

Sex. The biological differences between women and men

Gender. Gender refers to the differential social roles that define women and men in a specific cultural context.

Gender roles. These are learned behaviours in any given society or community, that condition which activities, tasks and responsibilities are perceived as male or female. Gender roles are affected by ages, class, race, ethnicity, religion and by geographical, economic and political environment.

What is held as proper behaviour for women and men varies from culture to culture. Boys may face as much pressure as girls to conform to their gender roles. The pressure comes from many places - family, friends, school, religion, traditions, and the media

Changes in gender roles often occur in response to changing economic, natural or political circumstances. Since gender roles are created through the process of socialisation, they can also be de-constructed and re-defined with more equitable distribution of power, responsibilities and expectations of women and men.

Gender awareness. Having an understanding that there are socially determined differences between women and men, based on learned behaviour, which affect their ability to access and control resources.

Gender awareness embodies an understanding of the negative impacts of gender issues and the need to address the inequalities that arise from them

Gender blind: a failure to recognise that gender is an essential determinant of social outcomes impacting on projects and policies. A gender blind approach assumes that gender is not an influencing fact in projects, programmes and policies.

Gender equity. The process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality.

Gender equality. The absence of discrimination on the basis of gender. Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human rights and potential.

- Gender equality does not mean that men and women become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances are equal.
- Addressing gender equality as a cross-cutting goal requires that women's views, interests and needs shape community decisions as much as men's
- Gender equality requires equal enjoyment by women and men of socially-valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards.
- Every policy, program or project affects men and women differently
- Equality can only be achieved through partnerships between men and women.
- Because of current disparities, equal treatment of women and men is insufficient as a strategy for gender equality. Equal treatment in the context of inequalities can mean the perpetuation of disparities.

Gender analysis. 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 recognises 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, behaviour and activities that women and men

An analysis of gender relations can tell us who has access, who has control, who is likely to benefit from a new initiative, and who is likely to lose. Gender analysis asks questions that can lead us in a search for information to understand why a situation has developed the way it has. It can also lead us to explore assumptions about issues such as the distribution of resources and the impact of culture and traditions. It can provide information on the potential direct or indirect benefit of a development initiative on women and men, on some appropriate entry points for measures that promote equality within a particular context, and on how a particular development initiative may challenge or maintain the existing gender division of labour. With this information measures of equity can be created to address the disparities and promote equality.

Women's Support Project