^{xv} UN Women, *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*, Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

^{xvi} UN Women, *The Beijing Platform for Action: inspiration then and now*. Available at: <http://beijing20.unwomen.org>