

UNDP GUIDELINES FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE LANGUAGE

Gender inequalities are perpetuated through culture, through societal norms, and through attitudes and power imbalances. This extends into the workplace. Further, gender inequalities are perpetuated through the very language we use. For example many people will automatically use the pronoun "he" without knowing whether the person being referred to is male or female. This perpetuates stereotypes that men and women must occupy certain roles. As an organization committed to gender equality, UNDP's communications materials, knowledge products as well as staff/personnel speaking on behalf of UNDP must show gender sensitivity in the language they use.



Nurses are women...

Ladies and gentlemen!

Doctors are men...

UNDP is committed to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in its programmes, and to fostering a gender inclusive work environment. This must be reflected through the use of gender-sensitive communication. UNDP must also work to assure equal representation of women and men in its communication materials and assure that male and female voices are heard. Further, as part of its mandate to promote gender equality, UNDP's communications should endeavor to show both women and men in non-traditional roles. UNDP has developed specific guidelines for gender-sensitive communications, in order to ensure the full mainstreaming of gender formal communications, as well as day to day business and operations.

Titles for people and occupations often reflect inequitable assumptions about males and females. Referring to a woman as a 'career woman' instead of a 'professional', or to a server as a waitress can exacerbate inequality, as women are not perceived as equal to men. Feminine suffixes such as -ess or -ette can also reinforce the notion that women are ordinate, or doing a different job to men. For example, instead of using actress or stewardess, for female professionals, it is better to use the generic term (actor or flight attendant) to avoid promoting gender inequality.

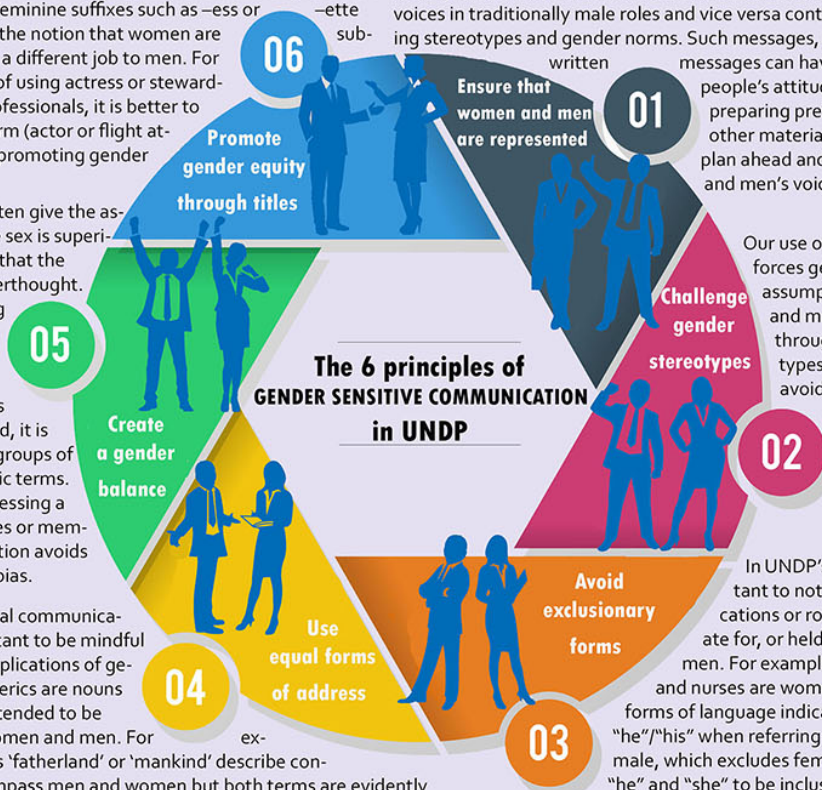
Word order can often give the assumption that one sex is superior to the other, or that the latter sex is an afterthought. For example, using the phrases men and women, or ladies and gentlemen, may give this impression. Instead, it is better to address groups of people with generic terms. For example, addressing a group as colleagues or members of the delegation avoids using any gender bias.

In written and oral communications, it is important to be mindful of the gender implications of generic terms. Generics are nouns and pronouns intended to be used for both women and men. For example, the terms 'fatherland' or 'mankind' describe concepts that encompass men and women but both terms are evidently male-dominated. Male-specific generics tend to call up primarily male images for readers and listeners. It is best to avoid such generics, to create a more gender-inclusive language.

As UNDP's partners are women and men, both should be seen, heard, and treated equally in corporate media products and messages. It is important to ensure that quotes from both men and women are included in press releases, stories and other communications. Additionally, presenting female voices in traditionally male roles and vice versa contributes to deconstructing stereotypes and gender norms. Such messages, including visuals and messages can have a positive impact on people's attitudes over time. When preparing press releases, stories and other materials it is important to plan ahead and clarify how women's and men's voices can be captured.

Our use of language often reinforces gender stereotypes and assumptions about women and men are often formed through such gender stereotypes. It is important to avoid using these, as gender stereotypes limit and trivialize both women and men, presenting inaccurate images.

In UNDP's context, it is important to not represent certain vocations or roles as only appropriate for, or held by, by women and men. For example, doctors are men and nurses are women. Exclusionary forms of language indicate the use of "he"/"his" when referring to both a female and male, which excludes females. One can use "he" and "she" to be inclusive, or use the plural "they" to avoid using any gendered pronouns.



The 6 principles of GENDER SENSITIVE COMMUNICATION in UNDP

06 Promote gender equity through titles

01 Ensure that women and men are represented

02 Challenge gender stereotypes

03 Avoid exclusionary forms

04 Use equal forms of address

05 Create a gender balance