

Defining Gender and Related Terms

Time: 45 Minutes

Activity Objective:

Define gender and related terms

Materials:

Flipcharts, markers, and tape

Printed flipcharts: Gender Definitions and Terms

Handout: Gender Definitions and Terms

Activity:

1. Divide the group into pairs. Assign each group one of the following terms (as appropriate for the topic areas of the workshop):

- Sex
- gender
- gender equity
- gender equality
- homophobia
- safe motherhood (optional)
- gender-based violence (optional)
- gender integration
- gender mainstreaming
- empowerment
- men's engagement
- heterosexism

Tell the pairs to take 5 minutes and define the term. When they are done, ask them to write the definition on a flip chart and tape it up on the wall.

2. Have the group assemble around each term, have the pairs read the definition, and ask the larger group for their thoughts on how it was defined. Clear up any incorrect information if necessary.

3. Display the newsprint with the IGWG's definition of each gender term (see next page). Explain to the group that gender is defined in many ways, as displayed by their words, but for our purposes today, we are going to use the IGWG definitions. Continue through each IGWG definition.

4. Ask the group if it has any further questions and/or comments.

Facilitation Alternative: If desired, the facilitator can use slides 2–8 and the accompanying speaker's notes from the "Gender 101 Master Presentation." These PowerPoint slides present the definitions of the standard 10 terms included in this exercise.

Gender Terms:

Sex is the classification of people as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex based on a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitalia.

Gender refers to a culturally-defined set of economic, social, and political roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements obligations, associated with being female and male, as well as the power relations between and among women and men, boys and girls. The definition and expectations of what it means to be a woman or girl and a man or boy, and sanctions for not adhering to those expectations, vary across cultures and over time, and often intersect with other factors such as race, class, age and sexual orientation. Transgender individuals, whether they identify as men or women, are subject to the same set of expectations and sanctions.

Gender Equity is the process of being fair to women and men, boys and girls. To ensure fairness, measures must be taken to compensate for cumulative economic, social, and political disadvantages that prevent women and men, boys and girls from operating on a level playing field.

Gender Equality is the state or condition that affords women and men equal enjoyment of human rights, socially valued goods, opportunities, and resources. Genuine equality means more than parity in numbers or laws on the books; it means expanded freedoms and improved overall quality of life for all people.

Gender Integration refers to strategies applied in in programmatic design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to take gender considerations (as defined above, in "gender") into account and to compensate for gender-based inequalities.

Gender Mainstreaming is the process of incorporating a gender perspective into organizational policies, strategies, and administrative functions, as well as into the institutional culture of an organization. This process at the organizational level ideally results in meaningful gender integration as outlined above.

Empowerment means expansion of people's capacity to make and act upon decisions affecting all aspects of their lives - including decisions related to health - by proactively addressing socioeconomic, and other power inequalities in a context where this ability was previously denied. Programmatic interventions often focus specifically on empowering women, because of the inequalities in their socioeconomic status.

Men's Engagement is a programmatic approach that involves men and boys a) as clients and beneficiaries, b) as partners and c) as agents of change, in actively promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and the transformation of inequitable definitions of masculinity. In the health context, this comprises engaging men and boys in addressing their own, and supporting their partners' reproductive, sexual and other health needs. Men's engagement also includes broader efforts to promote equality with respect to caregiving, fatherhood, and division of labor, and ending gender-based violence

Homophobia is the fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuals or homosexual behavior or cultures. Homophobia also refers to internalized heterosexism by homosexuals as well as the fear of men or women who transgress the socio-cultural definitions of what it is to be a "true man or woman" or embody "true masculinity or femininity."

Heterosexism is the presumption that everyone is heterosexual and/or the belief that heterosexual people are naturally superior to lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual people.

Gender-Based Violence, in the broadest terms, is violence that is directed at individuals based on their biological sex, gender identity, or perceived adherence to culturally-defined expectations of what it means to be a woman and man, girl and boy. It includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuse; threats; coercion; arbitrary deprivation of liberty; and economic deprivation, whether occurring in public or private. GBV is rooted in economic, social, and political inequalities between men and women. GBV can occur throughout the lifecycle, from infancy through childhood and adolescence, the reproductive years and into old age (Moreno 2005), and can affect women and girls, and men and boys, including transgender individuals. Specific types of GBV include (but are not limited to) female infanticide; early and forced marriage, "honor" killings, and female genital cutting/mutilation; child sexual abuse and exploitation; trafficking in persons; sexual coercion, harassment and abuse; neglect; domestic violence; economic deprivation, and elder abuse.

Safe Motherhood is the ability for a woman to have a safe and healthy pregnancy and delivery. The goal is to ensure that every woman has access to a full range of high-quality, affordable sexual and reproductive health services, especially maternal care and treatment of obstetrical emergencies to reduce maternal death and disability.

—Adapted from UNFPA Gender Theme Group, 1998