

DEFINITIONS RELATED TO GENDER



What is gender ?

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men. It includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviors of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). These roles and expectations are learned, changeable over time and variable between cultures.

Gender is an integral component of every aspect of the economic, social, daily and private lives of individuals and societies, and of the different roles ascribed by society to men and women. Increasingly, the term gender is being accepted to define the relationship between physiological processes (normal biological functions) and thoughts, emotions and behaviors involved in identity and social role – that is, one's own identification as male, female or intersex.

What is gender identity ?

Gender identity is understood to refer to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

What is gender equality ?

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys or any person whose appearance or behavior fails to conform to traditional male and female gender norms. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration - recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a 'women's issue' but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development. Women and men, girls and boys or any person whose appearance or behavior fails to conform to traditional male and female gender norms may experience not only discrimination on the grounds of sex, but may also experience the compounding effects of race, ethnic and religious identity, disability, age, class, sexual orientation.

What is women's rights ?

Women's rights refer to the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, which are enshrined in international conventions and covenants beginning with the International Bill of Human Rights. The obligation to eliminate sex-based discrimination against women to achieve gender equality is an essential piece of the international human rights framework. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reinforces the commitment to women's rights, providing specific guidance on the range of actions that must be taken to achieve gender equality

What is gender analysis ?

Gender analysis centers on understanding the causes and consequences of gender discrimination and the unequal power relations between men and women in a specific context, whether rooted in prevailing social attitudes and customary practices or discriminatory laws and policies, among other factors.

Gender analysis also refers to the variety of methods used to understand the relationships between men and women, their access to resources, their activities, and the constraints they face relative to each other. Gender analysis provides information that recognizes that gender, and its relationship with race, ethnicity, culture, class, age, disability, and/or other status, is important in understanding the different patterns of involvement, behavior and activities that women and men have in economic, social and legal structures.

Gender analysis is an essential element of socio-economic analysis. A comprehensive socio-economic analysis would take into account gender relations, as gender is a factor in all social and economic relations. An analysis of gender relations provides information on the different conditions that women and men face, and the different effects that policies and programs may have on them because of their situations. Such information can inform and improve policies and programs, and is essential in ensuring that the different needs of both women and men are met.

At the local level, gender analysis makes visible the varied roles women, men, girls and boys play in the family, in the community, and in economic, legal and political structures. **Four essential questions to ask in doing gender analysis are:**

**Who does what?
Who has what?
Who decides? How?
Who wins? Who loses?**

Integrating a Gender Perspective in my Human Rights Education work

Adopting a gender perspective means looking at the impact of gender on people's opportunities, social roles and interactions. It implies looking at ways to change gender relations by questioning and responding to the underlying values and factors for unequal status and treatment.

It is not enough to understand the relative position of men and women in society (gender equality or inequality) and to identify the underlying causes of this situation (through gender analysis).

Human rights educators need to bring this type of analysis into the training context by adopting strategies and facilitating relationships that exemplify the kind of opportunities, access, social roles and interactions we wish to see in society. In other words, Human Rights Education should include a gender perspective.

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