



TOWARD EQUITY SERIES

# UNVEILING GENDER

Basic conceptual elements  
for understanding gender

WORLD CONSERVATION UNION  
Mesoamerican Office - Social Policy Program  
ARIAS FOUNDATION FOR PEACE AND HUMAN PROGRESS



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This logo reflects the basic principle that should be present in any vision of sustainable development: equilibrium between human beings and nature, irrespective of age, ethnic group, economic status or sex.

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## FOREWORD

The Social Program of the World Conservation Union Regional Office for Mesoamerica (IUCN-ORMA) and the Arias Foundation's Center for Human Progress began this project in March 1997, thanks to the special interest and financial support of The Netherlands. Our objective is to unify gender and environmental efforts by providing technical assistance for regional organizations and rural development projects interested in incorporating a gender equity perspective into their programs.

The challenge was to offer more than just conceptual support regarding the definitions and implications of gender. We sought to provide tools and instruments for integrating a gender equity perspective at every level of the work cycle. Our ultimate goal was to ensure that projects achieved greater equity in regard to participation by women and men in the decision-making process, as well as in accessing services, goods and resources.

Our satisfaction in presenting this series is twofold. First, over the years we have concluded that even though many initiatives in the field have a positive attitude towards incorporating a gender equity perspective, they have not been able to find practical methodologies for doing so. In this series, called "**Toward Equity**", we have made an effort to offer concrete suggestions and recommendations for incorporating a gender equity perspective into every stage of the project cycle.

Second, the modules have been prepared and validated by countless numbers of project technicians in the field. These publications have been enriched by their invaluable contributions, and we send them our most profound thanks.

In some cases our recommendations were originally designed by a person or group of people in each country and then widely disseminated, discussed and validated in different parts of Central America (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras). This is the case of the modules on Proposal Design, Participatory Appraisals, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Participation and Empowerment and Systematization.

The recommendations contained in the other components of this series were based on participatory research. This is also true with regard to the modules on indicators and on equitable project administration and management.

- MODULE 1** A GOOD START MAKES A BETTER ENDING  
Writing Proposals with a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 2** SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND  
Creating Participatory Appraisals with a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 3** IF WE ORGANIZE IT WE CAN DO IT  
Project Planning with a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 4** TAKING THE PULSE OF GENDER  
Gender-Sensitive Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation
- MODULE 5** IN UNITY THERE IS POWER  
Processes of Participation and Empowerment
- MODULE 6** EYES THAT SEE...HEARTS THAT FEEL  
Equity Indicators
- MODULE 7** PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH  
Toward Administration and Management with Equity
- MODULE 8** SHARING SECRETS  
Systematization from a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 9** UNVEILING GENDER  
Basic Conceptual Elements for Understanding Equity

The ideal moment to use these modules is at the beginning of a work initiative or process. But they can also be applied whenever existing projects decide to introduce changes in processes that have already begun.

We hope that this series will be of value to all of those who are working in rural development projects and, like us, would like to make equity a lifelong commitment for the construction of a new society.

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*Arias Foundation*

# PURPOSE OF THE MODULE

I  
Gender and our personal  
history

**How women's and men's  
identity is constructed: a  
description of the process**

II  
Incorporating the  
terminology we need

**The terms most frequently  
used in gender equity  
analysis**



# INTRODUCTION

To facilitate the use of the different modules in the “**Toward Equity**” Series, we felt it was necessary to prepare one dedicated exclusively to the basic concepts making up theory on gender. This material is derived from different areas of knowledge, and it is in a continual process of construction. New elaborations are being incorporated every day.

In fact, during recent years study of this discipline has been consolidated and recognized for its development of theoretical and methodological proposals with scientific and critical underpinnings based on reality. This growth is exemplified by the creation of masters and doctoral programs in gender at several universities.

It is not our intention here to offer an extensive explanation of the different currents and positions, but simply to provide our readers with a theoretical sequence of how gender identity is constructed under a patriarchal system, based on an individual analysis as persons. To do this we utilize concepts of gender equity that development projects are using at this moment.

The final part of this module consists of a glossary defining the terms that, in our experience, are most often consulted by project technicians. We hope this will provide a useful reference.



# I GENDER AND OUR PERSONAL HISTORY

What is this “gender” thing you all talk about? What is it about? What does it have to do with me? I don’t like all this gender stuff, and I don’t understand it! How many times have we heard people say these things, or have even said them ourselves? We may sincerely believe that none of this has anything to do with our lives, and even less with the projects we are carrying out, because there is so much we do not yet understand about it.

However, even though we may not be aware of it and no matter whether we are a man or a woman, gender is part of our personal history—a personal history that began before we were born.

## 1. Sex - Gender: Biological and Social Differences

*“I hope it’s a little boy, that way they’ll have one of both!”*

*“I already bought a toy car for the little guy.”*

*“This is our fifth try—we only have girls.”*

*“It doesn’t matter whether it’s a girl or a boy, as long the baby is healthy.”*

*“I hope it’s not a girl—how they suffer.”*

*“What luck! It’s a boy!”*

*“What a loser—all she ever has is girls!”*

Like everyone else, our birth was marked by a certain set of circumstances. Maybe it was an event anticipated with joy, maybe not. The fact is that family and friends have different types of expectations depending on whether the baby is a boy or a girl.

When we were born the first thing they did was look at our genitals. Probably they bought us the "right" color clothes (either pink or blue) and began thinking about our future.

From that moment on, our path in life was set. If we are female, they gave us dolls and toy dishes, and little by little we learned how to sweep, dust, wash the dishes, and serve papa his dinner. If we are male, we probably had a toy car and a wooden horse, and little by little we will go with papa to work and one day, to the local bar.

Obviously, this is not meant to be an exact description of how people acquire their identity. But the fact remains that from the moment they find out what sex we are, differences in physical characteristics have a value determined by the social group to which we belong.

Women and men are differentiated first of all because of the physiological and sexual characteristics with which we were born. These are natural and do not change (not normally, anyway). These differences have to do with what we call "sex."

We are also differentiated because each society and each culture has given a distinct value and meaning to these differences of sex and has formulated ideas, conceptions and practices about BEING A MAN and BEING A WOMAN. This set of social, economic, political, cultural, psychological and legal characteristics and norms are what is called "gender" (Lagarde, M., 1994). As a result, there are two genders: female and male. In other words, I am taught to be a man or a woman depending on what characteristics my body has and what kind of external genitals I have.

For example, just think for a moment what would have happened in our lives if we had been born as the opposite sex.

- What would our life have been like up to now?
- What would they have taught us?
- What games would we have played?
- What would we have done in our free time?
- Would we have been able to study?

Norms, practices, symbols and values are socially formulated and shaped within each culture and consequently, they are created by people themselves in their culture. "As such, (gender) is by definition dynamic, created, changing, and modifiable to the extent that it is maintained and reproduced in the symbolic spheres of culture" (Campillo, F. and Pérez, L., 1998).

It is possible that in some places, what is female and what is male is the reverse of what it is for us, according to the dictates of that particular culture. Gender construction varies from one culture to another, and also changes over time within that culture.

If we talk to an elderly woman and an elderly man, either relatives or people we know, we could ask the following:

- How did they act, and what things could they do when they were little?
- What were the differences between her experience of gender and his experience of gender?

Gender construction is interrelated with other objective and subjective conditioners in each person's life. These involve their culture, ethnic group, social class, age, membership in a religious community, political leanings, and community and family history.

This is why all of us—women and men of different ages, cultures, ethnic groups, social classes and places—have an experience of gender. We are born into a social group that determines what we must be, according to our sex. Even so, not all of us live out the same experiences of gender.

## 2. From Natural Differences to Social Inequality

In themselves, differences do not lead to inequality. However, the moment a social group assigns a value to these differences—to the genders—this situation changes, producing inequality in the development and well being of women and men.

The inequality resulting from this social valuation keeps both genders from having the same access to opportunities for personal and collective development. People do not decide by themselves to live in conditions of superiority or inferiority; their formation according to gender assigns them a place in one of these two positions.

Studies and theory on gender have made it possible for us to understand the contents of inequality. We can see these contents expressed in different ways and forms in all the spaces in which women and men relate to one another and in all the actions we carry out. Some of the ways these inequalities are expressed include the following (Lagarde, M., 1998):

- Just because they are men, the male gender has power over the life of women. Men can control women's lives and make decisions about their health, their body, their education, their resources and their income. The exercise of this power turns women into perennial children viewed as minors and dependents, even when they are adults.
- The social construction of gender creates inequality detrimental to women, given that very early on, men must learn to make decisions and take care of themselves without consulting anyone else. They are taught that they must decide and then take responsibility for the consequences of those decisions. Women, on the contrary, learn that other people make the decisions and act for them.
- The social construction of gender grants many more social freedoms to the male gender than to the female gender: freedom to move about, to make decisions—both personal and collective—to access and make use of resources, and to represent groups. Cutting back women's freedoms increases their condition of vulnerability, or in other words, increases the number of difficulties they must face in order to live a successful life.
- The argument is that the reason for limiting "social freedoms" is not to restrict women but to protect them from the dangers that can exist in the street. This position assumes that men are all-powerful beings and are practically invulnerable. Such an idea is actually hazardous to men, because it obliges them to take unnecessary risks in order to prove their capability. The prevalent causes of illness and death in men (accidents and other violent causes) provide the most telling evidence of their exposure to risk.
- In addition to the lack of opportunities in education, work, health, recreation, and other areas, the female gender is also subjected to a situation of violence that is socially sanctioned and hidden, silenced, and muffled by families, communities, couples and institutions. It is not recognized that the aggression women suffer is a factor that limits their development. There

are many types of aggression, which can be verbal, physical, psychological, sexual or directed against women's ownership of things.

- Construction of what is male and female based on power and subordination foments the exercise of violence by the dominating party. Because it is not denounced, punished or prevented, this violence is legitimized, and even comes to be accepted as "normal." Violence is also harmful to men, who generally have been socialized to assault and exercise physical violence.
- The patriarchal paradigm bestows an authoritarian power on whoever has it, concentrated in one or a few people. In this type of relation, the people who exercise power over the dominated group are distanced from the others, and this hinders their capacity for making decisions that suit the needs and conditions of the persons they represent. This situation produces inequality in access to power for other men, as well as women, and impedes the formation of democratic and sustainable societies.

To construct sustainable human development based on participation, each person must have and maintain a position and possibility of acting according to personal conviction, without being subject to the decisions of others. The power men exercise over women's lives seriously damages this possibility.

### 3. Implications of the Social Assignment of Gender

The construction of genders leads to the subordination of one of them, the female gender, in relation to the domination and power of the other, the male gender. As a consequence, this social mandate promotes the development of certain characteristics for the female gender and others for the male gender, but bestows greater value on the male than on the female. These characteristics are manifested in gender identities.

No one is exempt from this process of identity formation, which determines the opportunities and obstacles to one's full personal development. This includes access to resources, capacity for decision-making and possibilities to create and propose efficient ways of doing things. But it also determines the possibilities for the collective sustainable development of the group in which the person develops.

In the pursuit of sustainable development each person has a responsibility and tasks to fulfill so that by working together, the changes proposed can be made. If the people participating are in a disadvantaged relation of subordination and oppression (due to gender, age, ethnic group, region, political persuasion or other factor), it will be difficult to achieve the minimal agreements required in order for them to recognize one another as equals, as people that will share in the tasks to be carried out, people that can be relied on and believed in.

In other words, participatory processes require ways of identifying these inequalities in given geographic settings and taking the measures needed for achieving gender equity. Among other strategies, this implies the need for all staff members to be prepared in gender equity perspective, with knowledge and capacity in handling appropriate methodologies. It is also essential to define policy and actions aimed at reducing and eradicating these inequalities, for the overall development of the community.

We can ask the following questions about the collective or social group benefiting from the project:

- Can inequalities be perceived?
- If so, what are they?
- How do they affect you and other people?
- Can these inequalities be identified in other forms of the collective order, such as the family and organized community groups?

#### 4. Socialization: How Do We Learn to Become Women or Men?

Even when we comprehend that this form of gender organization is unfair and that there are deeply rooted attitudes and behavior patterns that are hard to change, we generally act in ways that reinforce this unjust order. Why do we do this?

After we are born, our knowledge and perception of the world are shaped by the environment that surrounds us. We learn from oral tradition, example, life experience and the historical context in which we live.

The unequal order between women and men on which our identity is built was already structured from the moment of our birth. Being a woman or being a man gave us a social position of superiority or inferiority, not because we decided that way but because we learned it as children. Women learn that not everything is permitted them; men learn that almost everything is. In other words, we learn the boundaries of what we can do and what we are.

This process of configuration as people and members of society is called socialization. We human beings are constituted according to psychosocial processes in which gender is one determinant of our identity.

Our grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, mother and father or the people who raised us—significant figures because of their closeness during our first years of life—nourished a very important part of our process of formation as people, making them our referents in terms of gender behaviors. These people are called “others references.”

- Can you recall how family members treated women and how they treated men?
- What gender characteristics did the men and women have who accompanied you in your first years of life?
- What did you learn from these men and women?

In this process of socialization, behavioral codes and valuations of inequality are transmitted to us. We internalized these, because we were taught that it was “natural” to behave in these ways. We were scolded or even subjected to physical violence every time we tried to deviate from this scheme of things, and we were rewarded every time our behavior fit the pattern established for our gender.

Social groups are constantly transmitting gender formation, and this process takes place from generation to generation through multiple media that act simultaneously and are mutually reinforcing. We learn from the behavior of others. We see what women do and what men do, where they go to, what they do with their time, what decisions they participate in and the resources they control. We also observe whose name goes on the deed to the house, what responsibilities are assumed, and by whom. We perceive all these gender practices in the family, in school, at work, in institutions, in development projects, in the government, in business and in all the other social institutions that people can join.

Moreover, we watch television programs, listen to the radio, go to church where women and men perform many different roles and carry out activities, occupy spaces, use resources, and decide about situations assigned to each gender. The legends, stories, jokes, music, art, history and everything cultural that can be imagined has gender content shaped by the same social group, where there are stereotypes that can express inequality.

Gender construction is possible thanks to the oral, symbolic and official transmission of the various social institutions, the examples they drill into us and the experiences to which we have access, according to our gender:

*"Women shouldn't climb trees."*

*"Boys don't cry, you act like a girl."*

*"Come on, come on, take a sip [of alcohol], just a little at a time, that's how you become a man."*

*"Shut up, don't be stupid, girl."*

Phrases like these transmit ideas that women are weak and not worthy of imitating with respect to how they express their emotions and what they do, implying that men do not have the right to express their feelings about what has caused them to cry, and that they should always "stay cool" about the things that could hurt them.

## 5. Gender Identity: Who Am I?

Our identities are constructed during this process of socialization: female identity, male identity and forms of relating between them.

Our identities are constructed in relation to what we should feel, do, think and even imagine, all previously established for our gender. Nonetheless, this also depends on other conditions in the world where we evolve: the culture we belong to, the social class or group that determines our material conditions of life, and our identity according to age, religion or politics.

Women and men learn how society values us because this is demonstrated to us. We also form our own sense of value and ideas about what we can and cannot do. This means recognizing, as well as developing, our capabilities and potential. If we are constantly being told how dumb we are, if we do not receive support and motivation and have no experiences that help us to recognize what we can do as people or opportunities to correct our errors, very probably our perceptions of ourselves will be very poor and very low.

Each person has an identity representing the content of what that person is. Who am I? Gender socialization places greater obstacles to the construction of good self-esteem in women, and this impacts on the image they have of themselves.

Generally this identity corresponds to the identity assigned by society. We constantly see and hear messages about what the male and female genders do, the places they can and can't go to, the hours they can go out, how they can dress and the image they need to give to the rest of society, the things they can learn and the things they can talk about, the way we express our sexuality, the resources and benefits to which we have access, the decisions we can make and the ones we cannot.

Female and male identities are defined by a set of characteristics, qualities and circumstances assigned to each gender. In the formation of this gender "identity," any disobedience of what has been established is punished. The violence exercised can even become physical, in order to make women and men comply with what we are dictated.

In the case of the female gender, to be a woman means "being for others." Work, think and care for others. The emphasis is more on other people than on the woman herself and her own life. Characteristics of the female condition include subordination, timidity, and fear. Women are considered incapable of facing life, unable and afraid to try new things, with pragmatic ways of thinking and a great capacity for imagination, but doubtful of their abstract, theoretical, and technological capacities and of their abilities in the area of social representation and leadership (Lagarde, M., 1994).

As for the male gender, to be a man means "being for oneself". In the inverse of the gender construction for females, men live more for themselves than for other people. This means that their being is the center of their life. Characteristics of the male condition are constant competition, since they must show they have power; space and social recognition, and opportunity to develop their capacity for discovering and trying out new things. Their work is visible and

generates economic remuneration; they have ownership of things and resources; they must make decisions; and they have the power of domination (Lagarde, M. 1994).

The existence of the female gender occurs in function of the male gender, which appears as the only model of human existence. Women are undervalued and men are overvalued.

Nonetheless, although the male gender is privileged, this does not mean that male stereotypes help men attain happiness. Nor does this scheme of power relations guarantee that they can resolve problems and constraints for the entire population in order to achieve their wellbeing and development. To the contrary, being of male gender means renouncing all sensitivity in order to maintain one's toughness of character, as well as a constant attitude of aggressive competition, and always being on guard to defend what belongs to you. The fulfillment of the male identity implies oppression of other persons or groups. Clearly this construction offers no real alternative for the comprehensive development of either people or society, since it is founded on inequality.

*"While many characteristics associated with masculinity represent valuable human traits, such as effort, audacity, courage, rationality and sexual desire, the distortion of these traits as a masculine norm and the exclusion of others associated with femaleness are oppressive and destructive. The process of adaptation to masculinity is experienced by all men, even if they are not actually aware of it" (Kaufman, M., 1989).*

A recognition by men's groups of the oppressive and destructive factors in the construction of masculinity has motivated some men to propose a revision of their identity. They are able to break out of the patriarchal armor that constricts them by recognizing that democracy and equality are not just constructed in each country, but in each home and in each human relation.

The dominator-dominated system offers no alternative for the sustainability of current societies. Its concentration of resources and decisions excludes the great majority and exhausts resources and relations, essential elements for social development.

We are taught how we must be, based on our physical differences. We are separated and obliged to learn a predetermined identity that constructs an inequality (male over female) that

prevents us from seeing ourselves as people in equality of condition, with the same possibilities for thinking, feeling, and doing things, even though we may be different physically.

We could ask ourselves the following questions:

- Who am I?
- What is my identity?
- What things was I not allowed to do?
- What limits were placed on me?
- What freedoms were given to me, and in what was I supported?
- What limitations have I placed on the development of others?

It is important to remember that the social construct of gender is produced by each person's experience of gender in each culture. These experiences are different for everyone and none of them exactly matches the social model of gender we have been taught. That is why we insist on the need to recognize the particular case of each person in a community, no matter whether that person is a woman or a man.

## 6. Tell Me What You Do and I'll Tell You What You're Worth

The generic organization establishes the type of activities that men and women can do and their rank in society. There is gender division in labor, but also in sports, politics, the economy, the culture and all other spheres of activity in society.

The division of labor is a process of differentiation regarding the tasks to be carried out, the spaces where they are carried out, the responsibilities established for whether tasks are completed or not, the resources for carrying them out, and control over the benefits derived from these activities.

Gender attributes certain skills and abilities to women and men, leading to the assignment of particular tasks and responsibilities according to their assigned identity: the role of family provider, for the male gender, and the family reproducer role, for the female gender.

This division of labor is also culture-specific within a community's given geographic situation, depending on economic conditions and access to resources for production and reproduction.

The genders basically carry out three types of activities:

### Reproductive Activities

Activities involving biological reproduction, as well as those related to maintaining the family and its capacity for work, socialization and education of children, health care, nourishment, and all the tasks this implies. These tasks are assigned to women, who carry out domestic activities, housework, care and education of children, and care of the elderly and sick. There are few occasions when men have responsibility for or perform household chores. Within the female and male gender construction, such activities are "prohibited" for men.

### Productive Activities

These activities generate income or benefits for self-consumption or for sale in the market, and ensure family reproduction. The social construct of gender assigns these activities to men, who are expected to procure resources outside the private setting in order to maintain their families and satisfy their role as provider—in other words, to generate resources for meeting the needs of the family. Although society assigns these activities to men, in reality women, girls and boys also participate in productive work.

It is important to mention that in conditions of poverty, many men are pressured to perform certain kinds of work that are more profitable than others. Nonetheless, these conditions are not due to societal gender discrimination, but to other types of social oppression. In the case of women, gender discrimination, along with the exigencies of poverty, causes displacement toward poorly paid productive activities. The social construct of gender determines the type of productive activity women can engage in, and this is compounded by the fact that men control their lives, decisions and resources.

### Community Activities

These are all activities carried out in the community in relation to social organization. They include work in committees or groups of a social nature, and require members to dedicate time and resources. In general, women and men carry out such community activities separately, and men's groups receive greater social recognition.

As we can see, due to gender construction activities carried out by women are considered complementary. "You're in charge of the house and I'll provide the bread and butter." However, these activities are not valued equally. No social or economic value or

recognition is given to tasks of social reproduction, while productive tasks are overvalued. There is a belief that men are the ones who work and sustain the family, and that women and children simply help out. Income generated from productive activities usually stays in the hands of men who make decisions and control spending, and sometimes permit a part of these resources to be used for reproductive activities. This coincides with the formation of the male identity of "being for oneself" before being for others.

Women, on the other hand, receive no pay for the tasks they do and have to figure out how to cover the costs of family reproduction and maintenance, often opting to work outside the home. This is the basis for calculations that women work up to two and three shifts in order to fulfill the activities assigned to their gender, with no recognition for their effort.

It should be pointed out that with a division of labor in which women's work does not even receive any economic recognition, estimations of the cost of producing goods or services do not reflect real costs. "If women could access occupational opportunities without the current restrictions, the cost of staying at home performing unpaid tasks would be very high" (Campillo, F. and Pérez, L., 1998). In other words, although reproductive work upholds productive work, the cost of these activities are not calculated or taken into consideration when determining the cost of production.

According to Campillo and Pérez (1998), "This work that no one pays—not the State, not the company, not the spouse, not the community, just the women who do it—represents a transfer of value by women from the reproductive and household sphere to the productive sphere, thus facilitating processes of economic accumulation and competitiveness for businesses, whose profits provide no benefits for women. Maintaining this invisible transfer of value is a way to avoid paying and a way to avoid an equitable distribution of benefits at the world level."

Another important aspect to consider is the use and enjoyment of time. There is a false assumption that reproductive work—housework—is lighter and easier to do than productive work, and that a man comes home to eat and rest. There is also a general conception that women waste time during the day, and that they should also be responsible for doing everything related to family reproduction and maintenance. If it is necessary to walk several kilometers to bring back water for cooking, this is an implicit part of reproductive chores and the woman must do it. As a result, women have no time for participating in projects or organizations, nor for training, or recreation, or for themselves.

## 7. I Decide...You Decide For Me

As we can see, decision-making and the exercise of power are also unequal. More value is placed on public decision-making than on private, domestic decisions. However, in both cases it is the man who decides about everything, even about what activities the woman will engage in.

As a consequence, activities involving education and access to knowledge and training in general are carried out by men, who have the opportunity to become empowered through these new experiences. This is not just because of the new knowledge obtained, but also because of the social recognition they receive. Women must contend with many more obstacles in order to complete an educational process allowing them to become more qualified and perform activities that generate income and more recognition. When this is the case, they face another problem: who is going to cover the reproductive activities for them?

In many cases, daughters assume these chores, or other women help out, including relatives, grandmothers and neighbors. It is not easy to obtain women's full participation in a development process, precisely because they need the time and opportunity to be able to participate, possible only if there is consensus about changes between women and men in a given community. This presupposes an understanding that we are trying to develop the entire community, not just some of the people who live in it.

The time dedicated to community activities is also important because it represents a potential recognition by the community for the work performed by women (let us recall that society already grants men such recognition). However, the only time available is what is left after reproductive and productive activities have been carried out.

These activities also have implications concerning the social position of women and men with respect to the spaces and situations where power is exercised, and where decisions are made about access, control and use of resources.

The way our communities are generally organized and how we exercise power is conceived more in terms of the conditions of the male gender than those of the female gender. As a result, in processes of empowerment for women and men it will be necessary to modify these structures and make changes in the way we have been making decisions.

If we think about it, the places we are “allowed” to be are also different. Women generally are located in more private spaces: the home, and within the home itself, in the kitchen. Men have more possibilities for moving within public spaces, and they do not have to account for their time, as women do. When they go out, they can come back later—women cannot.

Generally, men are the ones who are assigned decision-making at the community level. This is to be expected, if we look at who has more experience in this sphere and in the type of activities carried out. Women make decisions related to their more immediate context, about which they have more knowledge—such as household decisions and things that are close to what goes on in their home. These does not mean that women are not capable of giving an opinion about what goes on in spheres to which they have not been assigned, but they have less experience in handling these. This can cause women to be more fearful about being criticized about the quality of their participation, particularly in public spaces.

In addition, we come back to the social value placed on the work of women and men. There is an increasing number of women engaged in productive and community activities, but there is little evidence of the reverse, that men are occupying spaces in the reproductive field (Campillo, F. and Pérez, L., 1998).

For the man, performing reproductive activities not only implies a loss of the social status awarded his gender, but could even be interpreted as a change of “sex,” and not being very “macho” or manly. This can increase his fears and his rejection of carrying out such activities.

In turn, the spaces where we women and men actually perform our activities also have a value. The private space is considered less important in comparison with economic and political decision-making in the public arena, or in cultural life. Until now, what takes place inside the home is locked inside, because it has no importance to the social collective mostly managed by men. Domestic violence and alcoholism are examples all people are familiar with, which in one way or another affect women and men (whether they are children, adolescents or adults). However, these issues are not treated with the same importance in public spheres as others, such as those involving economic production or politics, for example.

The gender system is thus an excluding system that does not provide equal opportunities of personal development for women and men. It is an inequitable system from its very roots.

In some cases, the conditions lived by women and men require them to carry out activities that society attributes to the other gender. However, it should be clarified that this has to do with their specific situation. Gender conception at the societal level does not change immediately in response to a particular circumstance. Our objective is for both genders to have the same opportunities for development, without this implying that we are changing sex. Gender and sex are so much a part of our conception of the world that some people have believed that performing activities assigned to the other gender will change our sex. In reality, what is being changed is the social construction, not our physical characteristics.

These activities in turn determine what kind of experience people will have as they live out certain spaces and social spheres. We are obliged to specialize in certain types of activities, without comprehending that we can develop skills in others. Our access to and control of income is circumscribed, as are our belongings and resources, our opportunities for training and mobilization, our enjoyment of life, our possibilities for improvement in the area of health, and decision-making about our own existence.

## 8. Why to Incorporate a Gender Analysis in Projects?

Gender equity perspective analyzes the reasons why inequality in the living conditions of women and men produces inequity, unease and a lack of well being for everyone, both women and men.

A recognition of the theoretical validity of this perspective or approach demands a commitment from us that implies taking a position and action to produce the transformations required. Otherwise, we reinforce inequality and contribute to its perpetuation.

Each man and woman has a responsibility toward the achievement of sustainable human development. Based on her/his own experience, girls and boys, young people, adults, older women and men, each and every one of them must make a contribution on behalf of the community and its development.

Gender analysis makes it possible for women and men to recognize for ourselves the opportunities and constraints involved in achieving our personal and collective development, within the historical and geographic context in which we live.

This concerns the concrete development of each woman and each man, improving the person but also the community, improving individual and collective quality of life through actions involving concrete forms of eliminating inequalities. To do this we must recognize the ways inequalities are manifested in the historical and geographical contexts in which we live, work and act.

Were you aware of these inequalities? Ask yourself the following?

- How were they present in your life?
- How have you supported other women and other men in changing toward new types of relations between the genders?
- How have you reinforced inequalities?
- In what ways have you done this?
- How can you contribute to carrying out actions for change?



## II INCORPORATING THE TERMS WE NEED

For this section we felt it would be helpful to provide some terms that are frequently used during the process of “unveiling” gender. Becoming familiar with these, incorporating them in our conceptions and practices, and using them when appropriate contribute to forging a path toward the equity to which we women and men all aspire.

Most of the terms have been introduced by certain authors. When no specific bibliographical reference is provided, the term can be attributed to the compiler of this chapter. Terms have been presented in alphabetical order to facilitate use.

### ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OF RESOURCES, BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Because most women hold a subordinate position in relation to men, their access and control of resources and opportunities is limited or nonexistent. This situation has been employed as a gender analysis element in development.

**Access** is defined as possibilities for participation, use and benefit.

**Control** refers to domination, ownership and decision-making. Under some circumstances, women can obtain access to a resource (possibility for using it), for example, land, and have limited control over it (cannot choose to sell or rent it).

**Resources** are means and goods, and include those that are economic or productive (land, equipment, tools, work, credit); political (capability for leadership, information and organization); and time (one of the resources women have least of).

**Benefits** are economic, social, political and psychological retributions derived from the utilization of resources. Benefits include the satisfaction of basic and strategic needs: food, housing, education, training, political power, status, etc.

**Opportunities** involve possibilities for physical and emotional self-fulfillment making it possible to reach one's life goals.

CCIC-MATCH. *Two Halves Make a Whole. Balancing Gender Relations in Development.* Ottawa, 1991.

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTIONS

Affirmative actions becomes "a strategy for equal opportunity through measures to contrast or correct discriminations that are the result of social practices or systems. Its purpose is to implement concrete programs giving women concrete advantages".

BARREIRO, LINE. *Las cuotas mínimas de participación de mujeres: un mecanismo de acción afirmativa.* Quoted in Camacho Rosalía et. al., Centro Mujer y Familia. San José, Costa Rica. 1996.

Affirmative actions are "...the most valid and internationally accepted instrument for overcoming obstacles in attaining equality between men and women."

PARTIDO SOCIALISTA ESPAÑOL. Quoted in Camacho Rosalía et. al., Centro Mujer y Familia. San José, Costa Rica. 1996.

While affirmative actions are often identified with measures aimed at increasing women's political participation, they can be designed to eliminate or reduce situations of discrimination wherever they may exist, and be adapted to the particular circumstances of rural development organizations and projects.

BLANCO, LARA AND RODRÍGUEZ, GUISELLE. *Module 7: Practicing What We Preach, Toward Equity Series,* IUCN - Arias Foundation. San José, Costa Rica. 1999.

## AGE GROUPS

Classification of the population according to age, for example, children, adolescents, adult women and elderly adult men.

## CONDITION AND POSITION: PRACTICAL AND STRATEGIC NEEDS

Based on the situation of inequality between women and men and their opportunities for development, two categories have been proposed for use in gender analysis. These categories help us identify the differences in their situations as a means of supporting strategies to minimize inequalities that may exist at the community level and effectively meet the needs of both women and men. They also help in implementing actions with the most priority for those experiencing the greatest disadvantages to the achievement of their development.

**Condition:** This term refers to the conditions in which people live, or their life situation, and points specifically to what are called practical needs (i.e., conditions of poverty, access to services, productive resources, and opportunities for health care and education).

**Position:** This is the standing and social recognition, or the status granted to women in relation to men (for example, inclusion in decision-making spaces at the community level, equal pay for equal work, and obstacles in accessing education and training).

It is easy to deduce that condition and position are related to practical and strategic needs and interests.

**Practical interests and needs:** These are due to material deficiencies and unsatisfied basic needs related to survival: shelter, food, water, a house, etc.

**Strategic interests and needs:** They offer women a better position with respect to men in terms of the position both occupy in society, and include such aspects as citizen participation, possibilities for democratic decision-making, autonomy and solidarity, opportunities for education and training, inequality with respect to decision-making, access to and capacity for deciding about the control and use of resources, cultural barriers to participation and consideration under equal conditions concerning what occurs in public and private spheres.

It is important to point out that while it is useful to make a distinction between practical and strategic needs as a way to facilitate work, it is not a good idea to make a rigid separation between the two. The position of women could be changed through measures to satisfy practical needs that are directed strategically toward interests that empower women. Practical, day-to-day needs are important. Addressing these can contribute notably to reducing inequalities and improving the population's quality of life, if projects also consider how their interventions affect relations of power and between the genders in order to contribute to achieving quality of life for everyone, both women and men.

### PRACTICAL AND STRATEGIC NEEDS

PRACTICAL	STRATEGIC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tend to be immediate, urgent.</li> <li>- Unique to particular women and men.</li> <li>- Relate to daily needs (condition): food, housing, income, health of children, etc.</li> <li>- Easily identifiable.</li> <li>- Can be addressed by making certain inputs available, such as food, water pumps, or a clinic .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tend to be long-term (processes).</li> <li>- Common to all women.</li> <li>- Related to disadvantaged position: subordination, lack of resources and education, vulnerability to poverty and violence, citizenship, etc.</li> <li>- The basis of disadvantage and potential for change are not always identifiable.</li> <li>- Can be addressed by consciousness-raising, increasing self-confidence, education, organizational strengthening, political mobilization, and full citizenship.</li> </ul>

### CUSTOMARY LAW

These are unwritten norms that generate law based on traditions and customs.

### DIVISION OF LABOR

This term concerns the different attributes conventionally assigned to the capacities and skills of women and men, and consequently to the distribution of different tasks and responsibilities

in social life. For example, men are customarily given the role of “family provider” and women the “reproducer” role, responsible for the home and for raising the children. Division of work by gender is specific to each particular culture and historical moment. It is flexible and can be adapted to the changing conditions of the home (illness or absence of a key member, changes of income or in the need for money), as well as in natural resources, or due to the impact of a local development project, education or other factors.

BANDER, GLORIA. *La igualdad de oportunidades para mujeres y varones. Una meta educativa*. National Program for the Advancement of Women in the Educational Area, UNICEF. Argentina. 1993.

Three types of work can be distinguished:

**Productive work:** Includes the production of goods and services for consumption or sale (i.e., agriculture or fishing). This usually refers to work that generates income and is the kind included in national censuses and statistics.

**Reproductive work:** Includes the care and maintenance of the domestic unit and its members, as well as bearing and caring for children, preparing food, drawing water, purchasing provisions, performing domestic chores and taking care of family health. This type of work is not considered as such by society and has no exchange value.

**Community work:** Includes the collective organization of social events and services. This type of work is not taken into account in economic analyses, even when it involves many hours of voluntary work.

AGUILAR, LORENA *et. al.*, *Historias no contadas de mujeres, hombres y vacas*. IUCN. San José, Costa Rica. 1995.

## EMPOWERMENT

**Empowerment of women:** This signifies providing women the opportunity to attain greater power and control over their own lives, and involves raising awareness, developing confidence in oneself, broadening opportunities and greater access to and control over resources. Empowerment comes from within; women empower themselves. “External agents,” such as donors, cannot empower women. However, donors can play an important role as facilitators. The instruments used to further the empowerment of women must simplify the process of communicating their needs and priorities, and promote a more active role in advancing these interests and

needs. Some of the most important instruments for empowerment are information and networks. Women's empowerment does not occur in a vacuum. Men must also be incorporated in the process of change, an idea endorsed by those who advocate women's empowerment.

It is important to determine potential repercussions that female empowerment may have on men, as well as the effects this may have on their attitudes and behavior. Nevertheless, the empowerment of women should not be considered a game of addition and subtraction, in which gains for women translate into losses for men. It is important to identify and make known the benefits women's empowerment has for society and for men.

WORNONIUK, B., THOMAS, H. AND SCHALKWWYK, J. *Gender: The Concept, Its Meaning and Uses*. Department for Policy and Legal Services, SIDA, Sweden. 1997.

## ETHNIC GROUPS

This refers to the classification of the population according to the social and cultural organization making up particular ways of living for the entirety of its members. In general, the people who comprise an ethnic group share characteristics such as race, language, territory and most of all, a particular way of seeing and interpreting the world.

Each ethnic group defines certain ways of living for women and men, and this determines the specific condition and position of women.

## EQUALITY

A condition of one thing being "equal" to the other, implying that there must be parity and identity.

**Equal Opportunity:** A situation in which women and men have equal opportunities for intellectual, physical and emotional fulfillment, and the ability to reach the life goals they have set for themselves and develop their potential without distinction of gender, sex, age, religion or ethnic group.

**Equal Treatment:** Presupposes the right to the same social conditions of security, remuneration and working conditions for both women and men.

**Equal Rights:** A truly egalitarian situation in which women and men share equal economic, political, civil, cultural and social rights.

BANDER, GLORIA. *La igualdad de oportunidades para mujeres y varones. Una meta educativa, Programa Nacional de Promoción de la Mujer en Área Educativo*, UNICEF. Argentina. 1993.

SERVICIO NACIONAL DE LA MUJER. *Políticas de Igualdad de Oportunidades. Hagamos un nuevo trato*. In: Seminario Encuentro Internacional Políticas y Desigualdad de Oportunidades. Santiago, Chile. 1993.

## EQUITY

This involves access to equal opportunity and the development of basic capacity. It requires eliminating all barriers to economic and political opportunities and access to education and basic services, such that people (men and women of all ages, conditions and positions) can enjoy these opportunities and benefit from them. Equity implies participation by all people in processes of development and the application of a gender perspective in all our activities.

Equity means justice, giving everyone what belongs to them, and recognizing the specific conditions or characteristics of each person or human group (sex, gender, class, religion, and age). It is the recognition of diversity, without this providing a reason for discrimination.

CCIC-MATCH. *Two Halves Make a Whole. Balancing Gender Relations in Development*. Ottawa. 1991.

## GENDER

Genders are biosociocultural groups historically constructed on the basis of sexual characteristics that categorize human beings according to their bodily features. Once classified, they are assigned different functions, activities, social relations, behaviors and norms. This is a set of economic, social, legal, political and psychological—in other words, cultural—determinations and characteristics that create the specific content of being men and women in each historical period, society and culture.

LAGARDE, MARCELA. *Identidad de género*. Course offered at "Olof Palme," Managua, Nicaragua. 1992.

LAGARDE, MARCELA. *Identidad generica y feminismo*. Presentation at XIII Congreso Internacional de Ciencias Antropológicas y Etnológicas, México, 1993.

## GENDER ANALYSIS

This is the theoretical and methodological process that assesses the differences between the roles of men and women, as well as their responsibilities, access to and use and control of resources, problems or needs, belongings and opportunities. The purpose of this analysis is to plan development that is efficient and equitable, and overcome existing discrimination that restricts women's possibilities for expressing their needs and preferences.

Gender analysis should not be limited to women's roles in society. The society's forms of organization and ways of functioning should also be studied with respect to social relations between women and men, reproductive and productive work, access to and control of benefits, limitations and opportunities, and the organizational capacity of women and men to promote equality.

BREELING, KIT. *Gender Issues in the World of Work*. International Labour Organisation. Turin. 1994.

## HOMOPHOBIA

Fear and aversion to homosexual people (men and women). Traditionally this term has been used primarily to designate an aversion to homosexual men.

RUTA - Unidad Regional de Asistencia Técnica. *Glosario de términos sobre género*. San José, Costa Rica. Undated.

## HUMAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

"A complex process that implies the social, economic and political improvement of individuals and of society itself. In this sense, improvement means society's capacity to satisfy the physical, emotional and creative needs of the population at an historically acceptable level... Consequently, it implies a higher level of life, but not blind consumption, and requires a type of society that permits an equitable distribution of social wealth".

Thus, human sustainable development (HSD) is conceptualized as "the process of broadening people's options," and goes beyond income and economic growth to encompass a total blossoming of human capacity. This way of conceptualizing development places human beings (their needs, their aspirations and their options), at the center of developmental concerns and activities for both men and women, and for future as well as present generations.

This conceptualization is in opposition to an economic growth without employment, equity, participation, roots and future. In sum, it opposes any growth that perpetuates current inequalities, since such growth is neither sustainable nor worth sustaining. Human development and economic growth must thus advance together with strong reciprocal ties, with the market and information functioning as mechanisms for common ground and the means for attaining balanced relations.

HSD means first, satisfying the needs of the present without compromising the satisfaction of future generations' needs; second, recognizing that children are more vulnerable to environmental degradation than any other group in the population; third, maintaining an awareness that young people have greater vision and energy in finding solutions for the future, are the group with most to lose and thus are the most severely affected by the way in which the planet is handled; and fourth, accepting that children and young people constitute the largest proportion of the population in many developing countries and therefore an integrated and humanistic approach toward the environment is necessary in order to find suitable solutions for its problems.

YOUNG, KATE. *Género y desarrollo: un enfoque relacionado*. Unpublished mimeo quoted by CIDA/MATCH in *Guía metodológica para incorporar la dimensión de género en el ciclo de proyectos forestales participativos*. S. P. 1991.

JOLLY, RICHARD. *Statement to the Third Session UNCED Preparatory Committee*, undated.

## INVISIBILITY OF WOMEN

The lack of value society places on activities carried out by women and considered to be their responsibility by nature. One obvious example of this is the perception society has of household chores or taking care of animals.

INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RIGHTS. *Women and Human Rights Program*. *Compendio de Documentos de Género y Derechos*. San José, Costa Rica. 1994.

## MAINSTREAMING

Mainstreaming gender means paying constant attention to equality between women and men as part of the policies, strategies and interventions for development. Mainstreaming gender does not

only mean ensuring that women participate in a previously established development program. It also means guaranteeing that women as well as men participate in defining objectives and in planning so that development actions satisfy the priorities and needs of women and men. As a consequence, it is essential to look at equality in relation to the analyses, policies, planning processes and institutional practices that establish the overall conditions for development.

Mainstreaming gender requires making an assessment of the impact development interventions could have on women and men in all areas of social development. This assessment should be performed before any important decisions are made concerning goals, strategies and distribution of resources.

WORNONIUK, B., THOMAS, H. AND SCHALKWWYK, J. *Gender: The Concept, Its Meaning and Uses*. Department for Policy and Legal Services, SIDA, Sweden, 1997.

## MISOGYNY

Attitude of hate or contempt for women, just because they are women.

RUTA - Unidad Regional de Asistencia Técnica. *Glosario de términos sobre género*. San José, Costa Rica. Undated.

## PATRIARCHY

The patriarchy is a power order or a mode of domination with the man as paradigm. It is based on the supremacy of men and masculinity over the inferiority of women and femininity. Moreover, in this system some men dominate other men and women are alienated from one another. Our world is dominated by men. To different degrees, women in this world are expropriated and oppressed in predetermined ways. Men are the owners and leaders of this world in any of the different social formations. Their power gives them the right to be served by women and by women's children, and to expropriate their creations and material and symbolic goods. This produces a world that is asymmetrical, unequal, alienated, androcentric, misogynous and homophobic. In it, the center is not only the man but the patriarchy.

LAGARDE, MARCELA. *La regulación social del género: el género como filtro de poder*. Consejo Nacional de Población. México. 1994.

## POWER

Domination, faculty or jurisdiction to give orders, define, control, and say something to someone.

The powers of domination are social, group, and personal, making it possible to alienate, exploit and oppress others. They are evidenced in processes with interwoven forms of intervening in the life of others from a place of superiority (value, hierarchy, and authority). Powers of domination are a set of capacities that permit one to control the life of others, expropriate their goods, subordinate them, and direct their existence. Domination implies having the capacity to judge, punish and, finally, pardon.

Relations of domination are characterized by dependence. By occupying hierarchical positions and superior ranks, those with powers of domination in turn become the possessors of truth, reason and force.

Gender systems can be comprehended through the way they distribute power. In the patriarchal system asymmetric relations are established between men and women, and the male gender and men are assured of a monopoly in powers of domination. The female gender and women remain in subjugation. Consequently, men can regulate, direct and, control women with almost no questions asked. Men make the rules and women are supposed to follow them. As judges, men can evaluate women's deeds, conduct and thoughts; they can discriminate against them, find them guilty and even pardon them. They employ social and personal criticism to judge women and can coerce them in diverse ways using the laws, and even eroticism and love, as well as through suppression of goods and violence.

In patriarchal societies power relations include those between the genders (men over women) and within genders (among men and among women). Both are conditioned by other factors, such as the race, ethnic group, age group, and social class to which the individual belongs.

LAGARDE, MARCELA. *La regulación social del género: el género como filtro de poder*. Consejo Nacional de Población. México. 1994.

## ROLE

A person's function or representation within society, based on a system of values and customs, which determines the type of activities that person is required to carry out.

**Triple role:** Female participation in the triple areas of productive functioning, reproductive functioning and community action (see productive work, reproductive work and community work).

GOMÁRIZ, ENRIQUE. *La planificación con perspectiva de género*. Colección Metodologías No. 1, Centro Mujer y Familia. San José, Costa Rica. 1994.

**Multiple roles:** Performing two or three types of roles simultaneously in one day's work. This is the situation of many women and, to a lesser degree, men. Women must juggle the multiple roles they have been assigned, often finding there are conflicts between their productive, reproductive and community activities. Women are constrained by the overload of having to juggle two or three roles at the same time, a fact that tends to be overlooked.

PANAMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION. *Conceptualización de Género para la Planificación en Salud* (versión preliminar). S. P. 1995.

## SEX

This term refers to the set of hereditary biological characteristics organizing individuals in two categories: men and women.

## SOCIALIZATION

Psychosocial processes in which the individual develops historically as a person and as a member of society. In this process the person acquires or constructs a personal and social identity as part of the social group to which s/he belongs. The individual is configured as a person with particular traits and personal characteristics, which are the fruit of this configuration process.

MARTÍN-BARÓ, IGNACIO. *Acción e Ideología*. Psicología Social desde Centramérica. UCA Editores. San Salvador. 1990.

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- MODULE 1** **A GOOD START MAKES A BETTER ENDING**  
Writing Proposals with a Gender Perspective Proposes a series of preconditions that contribute to the design of a project proposal containing the basic ingredients needed to facilitate the incorporation of a gender equity perspective.
- MODULE 2** **SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND**  
Creating Participatory Appraisals with a Gender Perspective Basic recommendations for carrying out participatory appraisals with a gender equity perspective.
- MODULE 3** **IF WE ORGANIZE IT WE CAN DO IT**  
Project Planning with a Gender Perspective Taking the step from appraisal to action using planning techniques that respond to the needs expressed by women and men.
- MODULE 4** **TAKING THE PULSE OF GENDER**  
Gender-Sensitive Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation Basic guidelines for designing an evaluation and monitoring system that reveals gender inequities.
- MODULE 5** **IN UNITY THERE IS POWER**  
Processes of Participation and Empowerment Examines the issue of power and its effect on development initiatives. An innovative presentation of carefully selected techniques for analyzing power and approaching the construction of new and more equitable and democratic forms of participation.
- MÓDULO 6** **EYES THAT SEE...HEARTS THAT FEEL**  
Equity Indicators Proposes methodology for defining indicators with men and women in the communities. Presents a set of indicators to identify and assess progress toward more equitable relations, and actions that enable a project to develop along paths that are more democratic and just.
- MODULE 7** **PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH**  
Toward Administration and Management with Equity Considerations that can help organizations develop more equitable forms of administration and management.
- MODULE 8** **SHARING SECRETS**  
Systematization from a Gender Perspective Proposes methodology for a participatory systematization of the experiences and outcomes of initiatives in the field using gender relations as the focal point for analysis.
- MODULE 9** **UNVEILING GENDER**  
Basic Conceptual Elements for Understanding Equity Presents elements for a basic understanding of gender theory, along with a glossary of the terms most frequently used in the Toward Equity series.