

Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
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UNDERSTANDING SOME GENDER-RELATED TERMS

Gender is a term used to describe socially constructed roles for women and men. Gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures.

Gender Roles – these concern the activities ascribed to men and women on the basis of perceived gender differences. While men are mainly identified with productive roles, women have a triple role: a productive role; a reproductive (or domestic) role; and a community-managing role. Gender roles and responsibilities vary between cultures and can change over time.

Example: A gender role is that women are expected to take care of the children and elderly and work without pay, while men are expected to work outside the home and earn money to sustain the family. Gender roles are also visible in jobs, which are considered typically female or male: nurses, kindergarten and primary teachers are predominantly female; technicians, workers in public transport, forestry or water management are predominantly male workers.

Sex refers to the biological characteristics, which define humans as female or male. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as males and females. (WHO). **Sex roles** are universal and do not change over time or across cultures.

Example sex: Women can bear children, and men cannot.

Gender Equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women¹.

Gender equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of gender in opportunities, in the allocation of resources or benefits, or in access to services. It is thus the full and equal exercise by men and women of their human rights. Gender disparities are inequalities or differences based on gender.

Example: Gender equality is when a country has the same percentage of boys and girls who enroll and finish secondary education.

Equal opportunities means ensuring the opportunity for full and equal participation of men and women in all aspects of political, social, cultural and economic life.

Example: Equal opportunities is when women have the same real opportunity as men to be nominated and elected as the president of a country/organisation.

Gender Issues and Concerns - issues, concerns and problems arising from the different roles by women and men, as well as those that arise from a questioning of the relationship between them.

Gender balance refers to equal representation and participation of women and men.

Example: Gender balance should be considered when organizing training in your mission i.e. the participants list should show a balanced number of women and men, in relation to the overall gender balance of staff.

Gender discrimination refers to any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender roles and norms, which prevents a person from enjoying full human rights.

Example: Gender discrimination is when female staff members are not given certain assignments because they are viewed less capable of performing the job or because it has traditionally been assigned to male staff members.

Gender sensitivity/awareness encompasses the ability to perceive, acknowledge and highlight existing gender differences, issues and inequalities and to incorporate a gender perspective into strategies and actions.

Example: There is gender sensitivity when OSCE managers have a 'zero tolerance policy' to sexual harassment in their team, which can be a serious obstacle in the career development of female staff members.

Gender stereotypes, or gender bias, are generic attitudes, opinions or roles applied to a particular gender and which function as unjustifiably fixed assumptions.

Examples: Women are not hired as drivers as they are generally not considered to be good drivers or because it is not a typical female job. Men are not appointed as gender focal points as they are assumed not to be interested in the role.

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experience an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, such that inequality between men and women is not perpetuated.

Gender Mainstreaming Principles

Gender mainstreaming means:

- forging and strengthening the political will to achieve gender equality and equity, at the local, national, regional and global levels;
- incorporating a gender perspective into the planning processes of all ministries and departments of government, particularly those concerned with macroeconomic and development planning, personnel policies and management, and legal affairs;
- integrating a gender perspective into all phases of sectoral planning cycles, including the analysis development, appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation policies, programmes and projects;
- using sex-disaggregated data in statistical analysis to reveal how policies impact differently on women and men;
- increasing the numbers of women in decision-making positions in government and the private and public sectors;
- providing tools and training in gender awareness, gender analysis and gender planning to decision-makers, senior managers and other key personnel;
- forging linkages between governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders to ensure a better use of resourcesⁱⁱ.

Resources to gender related glossaries:

International Labor Organization (ILO) – *ABC of women workers' rights and gender equality*

Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies- *Glossary*

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *DAC Source Book on Concepts and Approaches Linked to Gender Equality*

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Gender Mainstreaming Learning and Information pack*

United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)- *Glossary*

United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Office (UNESCO), *Gender mainstreaming framework and glossary*

World Health Organization (WHO)- *Glossary on Gender and Reproductive Rights*

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

ⁱ Ibid. and *Gender and Household Food Security*, Rome: International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2001. <http://www.ifad.org/gender/glossary.htm>

ⁱⁱ *Gender Equality and Equity: A summary review of UNESCO's accomplishments since the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995)*. Geneva: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations, 2000.