Handbook on
Gender and Diversity

National Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh

Human Rights Programme
United Nations Development Programme

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Developed and compiled by

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Acronyms

BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
GoV	Government of Bangladesh
HRP	Human Rights Programme
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NWDP	National Women Development Policy Bangladesh
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAW	Violence Against Women
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens Fund

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank the colleagues of Human Rights Programme (HRP) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for providing all kinds of support in developing this handbook. Particularly Sharmeela Rassool, Chief Technical Advisor and Bithika Hasan, Gender Expert of HRP for their invaluable advice as well as Taslima Islam, National Programme Coordinator for her cordial cooperation. I would also like to thank Susmita S Preetha for assisting in editing and infographics. The publishing was supervised by Quazi Mustafizur Rahman, Communications & Advocacy Expert of HRP, UNDP.

It is important to mention that to make the handbook user-friendly and informative, I have used important gender related data, information and definitions developed by different organisations, including UN Women. Some of the images have been compiled from different sources.

Message of Chairperson- NHRC

Women belong half of the total population not only in Bangladesh but in entire world. But to achieve gender equality in every sector the country has still long way to go. In spite of significant progress in the area on women empowerment the trend of violence against women is yet alarming in Bangladesh. There are disparities between urban and rural women to claim rights or get access to basic services. It's also been observed that the duty bearers are not always sensitive and responsive towards women's rights. Even those who are expected to respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights.

With this context National Human Rights Commission has been established in 2009 to promote and protect human rights including women human rights. By its founding act the NHRC is mandated to take all necessary measures that includes enhancing the capacity to relevant stakeholders on core human rights issues including women human rights. The 1st 2010-15 and 2nd 2016-20 Strategic Plan of NHRC have given due focus on women empowerment, elimination of discrimination against women and gender-based violence. As part of it NHRC has established a thematic committee on Women's Rights. Under the technical led of this thematic committee series of consultations, seminars, workshops, roundtables organized on women's and girls' rights issues. The complaint unit of NHRC has special focus of receiving and handling complaint on violence against women. NHRC is trying to establish gender parity during hiring its staff. NHRC also gives equal emphasis during producing any IEC materials.

Gender equality is one of goal out of 17 Global Goals of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It has given due importance and attention for ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all level including economic and public life under goal no 5. To achieve the global 2030 agenda including goal 5 we all have to working together from grassroot level to national level. To reduce the gender disparity awareness, sensitization and capacity need to be enhance of duty bearers. Developing the Gender and Diversity Training Manual and Handbook is the execution of NHRCs commitment to human rights intervention.

In view of that NHRC, with the technical support of Human Rights Programme of UNDP had taken the initiative to develop the gender and diversity training manual and handbook for NHRC, CSOs and Police. I am happy to see that the documents are going to publish for the wider dissemination and better use by all relevant actors.

Thus, we believe to enhance the capacity of relevant actors this Gender and Diversity Training Manual and Handbook would benefit all of them. We wish, everyone will utilize the essence of the content and apply in their personal and professional life.

We all have to learn, believe and practice though our entire life. This is the only solution to achieve the dreamed gender equality for all irrespective of race, color, class, creed, religion etc.

Kazi Reazul Hoque
Chairperson
National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Bangladesh

Foreward

Throughout history, women have constituted more than half of the world's population. And yet, despite tremendous advancement of the human civilization, statistics on women's position in society present a very disturbing picture across societies and sectors.

Although more than 140 countries guarantee gender equality in their constitutions, women continue to face inequalities in both policy and practice. For example, only 70 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys in tertiary level education in sub-Saharan Africa and globally women earn 24 per cent less than men. Globally, less than 20 percent of landholders are women. In 2015, only 22 per cent of all national Parliamentarians were female.

Discriminatory practices apart, women are frequent victims of violence both at home and outside. While the situation of women has improved in some parts of the world, an estimated third of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their lives. However, some national studies show that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime. (World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council 2013).

Thus, women's empowerment and advocacy for rights, equity and protection are of paramount importance both globally and also in Bangladesh. Despite considerable progress in some areas of women's empowerment, trends of violence against women in Bangladesh is alarming. Disparities between urban and rural women in seeking redress for rights violations and access to basic services still exist.

Gender equality is an integral part of and a critical pre-requisite of the Sustainable Development Goals. Globally UNDP is committed to establishing gender equality, advocate for gender mainstreaming and contributing to women empowerment. Our work in Bangladesh is informed, supported and builds on our global commitments.

The Human Rights Programme (2016-2020) of UNDP has mainstreamed gender equality throughout the project as a key strategy. The programme therefore proactively advocates for gender equality and works to empower women through engaging relevant stakeholders i.e. NHRC, civil society organizations, community-based organizations, police, relevant ministries, youth groups, media representatives and others.

In support of the above, the Human Rights Programme has presently developed a training scheme on gender and diversity with the objective of strengthening the institutional capacity of national partners. This Gender and Diversity Training Manual presents the key contents for the training, which we believe if utilized fully and applied in professional spheres and personal lives can benefit Bangladeshi society as whole.

The journey of empowering women has taken many decades to get to where it is today. The Sustainable Development Goals commits Bangladesh to accelerate the journey forward and this will require concerted efforts and sustained investments. UNDP is proud to be a torch bearer in this transformative journey and will always remain a committed partner in supporting women's empowerment in Bangladesh.

Sudipto Mukerjee
Country Director
UNDP, Bangladesh

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Understanding what constitutes women's empowerment

UNIT 1

Understanding Gender

Rationale

The purpose of this unit is to introduce basic gender concepts.

Learning objectives

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

Distinguish the difference between sex and gender, and understand how gender is constructed and sustained through socialization processes.

Comprehend what constitutes gender relations, gendered language, gendered space and gender gap, and how they relate to the subjugation of women and girls.

Understand what constitutes gender needs.

Content

This unit includes the following:

1. Sex and Gender
2. Gender vocabulary
    - Gender roles
    - Gender relations
    - Gendered language
    - Gendered space
    - Gender gap
3. Gender division of labour

1. Sex and Gender

The term sex refers to the natural biological differences between men and women, including both primary sex characteristics (the reproductive system) and secondary characteristics such as height and muscularity.

There are two sexes: male and female. However, there are also people who are "intersex", i.e. born with both male and female reproductive organs. Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic), but these terms are now outdated and derogatory.

Gender, on the other hand, refers to the cultural, socially-constructed differences between the two sexes. These are the differences which are created and sustained through a process of socialization that begins and birth, and which determine what constitute "appropriate" behaviour for men and women.

Gender determines that girls will be "feminine" and boys "masculine"; that girls wear "pink" while boys wear "blue"; that girls play with dolls while boys play with balls.

The term sex refers to biological or physical characteristics that do not vary significantly differ between different human societies. We know, for instance, that those categorised as the female sex are born with a vagina, will eventually menstruate and develop breasts that can lactate, irrespective of the culture they are born in. Gender, on the contrary, is not the same the world over—expressions and definitions of gender can vary between and within the same societies, and in different time periods. For example, we may consider it feminine to wear a skirt or a dress; however, in many other cultures, men wear skirts (called sarongs in Burma, or kilt in Scotland).

One's gender can be determined in many ways, e.g., behaviour. In most societies, for example, humility, submissiveness etc., are considered feminine traits and women are expected to behave accordingly. Men, on the other hand, are expected to be dominant, aggressive, etc.

Gender determines (among others) the following: dress, attitude, mobility, roles and responsibilities.

A person's sex, as determined by his or her biology, does not always correspond with his or her gender. Therefore, the terms sex and gender are not interchangeable. A baby boy who is born with male genitalia will be identified as male. As he grows, however, he may identify with the feminine aspects of his culture.

When a person's sex corresponds with their gender, they are called cisgender. A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that assigned at birth based on anatomical sex is called transgender.

2. Gender vocabulary

Gender roles

Society makes different rules for girls and boys, e.g. girls will do the household work and boys will do the outside work. Girls will stay at home and boys can go out. Girls will be given less food, and less time to play than boys.

Society and family decides that a boy will be sent to better schools and receive higher education so that in the future he can be the main income earner of the family.

On the other hand, a girl learns how to become a good housewife and a good mother. All over the world, gender differences are created by patriarchy. It is patriarchy that determines that men are dominating and women are submissive.

It is society that creates, sustains and perpetuates inequality between boys and girls and men, which prescribe greater value to men's work while belitting women's work and which deems that men are more powerful and thus ought to exert their power over women.

For ages it was believed that the different characteristics, roles and status accorded to women and men in society, are determined by biology, and that is why these are natural and therefore not changeable.

Gender relations

Gender relations refer to the ways in which gender shapes the distribution(s) of power at all levels of society. One of the most persistent patterns in the distribution of power is that of inequalities between women and men. The set of roles, behaviours and attitudes that societies define as appropriate for women and men ('gender') can be "the cause, consequence and mechanism of power relations, from the intimate sphere of the household to the highest levels of political decision-making. Wider structures and institutions can also shape the distribution of power by reinforcing and relying on gender roles."

Gendered Language

MMost of the time, language is also gendered. It ignores, marginalizes and devalues women's contribution. Gendered language is language that is biased towards a particular sex or gender. This includes using the masculine pronouns "his/him/he" as a placeholder for all genders, and using the word "mankind" to refer to humankind. You'll also notice that some professions are also gendered in the English language—such as the use of chairman or businessman, on one hand, and the use of waitress or nurse, on the other.

The use of gendered language, like the examples above, perpetuates what academic Allyson Jule calls 'the historical patriarchal hierarchy that has existed between men and women, where one (man) is considered the norm, and the other (woman) is marked as other – as something quite different from the norm'.

Gendered Space

The spaces designated for men and women, which are determined based on gender division of labour (For instance, women's place is in the home, and men's place is in the public sphere).

Gender gap

Gender gap refers to the disparity between boys and girls, men and women, in their access to resources, education, health services and power.

Women still earn less than men for the same amount of work done; for instance, in the United States, for every $1 earned by a man, a woman earns $79 cents.

According to a study conducted by the International Labour Organisation, women earn an average of 21 per cent less per hour than men in Bangladesh.

3. Gender Division of Labour

Women and men both contribute to our family, society and the state significantly. However, society has differentiated women's work from that of men. Women's household activities are not being recognised in most cases, though men's work is recognised. Work can be divided into three categories:

PRODUCTIVE WORK

Work from which we can earn money is known as productive work. Traditionally, men do productive work but women also make direct or indirect contribution to it. Women carry out productive work from within the house and not directly related with market. As she is not directly dealing with buying or selling, her partnership or contribution is not considered and she doesn't get any payment for her work.

As a result, she doesn't get equal status as well. In some cases, even if she earns, she doesn't have any control over her income because of a patriarchal system. These income related activities are in agriculture, mill factory, and offices etc.

REPRODUCTIVE WORK

Reproductive work encompasses all of the work done to care for, nurture and sustain human beings—covering cooking, cleaning, washing, feeding, and all tasks usually identified with a mother or an individual who is personally responsible for the general well-being of others.

Reproductive work can again be divided into two types – 1) Biological and 2) social reproduction. Biological reproductive work is pregnancy and delivery of child while child rearing and taking care of other members fall under the social reproductive category, such as cooking, cleaning, washing, nursing etc. As much as 90 to 95% of this work is done by women, for which they are not paid, even though every human being needs food and other services to give him/her energy to live, work and earn money. Men may perform some of these responsibilities, but usually these activities are outside of the house and are related with money. For example, marketing, repairing TV, freeze, etc.

These activities may not be directly related to earning, but our families depend and live on these; even productive work gets energy from reproductive work. Our body needs energy and comfort regularly like the battery needs charge every day. If women had not done these work, the men and other members in the family could not have gone out for work and earned a living.

COMMUNITY WORK/SERVICES

Both women and men take part in community work, such as road repairing, funeral formalities, sending food to deceased families, village politics. Even among community work, it can be noticed that women tend to take care of chores that involve being and working from home and/or are of a nurturing nature. The outside activities or decision-making activities are normally done by men.

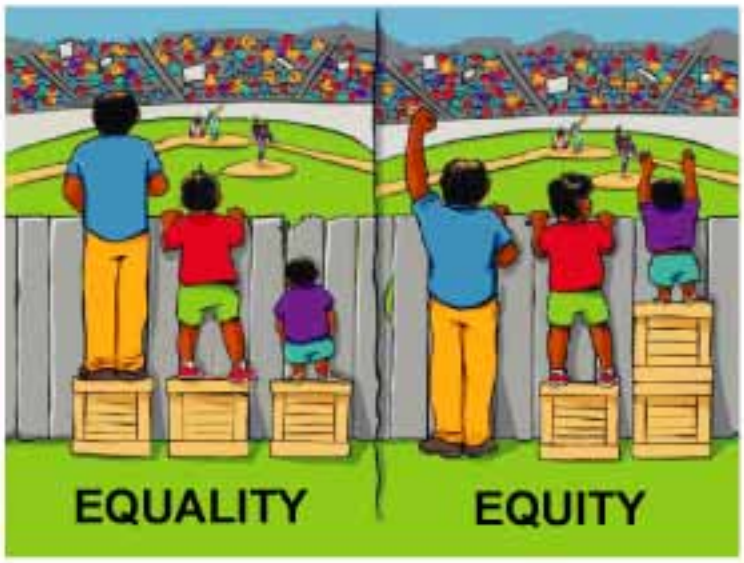
4. Equality vs Equity

There is a common misconception that equity and equality mean the same thing — and that they can be used interchangeably. Although the two words are similar, the difference between them is crucial.

Equality is defined as "The quality or state of being equal; the quality or state of having the same rights, social status, etc." Equity, on the other hand, is defined as "fairness or justice in the way people are treated." When we talk about equality, we pretty much mean that everyone gets the same thing. That sounds very similar to equity, right? Interestingly, however, simply ensuring access to equal resources does not mean that fairness has been established.

How so? Think about a child from an impoverished background who went to a school with inefficient teachers, poor facilities, and no coaching centres. Now imagine this child has to compete with another child from a rich family, who has studied in the best school in Dhaka, with all the additional support that money can buy, for a spot. Even if they are given the same test (ensuring equality), would it really be fair?

Providing equal resources to both men and women may not necessarily mean that they will have the same level of opportunities in the end.



Equality, even though it seems fair on the onset, can only really work in real life if everyone has the same access to opportunities and resources. Equity, on the other hand, can appear "unfair" to some, but in the end, ensures a level playing field for all, thereby making sure that everyone achieves an equal status.

Only equity can ensure real equality.

QUESTIONS:

1. Identify which of these fall under gender and which sex

Statement	Gender	Sex
Women are always shy		
Men have beards		
Women are the weaker sex		
Man are strong		
Women are loving and caring human beings		
Women breastfeed babies		

2. How does gender division of labour produce and reproduce discrimination against women?

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3. What do we understand by reproductive role of women?

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4. What are the differences between Practical Gender Need and Strategic Gender Need?

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5. Do women's position change if their conditions are changed?

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UNIT 2

What is patriarchy?

Rationale

The purpose of this unit is to understand that patriarchy is an ideology and social structure which creates and sustains the belief that men are superior to women.

Learning objectives

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

To understand the prime causes of unequal relationship between men and women;

To understand and describe the various institutions that produce and reproduce patriarchy;

To understand the construction of "masculinity" and "femininity" and its impact.

Content

This unit includes the following:

1. What is patriarchy?
2. Patriarchal institutions
3. How patriarchy exerts control over women
4. Masculinity and patriarchy

1. What is Patriarchy?

The term patriarchy derives from the Latin pater (father) and arch (rule). Father or father-figures hold the authority in a patriarchy. A patriarchy, from the ancient Greek patriarches, was a society where power was held by and passed down through the elder males.

According to feminist historian Gerda Lerner, patriarchy was not established through one event, but rather through a gradual process that spanned nearly 2,500 years, from approximately 3100 to 600 BC. What modern historians and sociologists describe as a "patriarchal society" is one where men hold and control the positions of power in the family, society, polity etc—from being heads of the family unit to the heads of the government, from being leaders of social groups to employers in the workplace. Traditional patriarchal societies are patrilineal—titles and property are passed through male lines.

> **Patriarchy is a social structure and an ideology which creates and sustains the belief that men are superior to women.**

Patriarchy, as a structure of power, determines that men exert control over women in different forms. As Kamla Bhasin notes, it is important to realise that patriarchy is not about some malicious men exerting control over some weak women; rather it is a system of domination that is entrenched in seemingly ordinary norms and practices in our everyday lives to laws, policies and institutional structures that affect the lives of men and women on a larger scale.

2. Patriarchal institutions

The family, which is the basic unit of society, is the vanguard of patriarchy. A man, as the head of the family, controls women's labour, reproduction, mobility and sexuality. As argued by feminist scholar Kathleen A. Lahey, "Most women procreate and nurture under conditions of such unrelenting male control that it is fair to say that all of women's reproductive arrangements are subject to some form of patriarchal domination." Under a patriarchal system, girls and women also grow up believing that they are subservient to men and to the male members of their families. It is the family which first imbues gender stereotypes and the values of dominion and subordination in children and constantly reinforces these values. Subsequently, educational institutions, the media, legal apparatuses, political and economic institutions etc. produce and reproduce patriarchal ideology.

Most institutionalised religions in the world are also patriarchal, and perpetuate patriarchal norms and values. Traditional interpretations of religion, be it Hinduism, Islam, Judaism or Christianity, consider women "less than" men, as impure, inferior and sinful, and give men authority, in one form or another, to exert control over women. Some religions even condone violence as punishment for "deviant" behaviour from a woman. It must be remembered, however, that, for centuries, these religions have been compiled and interpreted exclusively by upper caste and upper class men, who have read religion through their own lens of morality, ethics and even law.

Patriarchy would have us believe that women have unequal status in our society because they are inherently and biologically inferior to men.

Patriarchy would have us believe that the biological differences between men and women justify the differences in social roles and responsibilities assigned to the two genders. It insists on the superiority and control of men over women. It is patriarchy that decides that men's sphere is the outside world, and women's sphere the home; it uses women's anatomy and her ability to reproduce children to argue that she belongs to the home, to bear and rear children, and hence should be excluded from politics. As argued by Bhasin, "the traditional notion of 'public-private divide' which located politics in the public sphere and family and personal relationships in private sphere as non-political, believed that sexual inequality is natural and not political."

These male supremacist theories have long been debunked by feminists who have highlighted through their work that patriarchy is the historical product of socio-economic and political processes of society. Patriarchy is not biological; it simply uses biology to justify inequality and oppression.

Patriarchy manifests itself in different forms in different cultures, in different classes in the same society; in different societies, and in different periods in history. Though it may look different depending on where you are or what your social location patriarchy is, at its core, all over believe in and perpetuate the superiority and control of men.

3. How patriarchy exerts control over women

Generally, patriarchy controls the followings:

1. Women's Labour Power
2. Women's reproduction
3. Controls over women's sexuality
4. Women's mobility
5. Property and other resources

1. Women's Labour Power:

Under a patriarchal system, the productive powers of women are also controlled by men—both within the household, as well as in the workforce. To be begin with, as we know from our own families, there is little to no recognition of women's household work. It is assumed that the work that women do in the house is not real work—how many times do we say, when asked what a woman does, she is "*just* a housewife"?

According to a recent study by international NGO, ActionAid, Bangladeshi women, on average, spend eight hours on an average per day doing unpaid work, while their male counterparts spend only 90 minutes in such activities.

As per another research published in 2014 by research institute Unnayan Onneshan, the total engagement of women domestic work was presumed to be equivalent to 9.3 million full-employments per year and the total unpaid work per year was equivalent to BDT 11,15,914.8 crore or $14.45 billion. The total GDP of Bangladesh was BDT 1,037,990 crore in the FY 2012-13.

Men also dictate if, and where, women should work. Some jobs are considered fitting for women—such as nursing or teaching, jobs that corresponding with their prescribed feminine roles—while others are considered not suitable for "respectable" women. Often husbands or fathers get a say over the kind of jobs that women in the family should get, while at other times it's society more generally which influences, directly or indirectly, women's decision to work, and where.

Even when women are paid, their labour is devalued compared to men's. In most places of the country, according to Shykh Seraj, agricultural development activist, male agricultural labourers get BDT 280, while female labourers get BDT 180 for the same work.

2. Women's reproduction:

Men also control women's reproductive power. In countries of the world, women do not have the freedom to decide how many children they want, when to have them, what, if any, contraception to use, if and when to terminate a pregnancy, etc.

Patriarchal concepts of women's reproductive role in the family denote that their values are determined based on their ability to reproduce—that too, a male heir. Women's health are often put at risk by early marriage or forced, and repeated, pregnancies, in which they have little say.

Beyond the family, the state and other institutions also lays claims on a woman's body

Control over women's reproductive rights can take the form of denial of access to services that only women require, or poor quality services, subjecting women's access to services to third party authorisation, and performance of procedures related to women's reproductive and sexual health without the woman's consent, including forced sterilization, forced virginity examinations, and forced abortion.

3. Controls over women's sexuality:

In a patriarchal society, women's needs and desires are irrelevant; she and her exists to satisfy the sexual needs of men. A plethora of familial, social, religious and legal regimes dictate how she must behave, what she must wear, where she can go, who she can be with, how she must express herself.

And while it is "normal" for men to have sexual urges, for women to do so is tantamount to society equating her to a "slut" or "whore". Women must exist solely as objects of desire, not be the subjects of desire.

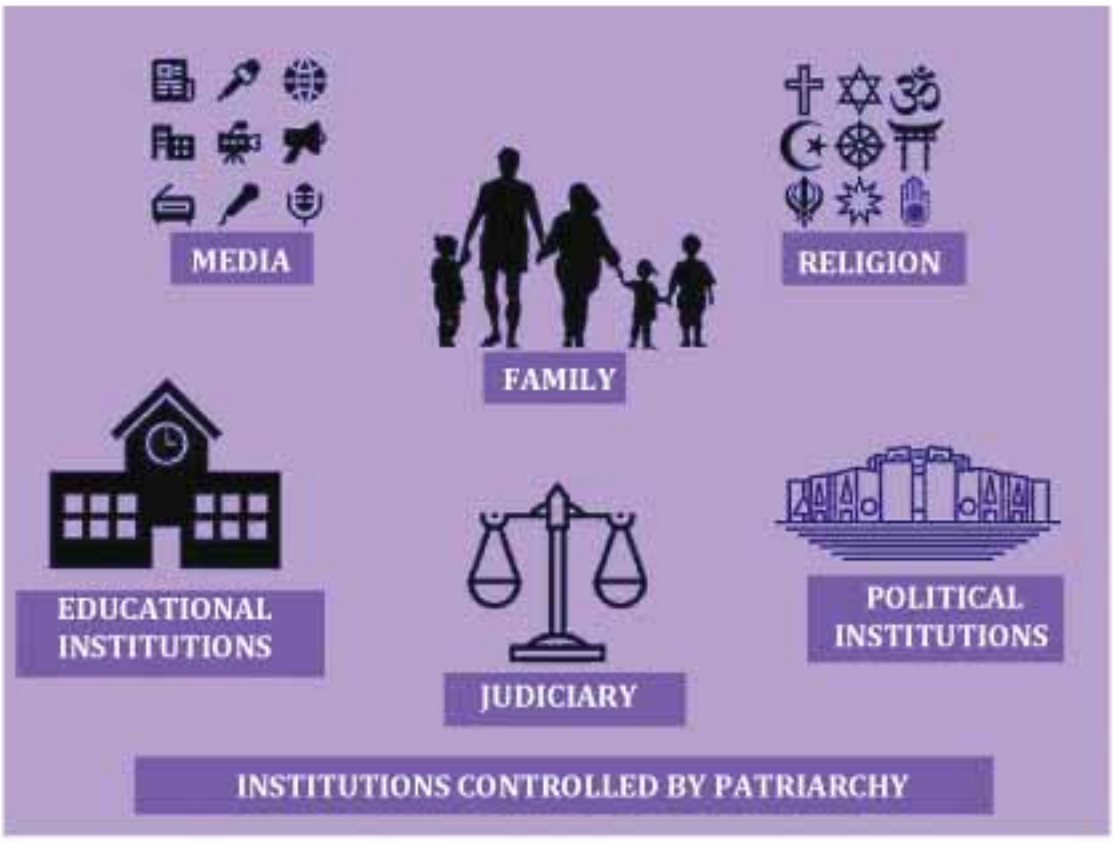
4. Controls over women's mobility:

Within a patriarchal society, women's mobility is severely constrained, whether it is within the family, when fathers and brothers decide if a woman can step out of the house and if so, how long she may stay out, or whether it is in public spaces where the fear of sexual violence compels women to not venture out into the dark by themselves.

5. Property and other economic resources:

Around the world, overwhelmingly, women have limited access to property and other economic resources compared to men. In our society, as in many others, property passes down from one man to another.

According to the World Economic Forum, women own less than 20% of the world's land. Another survey of 34 developing nations by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization puts that percentage as low as 10, even though more than 400 million of them farm and produce the majority of the world's food supply. Still, female farmers lack equal rights to own land in more than 90 countries.



4. Masculinity and patriarchy

Oxford English Dictionary defines masculinity as "having qualities or appearance traditionally associated with men." Masculinity is a social definition given to boys and men by societies; like gender, it is a social construction.

Nature makes us male or female; it gives biological definition. Society makes one "masculine" or "feminine". It changes from family to family, culture to culture, and even time to time.

All the qualities related to masculinity are not destructive or undesirable. Hegemonic masculinity that wants to control using aggression is to be condemned but protective masculinities can be useful at times. Protest masculinities as projected by the popular media can be inspirational too.

As Kamla Bhasin argues, "Masculinity does not exist in isolation from femininity. Femininity is negative masculinity. Femininity also is a set of attributes, behaviours, and roles associated with women. Femininity varies depending on location and context, and is influenced by a variety of social and cultural factors like masculinity."

Division of qualities as feminine and masculine reinforces and perpetuates patriarchy. To become masculine, men have to be given opportunities for self-promotion, and control over all kinds of resources and decision-making processes. Women have to be trained to serve and sacrifice. Men have to control everything including women, their productive and reproductive power and sexuality.

Both feminine and masculine qualities are not biologically determined; women can have masculine elements as part of their behaviour and similarly men also have feminine instincts as part of their nature. Nurturing positive aspects from both the qualities in both women and men would not only break the gender stereotypes but also challenge patriarchy.

Often, violent and aggressive behaviour from men, including violence against women, is encouraged through sayings such as: "Boys will be boys" – "as if it is natural and, in fact, acceptable to be intrusive, offensive and violent if you are a man. Within social groups of boys and men, "being a man" is equated to objectifying women, passing harassing remarks towards them or belittling them".

QUESTIONS:

1. What do we understand by patriarchy?

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2. How do men exert control over women in a patriarchal society?

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3. Name and describe the patriarchal institutions that produce and reproduce patriarchal values in our everyday lives.

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4. Are women completely powerless in a patriarchal system?

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5. What is the relationship between patriarchy and masculinity?

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UNIT 3

Human rights and women's rights

Rationale

The purpose of this unit is to understand what constitutes human rights and how they relate to women's rights.

Learning objectives

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

Define human rights, and the main characteristics of human rights;

Chart the various landmark developments in human rights:

Understand that women's rights are human rights, and the UN protections for women and girls.

Content

This unit includes the following:

1. What are human rights?
2. Landmark developments in human rights
3. Understanding women's human rights

1. Human rights

Human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. These are moral claims which are inalienable and inherent in all individual by virtue of their humanity alone irrespective of caste, colour, creed, and place of birth, cultural difference, sex or any other consideration. These claims are articulated and formulated in what is today known as human rights. Human rights are sometimes referred as fundamental rights, basic rights, inherent rights, natural rights and birth rights.

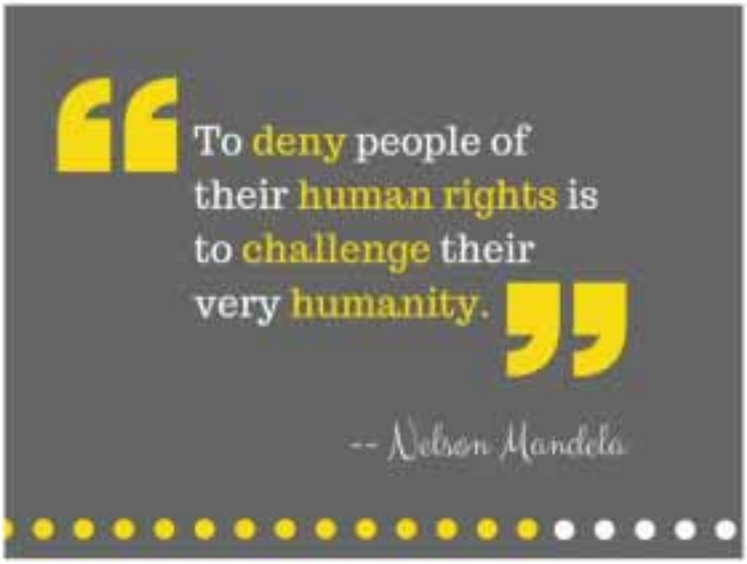
What are human rights?

Human rights are the rights a person has simply because s/he is a human being.

Dr Justice Durga Das Basu (of the Supreme Court of India) defines: "Human rights are those minimal rights, which an individual must have, by virtue of his/ her being a member of human family irrespective of any consideration."

> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948 defines human rights as "rights derived from the dignity of the human person".

Simply put, human rights are inherent and inalienable rights of people, which they are entitled to because of their humanity, irrespective of gender, religion, race, caste, citizenship, ethnicity, residency status, abilities and other considerations. Human rights become enforceable when they are codified as Conventions, Covenant or Treatise or as they become recognized as Customary International Law. Human rights when they are guaranteed by the constitution are known as "Fundamental Rights" because the Constitution is the fundamental law of the state.



Characteristics and nature of Human Rights:

1. **Inherent**—Human Rights are inherent because they are not granted by any person or authority.
2. **Fundamental**—Human Rights are fundamental rights because without them, the life and dignity of man will be meaningless.
3. **Inalienable**—Human Rights are inalienable because:
   a. They cannot be rightfully taken away from a free individual.
   b. They cannot be given away or be forfeited.
4. **Indivisible**—Human Rights are not capable of being divided. They cannot be denied even when other rights have already been enjoyed.

4. **Universal**—Human Rights are universal in application and they apply irrespective of one's origin, status, or condition or place where one lives. Human rights are enforceable without national border.
5. **Interdependent**—Refers to the complementary framework of human rights law. For example, your ability to participate in your government is directly affected by your right to express yourself, to get an education and even to obtain the necessities of life. The improvement one right facilitates advancement to others. Likewise, the deprivation of one adversely affects the other.

2. Landmarks in development of Human Rights:

1. **The English Magna Carta, 1215**
   Magna Carta or Great Charter signed by King of England was a turning point history of human rights. The main theme of it was protection against the arbitrary acts by the king.

2. **The English Bill of Rights, 1689.**
   The next source and avenue of the development of the philosophy of human rights is the English Bill of Rights, enacted in 1689 by the British Parliament. The British Parliament declared its supremacy over the crown in clear terms. The Bill of Rights codified the customary laws, and clarified the customary laws, and rights and liberties of citizens.

3. **American Declaration of Independence, 1776**
   The first colonies to revolt against England were the
   13 States of America. These States declared independence from their mother country England in 4 July 1776. The declaration of independence has great significance in the history of humankind as it justified the right to revolt against a government that no longer guaranteed the men's natural and inalienable rights.

4. **The French Declaration of Man and of the Citizen, 1789**
   In 1789 the people of France brought about the abolishment of the absolute monarchy and set the stage for the establishment of the first French Republic. Just six weeks after the storming of the Bastille, and barely three weeks after the abolition of feudalism, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was adopted by the National Constituent Assembly as the first step toward writing a Constitution for the Republic of France.

> **The Declaration proclaims that all citizens are to be guaranteed the rights of "liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression."**

It argues that the need for law derives from the fact that "...the exercise of the natural rights of each man has only those borders which assure other members of the society the enjoyment of these same rights." Thus, the Declaration sees law as an "expression of the general will, "intended to promote this equality of rights and to forbid "only actions harmful to the society."

5. **The UN Charter, 1945**

The United Nations Charter was drafted, approved and unanimously adopted by all the delegates of 52 states attended the UN Conference at San Francisco. This Charter contains provisions for the protection of human rights.

6. **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10th December, 1948.The Declaration consists of 30 Articles and covers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all men, women and children.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was not a binding document. It lacked enforcement. This deficiency was removed by the U.N. General Assembly by adopting in December, 1966 two Covenants viz, 1. International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and 2.International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

These two International Covenants, together with the Universal Declaration and Optional Protocols, comprise the International Bill of Human Rights. The International Bill of Human Rights represents a milestone in the history of human rights. It is a modern Magna Carta of human rights

The Universal Declaration of HUMAN RIGHTS

Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, the Universal Declaration states basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled.

zen pencils

Understanding Women's Human rights

The international human right systems adopted both general and specific human rights norms to eliminate discrimination against women and to guarantee their substantive rights.

The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1976 by the General Assembly of the UN is widely referred to as an International Bill of Rights for women. CEDAW ratified to date by 175 states. CEDAW calls for national action to end discrimination against women.

CEDAW's goal have been advanced further through UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960(2010).

What is the CEDAW?

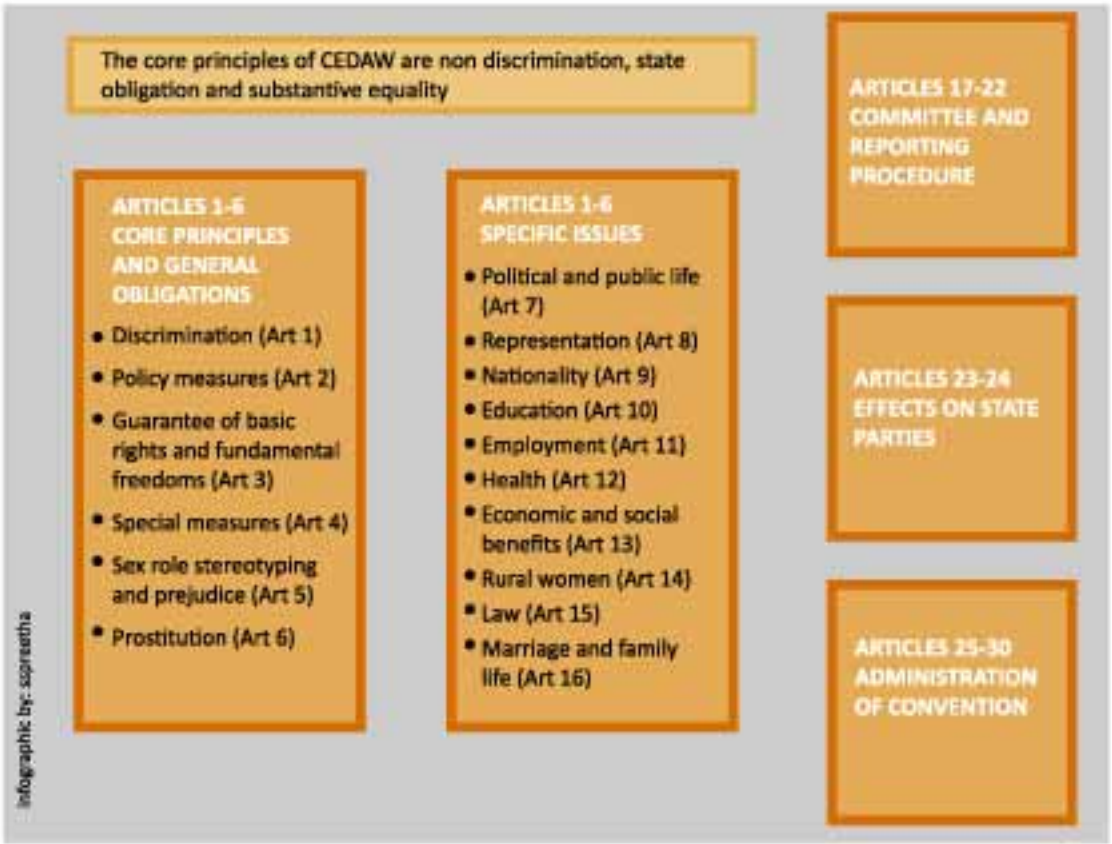
Known as the International Bill of Rights of Women, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations.

It affirms women's rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and took effect on September 4, 1981. As of 2007, it has 185 State Parties that agreed to implement the provisions of the treaty most importantly taking appropriate measures against all forms of discrimination and exploitation of women. 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 defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field."

CEDAW also establishes a framework that draws on three over-arching principles: equality inopportunity, equality in access and equality in results. The Convention advocates the "substantive" kind of equality both in law (de jure) and in practice (de facto)

Bangladesh is one of the 160 countries which signed their commitments to the said convention. On the 6th of November 1984, Bangladesh ratified CEDAW with reservations on Articles 2, 13.1[a], 16.1[c] and [f], on the basis of religious sentiments. While the Government feels that these provisions conflict with religious Islamic laws, women feel these reservations infringe upon the protection and promotion of their rights.



Bangladesh's reservations to CEDAW are as follows:

Article 2. States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women.

Article 13.1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular: [a] The right to family benefits.

Article 16.1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women: [c] The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;

[f] The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship, and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount.

Other important international events/conferences that have played very important role include:

1. Un Conference on Environment and Development (Rio, 1992)
2. UN World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993)
3. International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994)
4. UN World Social Summit for Development (Copenhagen 1995)
5. Fourth World Conference On Women (Beijing, 1995) and other subsequent conference.

QUESTIONS:

1. Can human rights vary depending on a person's nationality, culture, religion etc.? What are the characteristics of human rights?

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2. What are some important landmarks in development of human rights?

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3. How are women's rights and human rights related?

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4. What does it mean for Bangladesh to have ratified CEDAW? Why is full ratification of CEDAW important?

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Topic 1: Defining Violence against Women

Violence against women has taken the form of a pandemic worldwide, affecting women and girls, irrespective of their religion, class, culture, nationality, ethnicity, ability, age etc. Violence takes place in all spheres—in workplaces, in homes, in public transport, on the roads—and the perpetrators can be anyone, ranging from perfect strangers to members of the family, including one's husband. However, it should be noted that, although the VAW is a universal occurrence, some women and girls are more vulnerable than others, such as women and girls with disabilities, women from ethnic and religious minorities, migrants or refugees in refugee camps, who often face the highest level of discrimination and are at even higher risk of experiencing violence.

> **The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines VAW as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (General Assembly Resolution 48/104 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993)**

According to the UN General Assembly (2006), violence against women and girls is one of the most systematic and widespread human rights violations. It is rooted in gendered social structures rather than individual and random acts; it cuts across age, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries; affects all societies; and is a major obstacle to ending gender inequality and discrimination globally.

Although the terms 'gender-based violence' and 'violence against women' are often used interchangeably, the former refers specifically to violence "directed against a person because of his or her gender and expectations of his or her role in a society or culture". Gender-based violence highlights the increased vulnerabilies of a person to violence simply because of their gender—and while women and girls are disproportionately affected by it, men and boys, especially those considered "effeminate" or unable/unwilling to conform to society's standards of masculinity, can also be victims of may also be victims of gender-based violence, especially sexual violence.

In conflict/post-conflict and emergency settings, the term sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is commonly used. Sexual violence in these settings is also largely perpetrated against women and girls.

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In conflict/post-conflict and emergency settings, the term sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is commonly used. Sexual violence in these settings is also largely perpetrated against women and girls.

2. Quantifying the magnitude of Violence against Women worldwide

1. According to the World Health Organization (2013), it is estimated that 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their lives. However, some national studies show that up to 70 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime.

2. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2014), it is estimated that of all women who were the victims of homicide globally in 2012, almost half were killed by intimate partners or family members, compared to less than six per cent of men killed in the same year.

3. In 2012, a study conducted in New Delhi by UN Women found that 92 percent of women reported having experienced some form of sexual violence in public spaces in their lifetime, and 88 percent of women reported having experienced some form of verbal sexual harassment (including unwelcome comments of a sexual nature, whistling, leering or making obscene gestures) in their lifetime.

4. Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children (below 18 years of age). Of those women, more than 1 in 3—or some 250 million— were married before 15, as per UNICEF (2013).

5. Around 120 million girls worldwide (slightly more than 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives. By far the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against girls are current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends, according to UNICEF (2014).

6. Adult women account for almost half of all human trafficking victims detected globally. According to UNODC (2016), women and girls together account for about 70 percent, with girls representing two out of every three child trafficking victims.

7. An estimated 246 million girls and boys experience school-related violence every year and one in four girls say that they never feel comfortable using school latrines, according to a survey on youth conducted across four regions, according to data taken from Education for All Global Monitoring Report (EFA GMR), UNESCO, United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (2015) and UNGEI (2014).

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

UN WOMEN

Planet 50-50 by 2030
Step It Up for Gender Equality

A HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION OF PANDEMIC PROPORTIONS

Whether at home, on the streets or during war, violence against women is a HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION that takes place in PUBLIC and PRIVATE spaces.

FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Physical | Sexual | Psychological

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Fast Facts

Are there laws to protect women?

2/3

32 countries

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexually violent acts can take place in different circumstances and settings. These include, for example:

- Rape (within marriage and relationships, by strangers, and during armed conflict)
- Unwanted sexual attention or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for favours
- Sexual abuse of children
- Forced marriage or cohabitation, including child marriage

Fast Facts

In some countries, up to one-third of adolescent girls report their first sexual experience as being forced

In the European Union, 40% to 50% of women have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

"I wasn't even allowed to cry. If ever one tear fell they took me. I used to think it was better to see that to me feel this."

— Pearce Lovett, [illegible]

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is the acquisition and exploitation of people through means, such as force, fraud or deception. The practice possesses millions of women and girls into modern-day slavery, many of whom are sexually exploited.

Fast Facts

4.5 million

of the estimated 21 million people in forced labour are victims of sexual exploitation.

98%

of them are women and girls.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING

"Since you know that everyone has a right to be free from all forms of violence, and that you yourself have a responsibility to help them achieve that right, you don't look here."

— Gide Fu, [illegible]

WHAT IS FGM/C?

FGM/C includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Beyond extreme physical and psychological pain, the practice carries many health risks, including death.

Fast Facts

At least

200 million

Women and girls alive today have undergone FGM/C in 30 countries where representative data is available.

Age 5

In most of these countries, the majority of girls were cut before age 5.

CHILD MARRIAGE

"Since Eastern, I have learned to say yes to everything. Today I have decided to say no."

— Nazaret Mi, [illegible]

Fast Facts

700 million

Women alive today were married before 18 — those then predicted were married before 15.

2.5X

Most girls are more likely to marry in childhood than wealthy ones.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGE?

Child marriage usually means an end to girls' education, recession and her right to make life choices. Research confirms that girls and many in childhood are at greater risk for intimate partner violence than girls of the same age who carry later.

unwomen.org

Sexual Violence Research Initiative

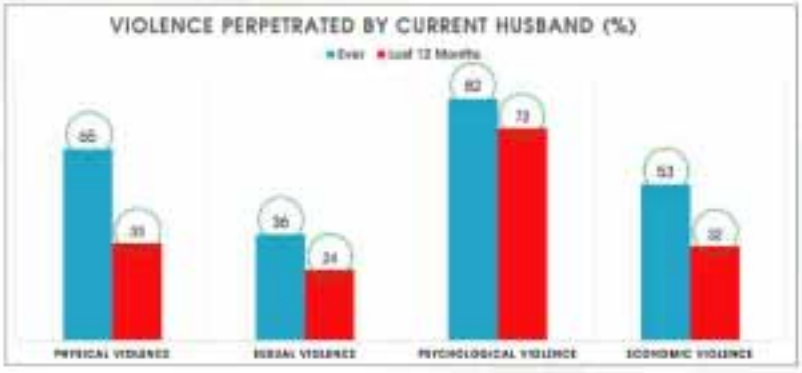
Quantum

Footnotes: [illegible]

Sources: [illegible]

A comprehensive survey conducted by the Government of Bangladesh found equally alarming statistics for women and girls in the country. The real numbers are likely to be higher than official statistics suggest.

Result of VAW Survey 2011



Violence by non-partner: First Forced Sex

At age of	Percentage
05-09	1.7
10-14	41.8
15-19	34.3
20-24	9.9
25-29	4.9
30-34	4.1
35-39	2.3
40+	0.9

Getting treatment due to violence

Reasons for not taking treatment due to violence	Current husband (%)	Previous husband (%)
Treatment received for violence	**51.8**	**51.3**
Afraid of husband	17.3	22.6
Husband didn't allow	15.2	8.9
Not necessary	51.6	41.0
Afraid of other family member	3.4	2.9
Afraid of social prestige	8.6	6.0
Other	4.0	18.6

3. Types of Violence against Women

The World Health Organization identifies four types of violence (and describes them in the following manner):

1. Physical Violence: Physical violence comprises acts that cause fear, pain, impairment, injury or even death. This includes:
   - Slapping, hitting, beating
   - Choking, burning, kicking, hair-pulling
   - Physical assault with acid, a weapon or firearm

2. Sexual Violence: Sexual violence comprises any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work. This includes:
   - Rape: within marriage or dating, as well as by relatives, acquaintances or strangers;
   - Sexual abuse: unwanted sexual advances or harassment, such as the demand of sex in return for favors;
   - Violent acts against the sexual integrity of another (e.g. virginity inspections);
   - Forced abortion, prostitution, trafficking, marriage or cohabitation;
   - The denial of contraceptive use or measures to protect against sexually transmitted disease.

3. Psychological or Emotional Violence: According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), psychological violence comprises threats, actions or coercive tactics that cause trauma. This includes:
   - Deliberate actions or threats that humiliate, diminish, intimidate or embarrass someone;
   - Coercion over someone to control what that person can or cannot do and to isolate that person from friends or family;
   - Use of threats to force another to engage illegal activities or control that person's behaviour
   - Destruction of property and smashing objects;
   - Harsh retaliation against someone who disagrees;
   - Denying a person access to transportation, communication (e.g. telephone), money or other basic resources

4. Economic Violence: Economic violence refers to acts of control and monitoring of the behaviour of an individual in terms of the use and distribution of money, and the constant threat of denying economic resources. The control mechanisms may also include controlling the victim's access to healthcare services, employment, etc. This includes:
   - Denial of food, Denial of basic access to healthcare;
   - Denial of access to income or denial of other basic rights;
   - Dowry.

Violence throughout a woman's life cycle

Sex-selective abortion; effects of battering during pregnancy on birth outcomes

Female infanticide; physical, sexual and psychological abuse

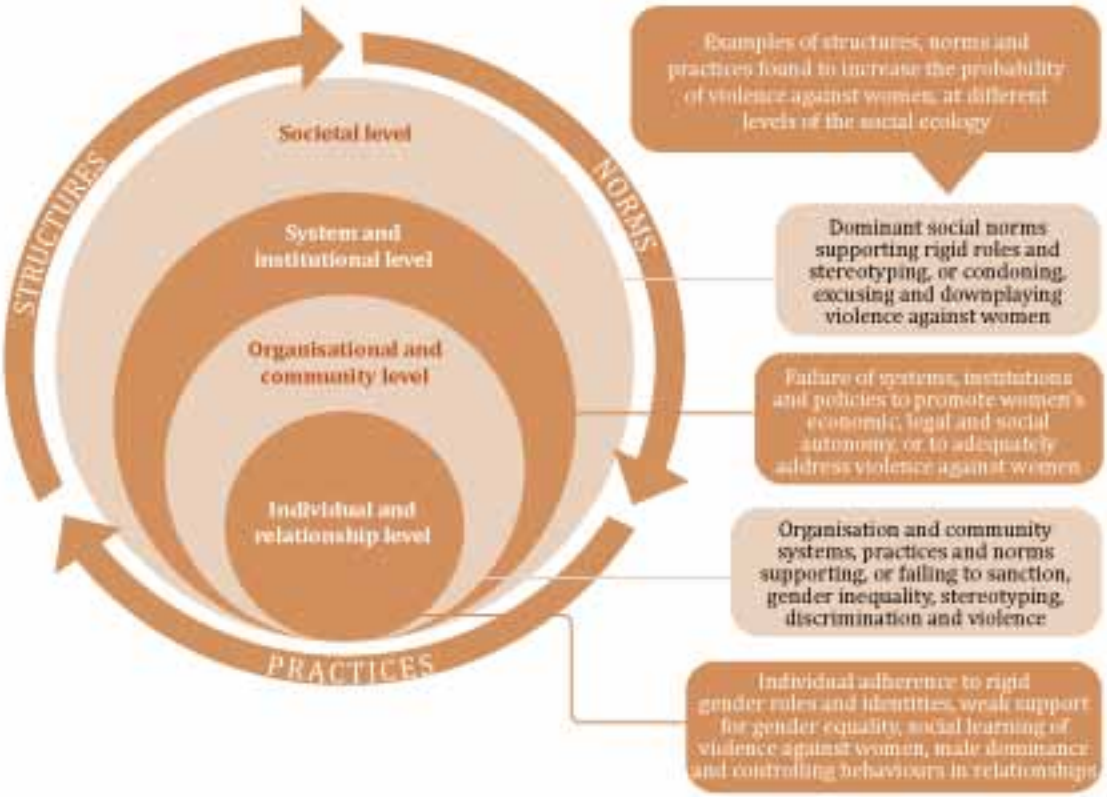
Child marriage; female genital mutilation; physical, sexual and psychological abuse; child prostitution and pornography

Sexual abuse in the workplace; rape; sexual harassment; forced prostitution; trafficking inn women; partner violence; marital rape; dowry abuse and murders; partner homicide; psychological abuse; abuse of women with disabilities; forced pregnancy

Forced "suicide" or homicide of widows for economic reasons; sexual, physical and psychological abuse

4. Causes of Violence against Women

The root cause of violence against women is gender inequality and discrimination which are perpetuated by the historical and structural power imbalances between women and men which exist in varying degrees across all communities in the world. Violence against women and girls is related to their lack of power and control, as well as to the social norms that prescribe men and women's roles in society and condone abuse.



QUESTIONS:

1. What are the different kinds of VAW? Give examples of this kind of violence's.

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2. What are the consequences of VAW on women and their family?

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3. What are the types of violence a woman faces in her lifetime?

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4. What strategies can be undertaken to address violence on women?

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UNIT 5

Women, diversity and intersectionality

Rationale

The purpose of this unit is to understand how women are not a homogenous category and that their experiences—as well as the solutions for their oppression—may differ, based on their social locations and other identities.

Learning objectives

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

To understand what we mean by diversity and why it is important to pay attention to issues of diversity;

To recognise that women's experiences of discrimination differ based on their class, caste, religion, ethnicity, language, race, sexuality et al.;

To understand the concept of intersectionality; To recognise that oppressions are interlinked.

Content

This unit includes the following:

1. Understanding diversity
2. Introduction to intersectionality

Women, diversity and intersectionality

Irrespective of stages of development, women in every community, culture, country or continent still enjoy lower status in comparison to their male counterparts. They have lesser education, lower life chances, badly suffer from lack of property and/or equal inheritance and are prone to various social barriers, are subject to ill treatment and physical and mental torture and battery. Without exception women all over the world suffer from various forms of discrimination, violence and trafficking just because of being women irrespective of their age, colour, ethnicity, profession, marital status, caste identity and nationality. This list of vulnerability of women, due to their biological differences vis-à-vis men, is not an exhaustive one and it can be made lengthier.

However, like any other social entity women are also not a homogeneous category. They have some commonalities but there are lots of differences too among and between them.

Their level of development, dependency, opportunity and deprivation structures markedly differ from continent to continent, country to country and within the same country, and same community due to various historical, social, economic, geographical, cultural and practical reasons and so on. If you are a US-born middle-class educated Christian white American woman with a permanent job, then you in general will be in a better position and enjoying higher status, power, respect, attention and privileges than your counterpart of colour, say a Bangladeshi-origin or an African or a Hispanic or an Afghan woman without valid immigration documents in the US, with little or no education and permanent income source. Even your religious identity could be a liability or asset depending on where you stay in a particular time. In India, an urban university-educated professional Hindu woman from a higher caste generally will be enjoying more respect, higher status and power in society as well as in her family in comparison to a woman form the Jharkhand tribal belt, practising animism with little or no education and working in the forest land or field as a manual agricultural day labourer. Both are women. They certainly do have many things in common but there are huge differences between them too.

Diversity describes the similarities and differences that people have. Diversity includes important and interrelated dimensions on human identity such as gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender identity and expression, nationality, citizenship, religion, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, and age. An important part of understanding diversity is that it includes similarities as well as differences.

Understanding that people have similar social identities, interests and stakes can encourage cooperation, cohesion and solidarity. On the other hand, a commitment to understanding and appreciating differences recognises that disparities in social and economic opportunities among groups often reflect the continuing impact of racism, caste differences, ethnocentrism, sexism, and various types of chauvinism, prejudice and bigotry.

Like any other society, women in Bangladesh are not a homogenous group. There is marked diversity among them. The sources of diversity are multi-dimensional. The major sources of diversity include but are not limited to: gender, class, caste, ethnicity, age, education, profession, citizen/nationality status, sexual orientation, physical ability/disability.

Diversity is a major source of strength in building a pluralistic and democratic society. Diversity makes a society richer, healthier, and more humane. Bangladesh has a very long, rich tradition and history of honouring and nurturing diverse traditions, customs, cultural and religious tolerance, and mutual respect. The constitution of Bangladesh clearly demonstrates that it will be a People's Republic and nobody will be subjected to any form of discrimination due to his/her sex, age, religion, caste, ethnicity or physical traits. And most constitutions of the contemporary world do uphold the same spirit of non-discrimination. However, the real situation does not always reflect the spirit of the constitution and/or relevant laws as it has been observed in Bangladesh and other countries across the globe, with different degrees of course.

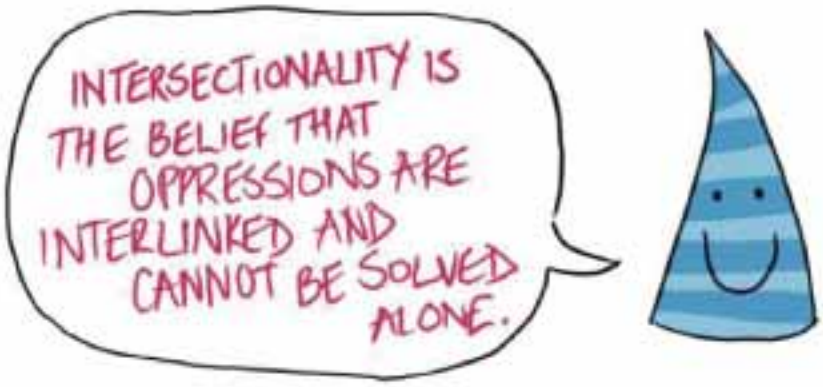
Introduction to Intersectionality

Another concept that is deeply interlinked with diversity is the concept of intersectionality. American feminist, legal rights scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw first coined (1989) the term to describe overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination or discrimination. The concept was further elaborated and popularised by sociologist Patricia Hill Collins in the 1990s. Collins deserves credit for providing deeper understanding of intersectionality and for elaborating how the intersecting forces of race, ethnicity, gender, class, caste, sexual orientation and nationality status, etc., interact in a matrix of domination (or privilege).

Intersectionality is an analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding the ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how these intersections contribute to unique experience of oppression and privilege.

Society is comprised of people and people are made of various socially constructed identities. Social identities are not static and changeable over time and location. Intersectionality may be defined as the "interconnected nature of social categorisation such as race, class and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage" (Linda Lupi). Intersectionality refers to the interaction of two or more forms of discrimination that manifest as inequalities among women.

Intersectionality/intersectionalism is the study of intersections between forms and systems of oppression/domination/discrimination. It interprets the interplay of race, class, caste, gender, etc., often resulting in multiple dimensions of disadvantage. In addition it is argued by feminist activists and academicians that an understanding of intersectionality is a vital element to gaining political and social equality and improving democratic systems.



OPPRESSIONS ARE NOT ISOLATED.
INTERSECTIONALITY Now!

Intersectionality is an analytical tool which helps in understanding and responding to the ways gender identity intersects with, as well as is influenced by, other social forces such as race, age, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation (Wikigender). As a tool for analysis, it is used to help to comprehend the multiple forms of oppression and encourages examination of how different systems of oppression intersect and impact differently various groups of women. In addition to analysis, it is a tool for advocacy and policy development that addresses multiple forms of discriminations and assists us to understand how different sets of identities impact access to rights and opportunities (Women, Rights and Economic Change, No-9, 2004). Intersectional analysis recognises that women and girls experience racial, ethnic, sexual and economic discriminations differently than men and boys (and poor women from wealthy women).

In short, women do have more than one identity and to get the complete sense of privilege and/or vulnerability structure of an individual woman or group, we must study the interconnectivity of identities and where they intersect (meet) with each other. The understanding of intersectionality makes it clear to us how marginalised women experience.

To put it differently, the various marginal/minority identities of an individual meeting together creates a condition/environment which is much more challenging than a person suffering from a single marginal status of being a woman only. To work for and with persons/groups who suffer from more than one marginal or minority status, we need to focus on their multiple identifies, interconnectedness of these identities and its implications, and accordingly devise ways and means to address their specific practical and strategic needs. We should not forget that a single size does not suit all, and women are no exception.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is Diversity?

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2. Does a garo garment workers experience of oppression differ from a middle class Bengali Muslim woman's experience? How?

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3. Why is it important to take into consideration differences in women's experiences?

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4. What we understand by intersectionality?

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UNIT 6

Women's Empowerment

Rationale

The purpose of this unit is to understand what we mean by women's empowerment and why it is necessary.

Learning objectives

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

To understand what constitutes women's empowerment;

To explore the different types of women's empowerment and its implications;

To recognise which resources are controlled;

To explore some strategies of empowering women.

Content

This unit includes the following:

1. What is women's empowerment
2. Some strategies for women's empowerment

What is women's empowerment?

As we have outlined in the previous chapters, women and girls around the world are experiencing various vulnerabilities as a result of patriarchal structures that still today strive to subjugate them. Empowering women entails giving them back control of their lives, livelihoods, health and well-being.

According to the guidelines on women's empowerment by United Nations, women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Development practitioners around the world now agree that women's empowerment— their political, social and economic autonomy—is an end in itself. It is also indispensable for achieving sustainable human development. It must be remembered that empowerment is not a one-off event, but a continuous process that requires long-term and sustainable efforts to change women's lives.

Empowerment starts with unleashing the power that women and girls have "within" them, but which patriarchy has taught them to curb for centuries. It begins with women deconstructing and challenging their internalized patriarchal beliefs of women's inferiority and of believing that they not only deserve better but that they themselves can bring about the changes they want in their lives.

However, changes must take place not only at the individual level but at the systematic level—through changes in policies and structures—to improve women's access to the scarce and valued resources of their societies (particularly secure livelihoods and economic resources), alleviate their disproportionate household responsibilities, remove legal and social impediments to their participation in the public sphere, eliminate the spectre of domestic and sexual violence from their daily lives and raise social awareness through effective programmes of education and mass communication.

Empowerment can be broken down into: political, social and economic empowerment.

Nelly Stromquist. Professor, International Education Policy, Stanford University, Empowerment argues that there is also a "cognitive" and "psychological" component to empowerment. By cognitive empowerment, she means "women are understanding of their conditions of subordination and the causes of such conditions at both micro and macro levels of society. It involves acquiring new knowledge to create a different understanding of gender relations as well as destroying old beliefs that structure powerful gender ideologies."

The psychological component, on the other hand, would include the "development of feelings that women can act upon to improve their condition. This means formation of the belief that they can succeed in change efforts."

Empowerment is about power and about changing the balance of power. Power can be defined as control over resources and control over ideology.

Strategies for empowerment

Below are outlined some common strategies for empowering women through the development agenda:

- Awareness-building/mobilisation/raising consciousness through formation of women's groups. Providing them with awareness on different issues including women's empowerment.
- Offering them and ensuring access to different services like healthcare, child care, agricultural support, water, sanitation, environmental programmes, social forestry, etc.
- Ensuring economic development through micro-credit, practical skills training, marketing facilities.
- Extension of adult literacy programmes for poor women. Developing materials which are women- and poor-friendly. Ensuring non-formal education for their girls, etc.
- Providing leadership training to women so that they became aware of their condition and position, and rise out of it.
- Formation of village, union and thana federations for their own development. Through these federations, they will be able to fight for their rights.
- Ensuring legal literacy and legal aid for the women.
- Organising male groups to provide support to women's groups.
- Creating a separate time and space for women to be together as women.
- Expanding women's access to new information, knowledge and skills.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is women's empowerment an important issue in development?

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2. What we understand by Women's empowerment.

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3. Control over which resources are important for women's empowerment?

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4. In section 2, categorise the strategies under social, political and economic empowerment.

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UNIT 7

Gender Sensitivity

Rationale

The purpose of this unit is to understand what it means to be gender sensitive at the individual, organizational and state levels.

Learning objectives

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

To understand what gender sensitivity is;

To comprehend what it means to be gender sensitive at the individual, community, organizational and state levels.

To understand what gender mainstreaming is.

To understand how to implement gender mainstreaming activities at the organizational level.

Content

This unit includes the following:

1. Defining gender sensitivity
2. What is gender mainstreaming?

Gender sensitivity

To believe that society has created difference between female and male for defining differently that resulting constraints towards the conditional and positional progress of women and to undertake initiatives from own position to remove/reduce these differences.

In other words, gender sensitivity is the act of being aware of the ways people think about gender, so that individuals rely less on assumptions about traditional and outdated views on the roles of men and women. But beyond awareness, gender sensitivity requires appropriate action to change the situation.

Gender sensitivity and gender justice definitely require women's equal participation in organisations and decision-making bodies but a transformation in the practices and cultures of organisations is also needed.

WHAT DOES GENDER SENSITIVITY LOOK LIKE?

Gender sensitivity at personal level

To believe that society has created differences between female and male that result in constraints towards the conditional and positional progress of women and to undertake initiatives from own position to remove/reduce these differences is called gender sensitivity.

Gender sensitivity at family level

To identify if there is any discrimination and difference in treating female and male at your family level and to undertake necessary initiatives to remove/reduce those or the impact of those discrimination and difference from your family is called Gender Sensitivity at Family Level.

Gender sensitivity at social level

To identify the social rules, policies, practices, etc., by which people define female and male differently and to undertake necessary initiatives to remove/change those or the impact of those social rules, policies, practices is called gender sensitivity at social level.

Gender sensitivity at workplace level

To identify the rules, policies, practices, etc., of your workplace by which people define female and male differently and to undertake necessary initiatives to remove/change those or the impact of those rules, policies, practices is called gender sensitivity at workplace level.

Gender sensitivity at state level

To identify the state rules, policies, practices, etc., by which people define female and male differently and to undertake necessary initiatives to remove/change those or the impact of those rules, policies, practices is called gender sensitivity at state level.

TOPIC 2: Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a process for integrating the concerns and experiences of women as well as men in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and of assessing the implication of women and men of any planned actions including law, policies, project/programmes in any area and at any levels.

Gender mainstreaming is...

A pro-active process designed to tackle inequalities which can and do discriminate against either sex

Represents a further step in the search for equality

Gender mainstreaming is NOT...

A woman only issue

Just about improving access or of balancing the statistics

About only women taking action

About only women benefiting from it

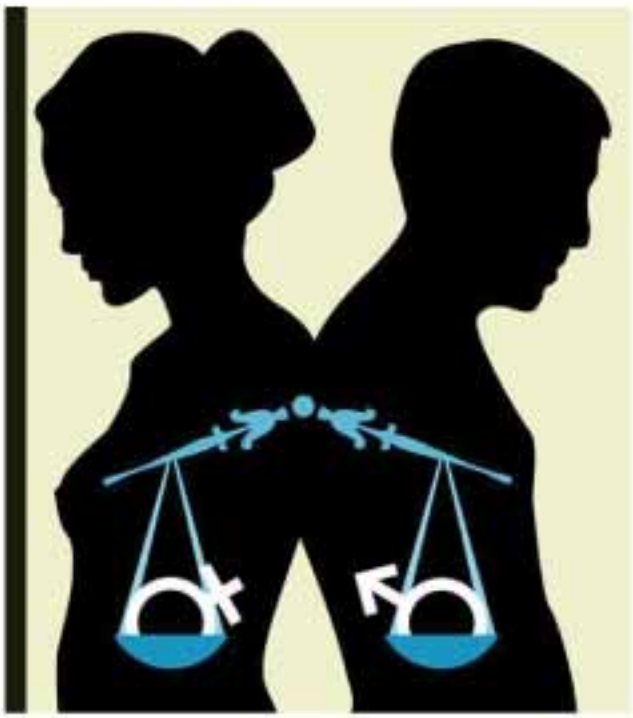
About stopping or replacing gender specific policies and projects targeted at either women or men.

Rather, gender mainstreaming involves designing, implementing and monitoring gender responsive projects/programs and preparing gender responsive budgets that:

- Recognize the differences exist in men's and women's lives and therefore our needs, experiences and priorities are different
- Take in consideration Practical Gender Needs (PGN) and Strategic Gender Interest (SGI).

Gender mainstreaming involves a willingness to establish a balanced distribution of responsibilities between women and men Needs determined political action and support with clear indicators and targets

Will not happen overnight, it is a continuous process



QUESTIONS:

1. What do we mean by sensitivity and gender sensitivity?

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2. Why is gender sensitivity important for a human being?

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3. What role can an organisation play to ensure gender sensitive working culture? What are some policies your organisation can take to make the workplace gender sensitive?

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4. What role an individual can play to address all kinds of violence on women?

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Handbook on Gender & Diversity

Sida

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra