

I Gender



This chapter will focus on gender roles and norms and their impact on individuals, families, and communities. Each session is meant to be used during one group meeting.

1. What is gender? What are gender roles?



Session objectives

By the end of the session, participants should be able to:

- Tell the difference between gender and sex.
- Identify at least three sex characteristics and three gender characteristics and roles.



Session guide

- 1. Ask:** What characteristics do you associate with being a woman? What makes someone a woman? [Invite five or six answers.] And what do you think of when you hear the word feminine? [Possible answers might include: She can have children. She can breastfeed. She gets emotional. She is good at taking care of children. She has menstrual periods. She is good at cooking.] List all suggestions on a flip chart if available, or note them down for discussion. Do not comment on the answers. Make sure participants give at least eight suggestions.
- 2. Ask:** What qualities do you associate with being a man? What makes someone a man? [Invite five or six answers.] And what do you think of when you hear the word masculine? [Possible answers include: He can father children. He is good at making decisions. He is good with money. He is rational. He grows a beard and mustache. He gets bald. He is strong.] List all suggestions on a flip chart if available, or note them down for discussion without commenting on them for the moment. Make sure participants give at least five suggestions.
- 3. Ask:** You've come up with a number of characteristics associated with men and women, male and female characteristics. Which of these characteristics do you think can be changed, which cannot be changed and why? [Read each characteristic and let participants determine whether they are changeable or not. Don't offer an "answer" at this point. If available, use a flip chart to divide the characteristics into three lists: "changeable," "not changeable," and "unsure." Invite discussion if participants disagree, as to why they would place a characteristic in one category.]
- 4. Explain** that certain characteristics are related to a person's biology. These characteristics cannot be changed and make up a woman and a man's sexual attributes. **Ask:** Which of the characteristics cannot be changed? Invite suggestions and discussion. **Highlight** from the list, if they have not been raised, the characteristics that cannot be changed. For example: Women can bear children, have menstrual periods, and have breasts. Men grow beards and mustaches, can father children (give sperm through sexual intercourse) and may grow bald.
- 5. Explain** that other characteristics are taught by our parents, teachers and other community members. We are told that this is the way things are, this is the way things are done. These qualities are rooted in particular cultures or traditions, but they can differ widely between cultures, and can also change over time. **Ask:** Which of the characteristics can be changed? Invite suggestions and discussion. **Highlight** from the list the characteristics that are learned and can be changed, if they have not been raised. For example: Women are emotional, are good with children, and are good at cooking. Men are rational, are good with money and at making decisions.
- 6. Emphasize** that *gender* refers to the characteristics which are taught by society and are considered acceptable, but which can be changed. Just because someone tells us that we are supposed to act in a certain way, or that a woman is supposed to do certain things because it is our tradition or our

culture, does not mean we have to follow those roles. We can choose for ourselves what roles we want to take on.

7. **Ask:** Have there been situations when you have chosen a role that was different from what your family, friends, or community expected? What was the situation? What was the response?
8. **Explain** that in today's session we will be discussing *gender*, what it means, and its impact on our lives and health.
9. **Refer** to one of the characteristics people were "unsure" about and **ask:** Can someone explain why they feel this (female or male) characteristic can be changed? After one person has explained, **ask:** Can someone explain why they feel this (female or male) characteristic cannot be changed? [Choose a characteristic that would be useful to highlight gender.]
10. **Explain** that some characteristics may be very hard to change. They may be deeply rooted in our traditions, our culture, and the social nature of the community. We may not want some of them to change. They may make some of us comfortable. But this is not the same as saying that they *cannot* be changed or *should* not be changed. We can choose to change them, and take on different roles and characteristics.
11. **Introduce** an example such as "women are good at taking care of children" and **ask:** Would most people agree that women are better at taking care of children than men? If they are better at taking care of children, is this because they are women? [Allow some discussion.]
12. **Explain** that women may be better at taking care of children, but this may be due to the fact that women are given the responsibility of raising children, are expected to take on that responsibility, and therefore have more experience than most men.
13. **Ask:** Do you think this can be changed? Can men also take care of children? [Facilitate a brief discussion of responses.] **Explain** that this is an example of *gender*, characteristics which are taught in families, and by society and the community, but which can be changed. Men and women can both take care of children. Nothing prevents men from being good at taking care of children. However, if a community expects women to take that responsibility, they may come to assume women are better than men in that role.

Some participants may disagree with the statement that nothing prevents men from being good at taking care of children. **Ask:** Can you let me know what you feel might prevent men from being good at taking care of children? Invite some suggestions as to why men might not be good at taking care of children. Then **ask:** Is that something that really prevents a man from being good at taking care of children? Could he change his lifestyle so that he is able to take care of children? **Highlight** that girls and women are taught from the time they are young about taking care of babies and children. In the same way that they learned, boys and men can also learn, and become good at it.

14. **Repeat** the above example can be repeated with other characteristics, such as "men are good with money." Men and women can both handle money and expenses. Nothing prevents women from being good with money. However, if a community expects men to take that responsibility, they may come to assume men are better than women in that role.

Some participants may disagree with the statement that nothing prevents women from being good with money. **Ask:** Can you let me know what you feel might prevent women from being good with money? Invite some suggestions as to why women might not be good at handling money. Then **ask:** Is that something that really prevents a woman from being good at handling money? If society changes their expectations about who should be responsible for handling money, and women were given the same responsibility, could they gain experience and become good in this area? **Highlight** that boys and men are taught from the time they are young about money issues. In the same way that they learned, girls and women can also learn, and become good at it.

- 15. Ask:** What other characteristics and roles do families and communities feel are more appropriate for men or women? Facilitate a brief discussion on the examples raised.



Main messages

- Sex means the biological differences between women and men. Sexual characteristics are related to a person's biology, their physical body, and cannot be changed.
- Gender refers to characteristics, roles and relations between men and women that are taught and learned. These differences are deeply rooted in every culture and community, but they can and have changed over time. They also differ greatly within and between cultures.
- We do not have to follow the roles that the community and society thinks are acceptable for us because we are women or men. We can choose different roles for ourselves.



Activities

Activity: Changing gender norms

Ask participants to provide suggested endings for the following statements.

"It may not happen now, but I expect one day women will..."

"It may not happen now, but I expect one day men will..."

"In my community, men are supposed to..."

"In my community, women are supposed to..."

Write the suggestions on a flip chart if available, or make a note of them for discussion. Make sure you have at least five to ten for each statement.

Invite participants to think about the possible impact and consequences of each statement. Then invite them to change the statement around. Keep the ending but switch the words "men" and "women" and invite discussion on the resulting statements. Do they sound strange? How would men feel if they were expected by society to allow women to make decisions, for example?

Activity: Storytelling, "We will do it together"¹

Ask participants to volunteer to read the different roles. Ask all readers to sit together so they can read the story. Allow participants to change the characters names to be more appropriate in your community. After the story is read, facilitate a discussion.

Characters: Narrator, Nasimiyu, Wanjala (her husband), Undinya (their daughter), Mmbasu (their son), Mmboga (female friend of Nasimiyu), villagers.

¹UNESCO-DANIDA, Special Project for Women and Girls in Africa, Adapted from radio programmes produced by media professionals in Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia, UNESCO-DANIDA workshops for the production of gender-sensitive radio programs (2000) Paris, France.

Narrator: This story is about a family: Wanjala and Nasimiyu, their daughter Undinya, and their son Mmbasu. Wanjala realizes after a time that his wife and daughter have more than their fair share of family responsibilities. How does he come to understand this? What does he do about it? Just listen on. As the story starts, let us listen to Nasimiyu at the stream. It's 6:00 o'clock in the morning and she's talking to another woman who has also come to fetch water.

Mmboga: It certainly is cold this morning, Nasimiyu.

Nasimiyu: Yes, it is, Mmboga. And I'm in a terrible hurry to get home with this jerrican of water. This morning I had no water at all, not even enough to make porridge for the children. I must rush to get it ready so they are not late for school.

Mmboga: I also had to come to the river early today. After I milked the cows at five, and took the milk to the collection centre, I realized I needed to fetch water straight away. Imagine! There wasn't even enough water for my husband to wash his face.

Nasimiyu: We'd better hurry home, my friend.

Mmboga: Oh yes!

Narrator: At home, Nasimiyu quickly made the porridge for her husband and her children. After drinking the porridge, the children ran to school. Only she and her husband were left at home. The baby slept.

Wanjala: Nasimiyu?

Nasimiyu: Yes?

Wanjala: Today's porridge was late. Why was that?

Nasimiyu: There was no water this morning. We used it up last night, remember? I had to prepare tea for the visitors who came late last night.

Wanjala: Don't let that happen again! Always make sure there's enough water to start the day.

Nasimiyu: I hope you realize it wasn't really my fault. There were so many things to do yesterday. I'm sure you would not have wanted the visitors to go away before they had tea in our house, would you?

Wanjala: All right, all right, let's stop there. Give me some water to wash my face, and don't forget to wash my clothes. We're attending the chief's bazaar tomorrow, and I want to look clean and smart.

Nasimiyu: After I wash the dishes, I'll sweep the house. Then I'll fetch more water so that I can wash your clothes.

Wanjala: All right.

Nasimiyu: (to the sounds of crying baby) Oh no, the baby has woken up. Now I have to feed her first. Then I'll carry her with the jerrican of water.

Narrator: Nasimiyu carries the baby and the jerrican to the river. She carries the water on her back and - using a piece of cloth tied around her neck - carries the baby on her stomach. At home she puts maize and beans on the fire to boil. After washing the clothes, she goes to the shamba. She spreads a piece of cloth under the tree and puts the baby on it. She reaps the beans but checks on the baby from time to time. At noon, she takes the baby, plucks a cabbage and goes home. She prepares lunch. The children have come home for lunch.

Undinya: Mother, is the lunch ready?

Mmbasu: Mother, please, give me lunch.

Nasimiyu: Here it is. I have fried maize and beans together with cabbage. Undinya, take this food to your father. He has come from the shamba now. He's sitting outside in the shade. As you eat, Undinya, please feed the baby.

Undinya: Okay, mother, I've eaten lunch and fed the baby. It's time for us to go back to school.

Nasimiyu: Thank you, Undinya, let me have the baby now.

Mmbasu: Let's go, Undinya.

Undinya: I'm coming.

Wanjala: Nasimiyu, let me have water so I can have a bath.

Nasimiyu: Please hold the baby, so that I can warm the water for you.

Wanjala: You can't hold the baby while you heat the bath?

Nasimiyu: Of course I can when I'm alone, but if you're here, it's easier if you help me.

Wanjala: All right. Give me the baby, but don't let her wet my lap.

Narrator: Nasimiyu splits firewood and prepares the bath for her husband.

Wanjala: Let me have a clean shirt. Did you wash my clothes?

Nasimiyu: Mmm, I washed the clothes. Here is your shirt. I'll wash the lunch dishes now so I can milk the cow.

Wanjala: Don't forget to give water to the cow.

Nasimiyu: I still have so much to do today. It would be better if you took the cows to the river to drink.

Wanjala: I think you've been lazy, but I'll take care of the cows. Later, I'll go to the shopping centre.

Nasimiyu: Really, it's not a question of laziness. While you are taking the cows to the river, I'll be cleaning the house. When you come back, I'll milk the cows.

Narrator: Wanjala took the cows to the river to drink. Later Nasimiyu milked them. Then she cut some grass for the cows to eat. Still carrying the baby, she went to a nearby bush to gather the firewood that had been lying there. She said to herself, "There's hardly any firewood in the house, and I still have to fetch more water, so I cannot make two trips to carry firewood. I think I'd better carry a very big pile of wood. That way I'll get enough firewood in one trip to last us a few days. Later, when the children came home from school, she said to them:

Nasimiyu: Mmbasu, take this money and go to the shop to buy some sugar. Also bring paraffin for the lamp. Undinya, take the jerrican and come with me to fetch water from the river. In fact, I think I'll carry two jerricans at one go. That way, I won't have to go to the river twice - and, of course, there will be enough water to start the day tomorrow.

Narrator: Undinya and her mother went to the river and brought back the water. Then Undinya helped her mother chop and cook the vegetables and prepare ugali for the evening meal. When Mmbasu returned from the store with the paraffin and sugar, he went outside to play with his home-made toy car. When it got dark, he came into the house and started doing his homework. Wanjala also came back to the house just as it was getting dark. He sat in his chair and listened to the news on the radio while waiting for his supper to be ready.

Nasimiyu: Come everybody, it's time to eat.

Mmbasu: Excellent, I just finished my homework. After supper, I'll read a storybook.

Nasimiyu: Undinya, you eat quickly. Then try to put the baby to sleep so that you can do your homework.

Wanjala: Nasimiyu, I was looking at the children's exercise books. It looks like Undinya is in trouble at school. This should be corrected.

Nasimiyu: Why don't we call her. Perhaps she can tell us why. Undinya?

Undinya: Yes, mother?

Nasimiyu: Come here.

Wanjala: Undinya, I've been looking at the comments in your exercise books. The teachers complain that you do not finish your homework.

Undinya: Yes. That is very true, Father, but I can explain. When I come home from school, I have so many things to do: I fetch firewood, change the baby, help my mother to cook, and wash the dishes. When I go to do my homework, I am too tired and sleepy. I can hardly do it well, and yet, I would like to do my schoolwork well. I want to be successful. When I grow up, I want to be a lawyer or an architect. I'm sure that if Mmbasu helped more with the housework, we would both have enough time to do our schoolwork.

Narrator: Wanjala listened silently. Undinya talked politely, but she was clear and confident. Her words and way struck him. When he went to sleep that night, Wanjala found himself reliving the day. What had he himself done? He found that he felt rather ashamed.

Wanjala: I woke up, washed my face with the water my wife fetched and ate breakfast that I did not help to prepare. I worked in the shamba for two hours. If my wife hadn't pointed it out, I'd have gone to the shopping centre before making sure the cows had water, I chatted with my friends, listened to the radio, and I was served supper by my wife. If you asked my wife what she had done, she might say something like this:

Nasimiyu: I woke up, fetched water from the river, cooked breakfast, fed my husband and children, swept the house, washed dishes, washed clothes, worked in the shamba, cooked lunch, milked the cows, cut grass, carried firewood, and cooked supper.

Wanjala: This is not fair; it's too much. And come to think of it, this is not just the way in this home. In almost every home I can think of in this neighborhood, the story is the same. No wonder so many women complain of backache. And girls too. They do too much housework, so much more than the boys. They don't have enough time for study. They fetch water and firewood, wash dishes, and clean the house. They could be described as their mothers' deputies.

Our boys don't do nearly as much. No! This has got to change. There should be a fair sharing of domestic duties.

Narrator: The next morning, Wanjala called his wife.

Wanjala: Nasimiyu, how is your back this morning?

Nasimiyu: It still hurts, Wanjala.

Wanjala: Today, I'd like you to rest your back. I have been thinking. I am convinced we need to share family duties more fairly in this house.

Nasimiyu: What? Am I hearing right? What do you have in mind?

Wanjala: First, as soon as we are paid for our milk, I have decided to buy a donkey. We can use it to carry water from the river, haul firewood, and transport anything else that requires carrying.

Nasimiyu: Oh what a wonderful idea!

Wanjala: As for today, I know this might surprise you, I'll try to do some work around the house. I'm not very good at it, but I want you to get some rest.

Nasimiyu: Oh! Thank you so much. I feel better already. I'll do some light work when I am feeling better.

Wanjala: Also, I'd like us to train Undinya and Mmbasu to share the housework. Let Mmbasu learn how to peel potatoes, cook, and clean the house. Who says boys should not do these things?

Nasimiyu: That's a very good idea, Wanjala. If they share the work, both of our dear children will have time to study and improve themselves.

Wanjala: As you know, I am planning to attend the chiefs meeting tomorrow. If you are feeling better, you should come with me. I am going to tell the gathering that women are overloaded. I'll challenge them to look for a solution.

Narrator: Wanjala is at the village meeting. It is his chance to speak.

Wanjala: My friends, I wish to make some observations. I have had time to think about these things during the past few days. I am going to make some suggestions that I'd like you to think about. I have an idea about how we can help to improve our families and our communities. I have noticed that our girls and women have too much work to do. We men do not do enough work in our families. Women cook, wash, clean, look after children, work in the shamba, and go to the market. Tell me, friends... Who does more work in the house? Girls, or boys?

Everybody: Girls!

Wanjala: Who has more time to study? Girls, or boys?

Everybody: Boys!

Wanjala: Do we want our girls and women to get sick because of overwork?

Everybody: No!

Wanjala: Do we want our daughters - as well as our sons - to have enough time to study and improve their education?

Everybody: Yes.

Wanjala: Then, I challenge you men to think about how we can lighten the burden of work for women. Let us train both girls and boys to help around the house. For myself, I have decided to use some money from our milk sales to buy a donkey to lessen the work of carrying heavy things.

Narrator: There was absolute silence as Wanjala talked. As the people went home, they discussed the matter among themselves. Many confessed that it had never occurred to them that the men and boys did so little, while the women and girls did so much. Many said they felt that something needed to be done, and soon!

End of story

Ask participants to talk about the story. Encourage them to think about how the story is similar to their own lives and experiences or things they have seen in their community.

2. Gender norms



Session objectives

By the end of the session, participants should be able to:

- Define gender norms.
- Identify and explore at least five gender norms in their relationships, families and community.
- Understand the impact of gender norms in their lives and recognize the importance of addressing those norms.



Session guide

1. Explain that you're going to discuss *gender norms*. Gender norms are what the community considers acceptable behaviour for women and men. You will start with a game to help describe gender norms.

2. Gender norms game²

Ask the group to stand. Explain that you are going to read some statements. Ask participants to stand to the right if they agree with the statements, and stand to the left if they disagree.

[See list of statements below.] Read the first statement. Repeat it to make sure everyone understands. After participants have decided whether they agree or disagree, ask a participant from each side to explain why they chose the way they did. Facilitate a brief discussion, asking participants whether they agree.

Pick up to five of the following statements (or make up some of your own) to use.

- The most important thing a woman can do is have babies.
- A woman should be a virgin when she gets married.
- It is ok for a man to have sex outside of marriage, if his wife does not know about it.
- Men are naturally smarter than women.
- A man's most important role is to make money and to protect his family.
- Women should not talk openly about sex or issues related to sexual health.
- A woman's most important role is to take care of her husband and children at home.
- Men should try not to show their feelings, especially feelings of vulnerability.
- Men are the stronger sex because the Bible says that is the way it should be.
- Men are responsible, as the head of the household, for making decisions regarding money, health, education, and how his wife spends her time.
- Women need to be married, because they need men to take care of them.
- Women should listen to their husbands, and not criticize or challenge their decisions.
- Women are naturally better at taking care of babies and children.
- It is more important for boys to get an education, as they will have to provide for their families.
- Women are naturally more emotional than men.

² Adapted from: Inter-agency Gender Working Group Training Toolkit "Gender 101" available online at www.igwg.org.

Emphasize the main message that these are all *gender norms* that have been taught by families and strengthened in the community. They are behaviours, activities, and roles that a given society or community finds acceptable and appropriate for women and men. We learn these norms by observing how others act, and listening to what our parents, friends, and community tell us we should do. *Gender norms* show how a community expects men and women to behave and what it expects them to do. They are not the same as sexual characteristics, which cannot be changed.

Emphasize that we do not have to follow what society expects of us, because we are women and men. We can choose the roles that we would like to take on.

3. **Ask:** What are some other socially learned gender norms? **Facilitate** a brief discussion on the examples raised.
4. **Ask:** Why is understanding gender and gender norms important? **Facilitate** a brief discussion on suggested responses. If it has not been raised during the discussion, you should introduce the idea that gender norms greatly limit people's opportunities and choices simply because they are women or men.
5. **Explain** that gender norms greatly limit a person's opportunities, choices and decisions, because they are a woman or a man. *[Some participants may say that the community needs to place limits on choices and decisions, as some of those choices and decisions may be harmful. If this is raised, you may want to acknowledge that communities have the right to limit certain decisions. We cannot choose to injure or kill someone or steal, for example. But these limitations are the same for men and women.]* Gender norms limit choices and decisions women and men can make specifically because of the different expectations and obligations placed on women and men.
6. **Explain** that these limitations have negative consequences for individuals, families and the community. They can have particularly severe consequences on a person's health, which can impact the health of their families, and the health of the entire community.
7. **Ask:** Can you think of some of the negative health consequences of gender norms? How can limiting someone's opportunities, choices, and decisions affect their health?
8. **Ask:** Let's take for example the gender norm that women should remain virgins until they are married. That "good girls" don't engage in any sexual activity, and that any girl who has engaged in sexual activity before being married must therefore be a "bad girl." What impact might this gender norm have on girls and women? What impact might it have on boys and men? **Facilitate** a discussion asking participants for any consequences they can think of.
9. **Explain** that this particular gender norm, this expectation for girls, is shared by a lot of communities and religions. **Emphasize** that it is not your intention to judge or advocate one way or another regarding a woman's free choice to remain a virgin until she is married. You would like to highlight the impact and possible consequences for girls and women who do not appear to live up to that expectation. **Highlight** some of the consequences raised by participants in the previous discussion. If they haven't been raised, make sure the following are emphasized:
 - Girls may not want to ask questions about sexual health, leading to possible reproductive health problems.
 - Girls do not learn how to negotiate and discuss safe sex, leading to possible infection with HIV or other STIs or unplanned pregnancy.
 - Girls may be pressured to marry early to ensure their virginity at the time of marriage. Early marriage, before a girl is emotionally and physically ready, can result in a range of mental and physical health problems.
 - Women who are not virgins when they get married may face abuse at the hands of an angry husband.

- Girls and women who are sexually abused or raped may not seek or receive the full range of assistance, including medical care, counseling, support and legal protection they need.
10. **Repeat** the above with two or three other gender norms, including some for men. **Ask** for example: What impact might the gender norm that “men should not discuss their feelings, especially those that may make them appear vulnerable” have? Is this a value you hold? [Discussion should include that such a norm prevents men from addressing their feelings and fears, which has consequences for emotional and physical health, and may result in using violence to express themselves. Men may also refuse to seek assistance for emotional, physical or other concerns.] What impact might the gender norm that “men are responsible, as the head of the household, for making decisions regarding money, health, education and where his wife can go” have? Is this a value you hold?
 11. **Explain** that the fear of stigma, being shunned by the community, or being subjected to violence can also limit a person’s choices and affect their decisions. Gender norms and expectations might, for example, make a woman hesitate about getting tested for sexually transmitted infections including HIV, or seeking treatment. She may fear being laughed at, abuse, or abandonment. Women who have been sexually abused may fear stigma and prejudice, and refuse to seek assistance or tell someone about the abuse.
 12. **Ask:** Have gender norms affected your choices, decisions and actions? How? And what were the consequences? What was the impact? **Facilitate** a discussion.
 13. **Explain** that gender norms change over time and differ widely among and within cultures.
 14. **Ask:** What choices did your grandmothers and grandfathers have? What choices do you, your brothers and sisters have? What choices do your children have? Are they different? What has changed? What role did your grandfather or your father play as a husband? Have a husband’s responsibilities changed in your society? Have a wife’s responsibilities changed since the time of your grandmother and mother? How do they differ in other cultures? How do they differ in your own community?
 15. **Explain** that gender norms also impact overall personal and community development and have consequences at all levels. Some examples include:
 - Laws that discriminate against women, including laws that prevent women from inheriting property, laws regarding child custody and the dividing of property upon divorce, and the absence of laws regarding violence against women.
 - Traditional practices such as bride price, dowry, widow inheritance, and early marriage.
 - Restrictions on women’s education and ability to work outside the home.
 - Restrictions on women’s involvement in community and nationwide leadership roles.
 16. **Ask:** In what other ways have gender norms impacted your community?
 17. **Ask:** Think about the harmful gender norms that we discussed earlier. [You might want to refer back to the list from the gender norms game.] How might these harmful norms in your community be changed? **Facilitate** a discussion on this issue.



Main messages

- Gender norms are behaviours, activities and roles that a given society finds acceptable and appropriate for women and men, and are taught. They can be changed.
- Gender norms can lead to harmful attitudes and behaviours, with negative consequences for our health, development as human beings, and relationships.
- We do not have to follow the norms that the society considers acceptable for women and men. We can choose different norms for ourselves. In fact, it is critical for us to change gender norms so that we can avoid their harmful consequences.



Activity: Gender role play

Characters: A middle aged couple with three children.

Scenario: The young daughter has been really sick. The wife would like to take her to a local clinic. She is at home during the day and watches her daughter suffer. She has discussed her symptoms with a few friends and is convinced the girl needs medical attention and some medicine. However, the husband is not convinced the daughter needs to go to the health clinic. It costs too much and there won't be enough money for the older son's school fees. The girl looks all right to him. Perhaps all she needs is some rest. He refuses to give the money for the clinic.

Facilitate a discussion after the role play.

3. Masculinity



Session objectives

By the end of the session, participants should be able to:

- Identify ideas of masculinity in their lives and communities.
- Explore where these ideas came from and their impact/consequences.
- Explore their personal feelings about masculinity, how they are shaped by and how they differ from community norms.
- Identify ways masculinity can be transformed and redefined in their lives and their communities and give themselves permission to be "ideal men."



Session guide

1. **Explain** that you would like to discuss masculinity; ideas about what it means to be a man and to be masculine.
2. **Ask:** What comes to mind when you think of being a man? What does it mean to 'be a man'? Probe further if necessary, what does it mean to be a man, sexually; financially; in the workplace; in your personal life; with your family?
3. **Ask:** Has anyone ever told you to "Be a Man"? Either recently or when you were growing up? Can you let us know who told you to "Be a Man" and what was going on at that time? Can you also let us know how you felt at the time? Facilitate a discussion around this issue. [With women participants: Have you ever heard someone telling a boy or a man to "Be a Man"? What was going on at the time and how did it make you feel?]
4. **Explain** that ideas of masculinity, what it means to "be a man," are part of a society's and a community's gender norms. They include attitudes and behaviours that are learned, copied and encouraged, beginning in childhood, and strengthened throughout a man's life by the community. Use some of the stories shared by participants to reflect on how masculinity is taught and learned.
5. **Ask:** Has anyone ever told you that 'you are not acting like a man'? Can you let us know who said this and what was going on at the time? How did it make you feel? What do you think the other person was feeling? Why do you think they told you were not acting like a man? Facilitate a discussion. [With women participants: Have you ever heard someone telling a boy or a man that they were not acting like a man? What was going on at the time and how did it make you feel?]
6. **Emphasize** that ideas of masculinity cannot exist and develop separate from a community's action and support. They are developed as people act and communities encourage particular behaviours and discourage others. Masculinity then becomes a part of a community's deeply rooted norms.
7. **Ask:** Do the characteristics you've listed accurately describe you? [With women participants: Do they accurately describe the men you know?] Let's take them one by one. Are you (*pick one of the characteristics*)? Are you always (*characteristic*)? Are there times you are not (*characteristic*)?
8. **Explain** that traditional, harmful notions of masculinity lead men to hide their true selves, their true feelings and ambitions. You may feel one way, but act another because you are worried about

what your family and friends may say. What they will think of you. You may hide feelings of doubt, fear, concern, caring and sadness because they are not 'masculine.'

9. **Ask:** Think of all the characteristics, feelings, behaviours that define you, including those that other people might not recognize or know about. Are they all on this list? What's missing? [If you are using a flip chart with a picture of man, write down the additional characteristics around the outline, but not in it.]
10. **Highlight** that all of these characteristics make up who you are. They are an important and very valuable part of you. If you reject them, you lose that part of you, and your family, friends, and community also lose that part of you.
11. **Ask:** What prevents men from changing the traditional norms of masculinity? What makes men continue with the traditional norms of behaviour, even when they might not want to, or when they recognize it is harmful? Facilitate a brief discussion.
12. **Ask:** Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to act or behave in a certain way, but didn't because it was not masculine? Have you ever behaved in a manner that would not be considered masculine, because you felt it was the right thing to do? What was the response of those around you? How did you feel? Facilitate a discussion.
13. **Ask:** Do you know of any men in your community who do not take on the behaviours and actions that are typically considered masculine? Are there men who take on more of the typically feminine roles, like helping with household chores, taking care of children, or sharing decision making with their wives? Are there men who speak out against violence against women? Are they any less of a man because of these actions? Why or why not? Facilitate a discussion.
14. **Highlight** that harmful norms of masculinity are often continued because of fear, including fear of being laughed at, being called "feminine" or weak, being shunned by family and friends, fear of losing control and losing respect. But those that make fun of or avoid people who do not appear masculine are almost always doing so because of their own fear and insecurity. They don't want to appear unmasculine (or feminine), so they find ways to loudly and visibly show that they are ideal men.
15. **Explain** that men may be afraid of appearing vulnerable or of losing control. But vulnerability does not mean weakness. We have all felt vulnerable at some point in our lives, and will all feel vulnerable in our lives. It is a part of being human, and can in fact make us stronger. But we don't need to be scared of showing that vulnerability. It does not make us any less of a man. In fact, it makes us a complete man, and a complete human being. You do not need to rely on others to tell you what actions or behaviours make you a man. You are the only one who can determine whether your actions are masculine or not. If you are secure with yourself, and happy with your life, there is no reason to rely on other ideas of masculinity, or to criticize other men for how they act or don't act.
16. **Explain** that gender norms associate certain behaviours as "masculine" and others as "feminine" and characterize particular individuals as masculine or feminine. But these ideas also exist at the larger group, community level. Ideas of masculinity are defined and supported in the workplace, by armies, governments, and schools. Culture plays a large role in defining masculinity. The media, TV, radio, movies, and commercials, show stereotyped images of violent masculinity. Sports events, while they can be incredibly positive, can also encourage stereotypes of masculinity.
17. **Ask:** How have group notions of masculinity been defined and supported in your community? In schools, the workplace, the media, informal groups, sports, and by the government? Facilitate a discussion encouraging examples for each site.
18. **Explain** that norms of masculinity have been associated with a wide range of harmful consequences.

19. Ask: What has been the impact of some of the notions of masculinity in your lives and in the community? What happens when you feel you have to act in a certain manner in order to be a man, even if you don't want to? Facilitate a brief discussion. Make sure to reflect that harmful notions of masculinity have been associated with:

- Harmful consequences in the lives of men themselves, including high levels of injury, such as those caused by road crashes, patterns of ill health and mortality resulting from poor diet, drug and alcohol abuse, inadequate use of health services, unsafe sexual practices, high levels of victimization (men are the majority of victims of reported violence) and imprisonment, patterns of conflict among men that lead to violence, unstable relationships, depression, fear and isolation.
- Harmful effects in the lives of others, including rape and domestic violence against women, other forms of violence, racism, patterns of ill health and infection resulting from partners' unsafe sexual practices, instability in the community, armed conflict.
- Limiting opportunities for men in areas that are not considered masculine. Limiting girls' and women's opportunities in areas that are considered masculine.

20. Explain that there is no single pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere. Different cultures have different ideas about masculinity, and norms of masculinity change over time.

21. Ask: What behaviours, actions and attitudes did your fathers and grandfathers feel were masculine? Do your behaviours, actions and attitudes differ? How? Do you see any changes in how your community views being a man? What are they? How do notions of being a man differ in other cultures? Facilitate a discussion on how notions of masculinity vary in different cultures and change over time.

22. Explain: We know that different cultures construct masculinity differently, and norms of masculinity change over time. Ideas about masculinity can change. It is critical to transform harmful ideas about masculinity so that their harmful consequences for men, women, children and the community can be prevented. Transforming these ideas into positive ones is important if we want to stay healthy, have healthy relationships, feel fulfilled in our lives, allow family and friends to know who we really are and how we really feel, end violence against women, and make our communities secure.

23. Ask: How can we change harmful ideas of masculinity? What would that change look like in our lives and in our communities? Facilitate a discussion.



Main messages

- Notions of masculinity, what it means to "be a man," are part of a community's gender norms. They include attitudes and behaviours that are learned, copied and encouraged, beginning in childhood, and strengthened throughout a man's life by the community.
- Different cultures construct masculinity differently, and norms of masculinity change over time. There is no single pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere.
- Ideas of masculinity are associated with a wide range of harmful consequences including poor health and violence against women in the community.
- Harmful norms of masculinity are often continued because of fear. The fear can be overcome and the norms transformed into alternative, positive and healthy ones. Men do not need to rely on other people's ideas of what is masculine. Men can decide for themselves what actions and behaviours make them a ideal man.



Activities

Activity: Be an ideal man

Take the original drawing of a man you drew on the flip chart and used to begin the discussion. Draw another outline. Let participants know that you would like them to help fill out the outline of this new man. This new man will be allowed to be an "ideal man." He will be allowed to think of being masculine in a new way that includes characteristics that he previously rejected.

Ask each participant to come up and fill in the new man with characteristics they feel make up an "ideal man." Ask them to look at and use all the characteristics that surround the old outline and use them to fill in the new outline so that he can be an "ideal man." Ask them to think carefully about the characteristics that are inside the old outline, that make up the old man and old masculinity. They may choose to give the new man some of the old characteristics, if they agree they are positive. [Characteristics like "helpful" for example can be included.] If someone disagrees with any characteristic, they should explain why they disagree and discuss it with the others. Participants should come to an agreement on all the new man's characteristics.

Activity: Permission slips

[For male participants]

This activity is about giving yourself permission to become an ideal man and to change harmful ideas about masculinity. Think about the new man we have created. Choose three or four characteristics that you think are really important for an ideal man. Write yourself permission slips to be that new man, and to take on those new characteristics. You don't have to show them to anyone. They are for you to keep and refer to. You may want to write a slip that says, for example:

I (name) give myself permission to walk away from a fight.

I (name) give myself permission to let my wife know if I am feeling scared or sad.

I (name) give myself permission to enjoy and be proud of my wife's accomplishments.

[For female participants]

This activity is about giving yourself permission to encourage and support your husbands, partners and sons to be ideal men and to change harmful ideas about masculinity. It is about giving yourself permission to want and expect a change in the old ideas about masculinity. Write yourself permission slips to support and expect new ideas of masculinity. You don't have to show them to anyone. They are for you to keep and refer to. You may want to write a slip that says for example:

I (name) give myself permission to expect that I will share equally with my husband in decisions about household finances, health concerns, birth control and condoms, and all other matters that affect me and my family.

I (name) give myself permission to ask my husband if he is feeling scared or sad and to encourage him to share his feelings.

I (name) give myself permission to raise my son to believe that feeling vulnerable does not mean he is weak.

Activity: Role play - The new man

Ask participants to suggest situations, or use ones from the discussion, where harmful ideas of masculinity have affected their behaviour or action. Ask for participants to role play the same situations, with the new "ideal man." Ask for examples from family life, from the workplace, or from social situations with friends who believe the old notions of masculinity. Discuss the role play with participants when it is finished. Ask them if they agree this is what a new "ideal man" would do or this is how he would respond. Why or why not?

Characters: A young, childless couple

Scenario: A wife has heard from some friends that her husband has been having affairs and is worried about getting infected with HIV. She is unable to talk with him about the affairs, but wants both of them to get tested for STIs and to use condoms. When she finally timidly raises the subject, he becomes upset. He swears he has not been unfaithful and is angry she would question his loyalty. She has no right to ask him to get tested for HIV. What would people think? And there is no way he is using a condom. He wants to have children soon.

Facilitate a discussion after the role play.

4. Gender equity



Session objectives

By the end of the session, participants should be able to:

- Define gender equity
- Explore what it means to be gender equitable and why it is important
- Explore what gender equity might look like in the home, in relationships, at work and in the community
- Identify at least five actions/ situations in their lives and communities that are not gender equitable and suggest steps to make them equitable



Session guide

1. **Ask:** What do you think the phrase "gender equity" means? What does it mean to be "gender equitable" or to have "gender equality"? Facilitate a brief discussion. List the suggestions on a flip chart, if available, or note them for discussion.
2. **Explain** that people will define gender equity and gender equality in different ways. An individual's opinion on what it means to have gender equality is connected to existing community gender norms and expectations. These norms and expectations can be changed.
3. **Explain** that gender equity is a process of being fair to women and men. Gender equity includes all the actions, attitudes, and assumptions that provide opportunities and create expectations about individuals leading to equal treatment and equal outcomes for girls and boys, women and men. Gender equity means giving girls and boys, men and women an equal chance at opportunities, resources and support.
4. **Highlight** that gender equity is not the same as gender equality. Gender equality means that the outcomes are the same for women and men. Gender equity is how we reach those outcomes, how we move towards gender equality. For example, gender equity means that parents value education for girls and boys equally and offer similar support to both. Gender equality means girls are able to reach the same level of education as boys, and have access to similar jobs. Explain that you will be discussing gender equity and why it is important.
5. **Ask:** What would gender equity look like in the home and within families? Facilitate a brief discussion. List the suggestions on a flip chart, if available, or note them for discussion.
6. **Ask** the following questions, one by one, and allow time for brief discussion after each one: Who makes decisions about how money is going to be spent? Who controls access to resources? Who makes decisions about the children's education? Who decides when someone in the family needs to visit a health centre for treatment? Who makes decisions about when and to whom children will get married? Who decides when a couple will have sex, and whether or not they will use family planning methods like condoms? Can wives decide independently what activities they want to do? If they want to leave the house to go see some friends?
7. **Explain** that gender equity is not just about equal resources. For example, a husband saying that his wife is allowed to ask for as much money as she needs for household expenses is not a gender equitable relationship. Gender equity is about men and women having equal control and decision

making power. In this example, gender equity would mean the woman would not have to rely on the husband to allow her to spend money on household expenses. They would decide together how money should be spent, listening to and respecting each other's ideas.

8. **Ask:** Are our families gender equitable? In what way are they equitable? In what way are they not equitable? What are ways we can make them gender equitable? What would happen if they were gender equitable?
9. **Explain** that this is also about ensuring that girls and boys are given the same opportunities and support and allowed to develop to their full potential. It is important to look at gender norms which prioritize boys over girls, giving boys more attention and placing greater value on their development, education and goals while limiting or devaluing girls' goals and ambitions.
10. **Ask:** Are boys treated differently than girls in the home? If yes, why? In what way? Facilitate a brief discussion. What impact does this have for girls?
11. **Ask:** What would gender equity look like in relationships? Facilitate a brief discussion. List the suggestions on a flip chart, if available, or note them for discussion.
12. **Explain** that gender equity in relationships is also about decision making and control. For example, if a couple decides to get married, and the man wants to move but the woman does not, who makes the decision? Who makes decisions about using birth control or condoms? Are there different expectations for men and women in relationships about who they can see, about going out alone, or with friends?
13. **Ask:** Are our relationships gender equitable? In what way are they equitable? In what way are they not equitable? What are ways we can make them gender equitable? What outcomes would this lead to?
14. **Ask:** What would gender equity look like in the workplace? Facilitate a brief discussion. List the suggestions on a flip chart, if available, or note them for discussion.
15. **Explain** that gender equity in the workplace means ensuring that women and men are treated fairly, given the same opportunities for advancement and paid the same amount of money for the same work. It means that their performance is measured by the same standards and that men are not treated better than women. It also means that sexual harassment is treated as a serious abuse of power, incidents are investigated and punished, and a culture of respect is developed with no tolerance for harassment. [See Background Notes for information on sexual harassment.]
16. **Ask:** Are our workplaces gender equitable? In what way are they equitable? In what way are they not equitable? What are ways we can make them more equitable? What outcomes would this lead to?
17. **Ask:** What would gender equity look like in the community? Facilitate a brief discussion. List the suggestions on a flip chart, if available, or note them for discussion.
18. **Explain** that gender equity in the community involves ensuring that women are allowed to participate fully and equally in the community's social, economic and political life, and not limited by the community in the choices they make because of gender norms. Practically, it means ending laws, practices and attitudes that discriminate against women in the community. It also means that sexual harassment in the community is treated as a serious abuse of power, incidents are investigated and punished, and a culture of respect is developed with no tolerance for harassment. [See Background Notes for information on sexual harassment.]
19. **Explain** if needed that gender discrimination refers to "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender norms which prevents a person from enjoying their human rights." It includes denying opportunities and privileges to someone because of their sex. What does this mean? Any barrier that a woman has to face which prevents her from doing the basic things she needs to do to carry on her life, including getting a job, buying food, fish, water

and other essentials for her family and getting health care, and which she faces because she is a woman (and men don't face the same barriers) is discrimination.

20. **Explain** that gender equity in the community also involves taking action to correct historical inequity and inequality. For example, if girls have historically been excluded from certain schools or programs, steps should be taken to actively recruit, support and keep girls in those programs. If women have historically been excluded from positions of leadership in the community, steps should be taken to actively encourage and support women's participation in leadership roles. Laws that discriminate against women should be changed or done away with. These steps need to be taken to ensure that gender equality can be reached in the community.
21. **Ask:** Are our communities gender equitable? In what way are they equitable? In what way are they not equitable? What are ways we can make them more equitable? What outcomes would this lead to?
22. **Explain** that while gender equity in the community has a lot to do with government action, such as passing laws; it also has even more to do with the actions and attitudes of community members. The community plays a large role in how women and girls are viewed and how they are treated, whether they are given the same respect and whether their goals and ambitions are valued as much as those of men and boys. A woman who finds herself in a very unequal situation, at home or in the community, may feel it is too difficult to change her situation. She may feel that there will be little support if she tries to create some change. But it is important to remember that women all over the world have been advocating for equality for a long time. Strong local women's groups exist in many communities that could serve as resource centres, and places to get assistance. By speaking out and joining together, women have brought significant change to areas many felt would never change.
23. **Ask:** Why are gender equity and gender equality important? Facilitate a brief discussion. After getting at least five to ten responses, guide the discussion to highlight the following, if they haven't already been raised.
 - Gender equitable families are more stable, are healthier overall (physical and emotional health), have less tension and violence, report fewer instances of depression and suicidal thoughts, report greater levels of satisfaction and happiness, have healthier gender role models for children, provide an environment where children are allowed to develop to their full potential, and girls develop confidence in their ability to pursue their goals.
 - Gender equitable relationships demonstrate less tension and violence, encourage and support joint communication and decisions that promote safe sex and overall health (physical and mental health), and provide good role models for the community.
 - Gender equitable workplaces benefit greatly from women's ideas, energy and experience. They report greater overall success. Gender equitable workplaces increase opportunities for women, allowing them greater financial freedom, and the ability to contribute economically to their families and their communities.
 - Gender equitable communities benefit greatly from women's full participation and contribution in social, economic and political life. They report less violence, greater stability, greater economic growth and development, more equitable distribution of resources, and fewer reported public health problems (physical and mental health).



Main messages

- Gender equity is a process of being fair to women and men. It means giving girls and boys, men and women an equal chance at opportunities, resources and support.
- Gender equity is rooted in transforming unequal gender norms into gender equitable norms.
- Gender equity results in equal treatment for women and men in the family, in relationships, in the workplace and in the community.
- Gender equity and equality have benefits for individual, family and community physical and mental health, economic development, and family and community stability.



Activity: Is it gender equitable or inequitable?

Invite all participants to stand. Explain that you are going to read some scenarios. You would like participants to stand to the right if they think the scenarios are gender equitable, to the left if they think the scenarios are gender inequitable, and in the middle if they are unsure. Read the following scenarios one by one. Repeat each one if necessary to make sure everyone understands. For each one, facilitate a brief discussion asking at least two participants why they chose the way they did.

1. A husband and wife are relatively well off. The husband says that he gives his wife whatever amount of money she asks for or needs. He has never said no to something she has asked for, and claims he never will.
 - Make sure to emphasize that this is not equitable, because the wife has to depend on the husband to give her money. Even though he says he gives her all the money she needs, she is not able to make any decisions or have any control. He can decide at some point that he will not give her money. Also, she may be scared to ask him for money for certain things.
2. A family of little means with five children has enough money to send three of them to school. The youngest daughter, thirteen years old, is engaged to be married to an older, well respected and relatively well off man. As she will be taken care of, she will not be sent to school.
 - Make sure to emphasize that this is not equitable, because the girl's opportunities are being limited because she is a girl. The parents have made the decision to marry her off at a young age. She will not have the opportunity to get an education and decide if and how to use that education. She may be "taken care of" by her well off husband, but will not be able to choose another path for herself.
3. Two applicants for a position, a man and a woman, have similar backgrounds and similar experience. The organization has never had a woman in the particular position before. They hire the woman for the job.
 - Make sure to emphasize that this is equitable, because the organization is taking positive steps to correct the fact that women have always been kept from having that position. Part of gender equity is to make up for situations where women and men have not been treated equally.
4. A woman comes in to a health centre. She is visibly upset and looks somewhat unsure. After some time, she lets the counselor know that she needs to leave her husband and would like some assistance with referrals or recommendations. The counselor asks her why she wants to leave the husband. The woman is unable to answer her, and remains visibly upset.

The counselor knows the woman has few resources (her husband has the money), will not be able to access other services easily, and is worried about what will happen to her. The counselor tells the woman she should go home and work out her problems with her husband. The counselor notes the discussion in the file.

- Make sure to emphasize that this is not equitable. The counselor has made a number of assumptions about the woman and is not allowing her to make her own decision about leaving her husband. The woman's unequal financial situation and the counselor's assumption that she would be better off with her husband have affected the kind of support provided. Health practitioners have an obligation to promote and protect health and to do no harm. In this case, the counselor has not taken steps to support a woman who has clearly asked for assistance in leaving a relationship. Presumably the counselor would have reacted very differently if a man walked in and asked for assistance.

5. Gender-based violence



Session objectives

By the end of the session, participants should be able to:

- Define gender-based violence, discuss its prevalence in the community, with a focus on intimate-partner and sexual violence and identify sites where it occurs
- Identify at least five myths and realities surrounding gender-based violence
- Identify at least five consequences of gender-based violence



Session guide

1. **Ask:** What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “gender-based violence?” What is gender-based violence? What does violence against women mean?
2. **Explain** that gender-based violence and violence against women are defined in many different ways, but for this discussion, we will use United Nations definitions that have been agreed upon by women’s groups and the majority of governments around the world.
3. **Read:** Gender-based violence against women is “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or violence that affects women disproportionately.” Violence against women includes “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”
4. **Ask:** Is there anything in the definitions I have just read that surprises you? Anything that you disagree with or that confuses you? Facilitate a brief discussion.

Depending on the questions or the group, you may want to **emphasise** the major points about gender-based violence:
 - It is violence that is committed against women because they are women.
 - It is violence that affects only women, or women more than men, because they are women.
 - It includes physical, psychological (emotional), or sexual harm, or the threat of harm.
 - It includes violence in the public and the private sphere – that is, violence that occurs in the house or in the bedroom, by family members, as well as violence occurring in the open, by strangers.
5. **Explain** that gender-based violence can occur in many forms and in many situations, in the home and in the community. With this session, you want to focus on two particular types of gender-based violence: intimate partner violence and sexual violence. You want to focus on these two forms because of their widespread nature in communities around the world. Other forms, which you will raise later on in the discussion, are just as harmful and important to address.
6. **Read:** Intimate partner violence has been defined as “actual or threatened physical or sexual violence or psychological or emotional abuse directed towards a spouse, ex-spouse, current or former boyfriend or girlfriend, or current or former sexual partner.” Sexual violence is defined as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using force, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.”

7. **Ask:** Is there anything in the definitions I have just read that surprises you? Anything that you disagree with or that confuses you? Facilitate a brief discussion. Depending on the questions or the group, you may want to **emphasise** the major points:
- Actual or *threatened* violence, physical, sexual or emotional.
 - Any sexual act or *attempt* to obtain a sexual act, in *any* setting, home, community, school, work, church, regardless of the person's relationship to the victim. This includes threatening, coercing, or using blackmail to obtain a sexual act. And it includes *any* sexual act, not only penetration with a penis.
8. **Explain** that there are a lot of myths and misconceptions about gender-based violence. And it is sometimes a very difficult subject to address because of those misconceptions.
9. **Myth or reality?** Invite all participants to stand. Explain that you are going to read some statements. You would like participants to stand to the right if they agree with the statements, to the left if they disagree, and in the middle if they are unsure. Read the following statements one by one. Repeat each one if necessary to make sure everyone understands. For each one, facilitate a brief discussion asking at least two participants to talk about why they agree or disagree.
- The perpetrators of violence are usually mentally ill men.
 - Violence against women is caused by substance abuse, such as alcohol and/or drugs.
 - Violence against women is a normal part of male-female relations.
 - Violence against women is a natural expression of male feelings that cannot be avoided or changed – men can't help themselves.
 - Women's behaviour sometimes provokes men to become violent.
 - Gender-based violence is more common in some communities, and some cultures than others.
 - Violence is justified if a woman is unfaithful to her husband.
 - Hitting your wife is a way for a husband to show her he loves her.
 - Violence is justified if a woman disrespects or disobeys her husband.
 - Sometimes a woman needs to be disciplined so she remembers her place. Violence is a way of doing this.
 - A lot of women stay in violent relationships because they want to. If it was really bad, they would leave.
 - The worst consequences of gender-based violence are easily seen in bruises and other visible, physical signs of abuse.
 - Gender-based violence doesn't really happen to women in our community.
10. **Explain** that gender-based violence against women, intimate partner, or domestic violence, and sexual violence occur in great numbers in every community and every culture. Studies conducted around the world show that on average, one in three women will experience some form of violence during their lifetimes.
11. **Explain** that gender-based violence is particularly rooted in the idea of male power over women. It is used by men who are afraid they do not seem masculine enough and want to show they can control and dominate a woman. This idea is important to recognize because many people still believe that gender-based violence against women is provoked by women themselves. Women's actions are somehow responsible for making men violent. A woman who has been sexually assaulted, for example, is often questioned about the clothes she wore and whether she had been talking with the rapist or "leading him on." Her character is called into question. Men cannot control their sexual urges, and should not be punished for acting on those urges if a woman dresses in a "provocative" manner. But rape and sexual violence are not about feeling sexually attracted to someone. Many men feel sexually attracted to women and don't assault them.

Rape and sexual violence are about the need to control women. And that needs to be changed.

12. Ask: Is there gender-based violence occurring in the community? If yes, what forms are they aware of? Where does the violence occur? And what is the response?

13. Explain that gender-based violence against women is deeply rooted in traditional gender norms.

14. Emphasise that gender norms are society's expectations of how men and women should act. They are learned, and can be changed. Gender-based violence is also fueled by harmful traditional ideas of masculinity. These ideas of masculinity can be changed, and need to be changed. Gender-based violence is sometimes excused and accepted as "culture" or "tradition," but is not an unchangeable part of any culture.

15. Ask: What traditional and cultural gender-norms play a role in gender-based violence? How do these norms lead to violence, or the acceptance of violence? Facilitate a discussion.

16. Highlight the following norms and ask participants to discuss how they can lead to violence.

- The gender norm that women should listen to men, and not challenge them.
- The gender norm that women should be passive, nurturing and submissive.
- Cultural and social norms encouraging men to be aggressive, powerful and controlling, and in particular, that they should dominate women.
- The norm that "good girls" remain virgins until marriage, and refrain from engaging in or talking about sex or sexual desire.
- The norm that men should not show signs of weakness or discuss their feelings.
- The belief that husbands should control and discipline their wives.
- The norm that men cannot control their sexual urges.
- The norm that violence is an inevitable part of male-female relations.

17. Explain that gender-based violence has serious, long-lasting consequences that extend beyond the individual victim.

18. Ask: What are the consequences of gender-based violence? What impact does it have for physical health, mental health, for the family and for the community? Write down participants' responses on a flip chart if available, or note them for further discussion. Encourage participants to think of all the possible consequences of violence. Make sure you have at least ten responses.

19. Highlight the following consequences:

Physical health consequences include:

- Long-lasting pain and injury.
- Disability (limbs and senses).
- Deformity.
- Reproductive and sexual health problems including infertility, gynecological disorders, pelvic inflammatory disease, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy complications, miscarriage, unsafe abortions and unsafe pregnancies.
- Death.

Emotional and mental health consequences include:

- Depression.
- Suicidal thoughts and attempts.
- Mental trauma: serious impact on a person's emotional and mental health, including nervous breakdowns and shock.
- Loss of memory or the ability to think clearly.

Consequences for the family include:

- Children who witness violence demonstrate high rates of emotional health problems.
- Children who witness violence are more likely to be violent with other people themselves or be more accepting if they experience violence later on.
- Physically incapacitated or traumatized women may be unable to take care of their children.
- Physically incapacitated or traumatized women may not be able to return to work, resulting in a loss of resources for the family.

Consequences for the community include:

- Violence prevents women from fully participating in their communities, socially and economically.
- Violence against women in families is closely associated with greater overall violence in the community and society.
- Greater violence in the community and society undermines overall security in the community.
- Violence against women also has tremendous economic costs for the community, including the direct costs of health, social and legal services and the indirect costs of lost resources.

20. Ask: Do you think anything is missing from the list? Did you miss anything when you came up with your lists? Did any of the consequences I've just talked about surprise you?

21. Emphasise again that gender-based violence has profound, negative consequences for women and girls' mental and physical health. The long-term impact of such violence can be seen in illness throughout their lifetime. Girls and women who experience violence continue to suffer from its consequences throughout their lives. Gender-based violence also impacts the family and the community. It is therefore a very important issue to address.

22. Ask: How can gender-based violence be addressed in the community? Facilitate a discussion, making sure to highlight the need for community members to speak out against violence against women, for men to join women in calling for an end to violence.

23. Emphasise that it is important to think about traditional, harmful gender norms and their impact on individuals and the community. **Ask:** How can we begin to transform harmful traditional gender norms? Facilitate a discussion on this, and guide it to include the importance of communication, respect, modeling positive behaviour, recognizing negative attitudes and behaviours, and actively changing and discouraging them.



Main messages

- Gender-based violence can occur in many forms in the home and in the community.
- Gender-based violence is deeply rooted in harmful traditional gender norms and notions of masculinity. These norms can be changed.
- Gender-based violence has serious consequences for mental and physical health. It also impacts the family, community and society as a whole.



Activity: In Her Shoes³

Ask for volunteers to role play the following scenarios. You may want to ask for men to play women's roles and women to play men's roles. After each role play, ask participants to discuss.

- 1) **Characters:** A young wife and her older husband

Scenario: A young wife comes home a little late. Her husband is annoyed, and suspects she is having an affair. He is also scared that she will leave him, but is unable to express his fears. He confronts her and demands to know where she was.

- 2) **Characters:** A teenage girl and her parents

Scenario: Community gossip has reached the parents regarding the fact that their teenage daughter is hanging out with boys. The parents are upset about this and greatly worried about their daughter's reputation, as well as their reputation in the community. The daughter comes home in the afternoon. She looks like she has been crying. She shakily tells her parents some boys assaulted her after school.

- 3) **Characters:** A middle-age woman with three children and her mother-in-law

Scenario: The woman's husband has been abusing her for a while. She desperately wants to leave, but she has no resources of her own and is worried about losing her three kids. Her mother-in-law tries to convince her that she should stay with her husband and do her best to keep him happy so he won't get angry all the time.

- 4) **Characters:** A young woman and a man she does not know

Scenario: A man approaches an attractive young woman in a bar. They strike up a conversation which both appear to be enjoying. The man suggests that they go back to his place. She responds that she is not interested and begins to get up. The man thinks that she is acting flirtatious and is clearly interested in going home with him, despite her protestations.

- 5) **Characters:** A married woman and a health worker

Scenario: The woman has come in for a health check-up. She knows that her husband has had several affairs. She is worried she might have contracted a sexually transmitted infection. The health worker suggests a number of tests, including one for HIV infection. The health worker also happens to be the husband's friend.

³Adapted from: Washington State Coalition against Domestic Violence "In Her Shoes" (2004), Seattle, Washington <http://www.wscadv.org/Resources>.



Background notes

Sex means characteristics that are related to a person's biology. These characteristics cannot be changed and make up a woman and a man's sexual attributes. Sexual characteristics include: women can bear children, have menstrual periods and have breasts. Men grow beards and mustaches, can father children (give sperm through sexual intercourse) and may grow bald.

Gender refers to characteristics, roles and relations between men and women that are taught and learned. These differences are deeply rooted in every culture and community, but they can and have changed over time. They also differ greatly within and between cultures. Gender characteristics include: women are good at taking care of children and are naturally emotional. Men are good at handling money and are naturally rational.

Some characteristics and roles may be very hard to change. They may be deeply rooted in our traditions, our culture, and the social nature of the community. We may not want some of them to change. They may make some of us comfortable. But this is not the same as saying that they *cannot* be changed or *should* not be changed. We can choose to change them, and take on different roles and characteristics.

Gender norms means what the community considers acceptable behaviour for women and men. We learn these norms by observing how others act, and listening to what our parents, friends and community tell us we should do. Gender norms show how a community expects men and women to behave and what it expects them to do. They are not the same as sexual characteristics, which cannot be changed. But individuals do not have to follow what society expects of them, because they are women and men. They can choose the roles that they would like to take on.

Masculine means qualities that are traditionally male. Ideas of masculinity, or what it means to "be a man," are part of a society's and a community's gender norms. They include attitudes and behaviours that are learned, copied and encouraged, beginning in childhood, and strengthened throughout a man's life by the community. Ideas of masculinity cannot exist and develop separate from a community's actions and support. They are developed as people act and communities encourage particular behaviours and discourage others. Masculinity then becomes a part of a community's deeply rooted norms.

Traditional, harmful notions of masculinity lead men to hide their true selves, their true feelings and ambitions. Men may feel one way, but act another because they are worried about what their family and friends may say and what they will think. They may hide feelings of doubt, fear, concern, caring, and sadness because they are not masculine.

Harmful norms of masculinity are often continued because of fear, including fear of being laughed at, being called feminine or weak, being shunned by family and friends, fear of losing control and losing respect. But those that make fun of or avoid people who do not appear masculine are almost always doing so because of their own fear and insecurity. They don't want to appear unmasculine (or feminine), so they find ways to loudly and visibly show that they are ideal men. Men may be afraid of appearing vulnerable or of losing control. But vulnerability does not mean weakness. It is a part of being human, and can in fact make us stronger.

Gender norms associate certain behaviours as "masculine" and others as "feminine" and characterize particular individuals as masculine or feminine. But these ideas also exist at the larger group, community level. Ideas of masculinity are defined and supported in the workplace, by armies, governments, and schools. Culture plays a large role in defining masculinity. The media, TV, radio, movies, and commercials, show stereotyped images of violent masculinity. Sports events, while they can be incredibly positive, also encourage stereotypes of masculinity.

Norms of masculinity have been associated with a wide range of harmful consequences to men, including:

- High levels of injury, such as those caused by road accidents.
- Patterns of ill health and death resulting from poor diet, drug, and alcohol abuse.
- Poor use of health services or not using services at all.
- Unsafe sexual practices.
- High levels of victimization (men are the majority of victims of reported violence) and imprisonment.
- Patterns of conflict among men that lead to violence, unstable relationships, depression, fear and isolation.

Norms of masculinity might also encourage some harmful effects in the lives of others, including rape and domestic violence against women, other forms of violence, racism, patterns of ill health and infection resulting from partners' unsafe sexual practices, instability in the community, and armed conflict. The perception of masculinity can also limit opportunities for men in areas that are not considered masculine, as well as limit girls' and women's opportunities in areas that are considered masculine.

There is no single pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere. Different cultures have different ideas about masculinity, and norms of masculinity change over time. So we know that ideas about masculinity can change. It is critical to transform harmful ideas about masculinity so that their harmful consequences for men, women, children and the community can be prevented. Transforming these ideas into positive ones is important if we want to stay healthy, have healthy relationships, feel fulfilled in our lives, allow family and friends to know who we really are and how we really feel, end violence against women, and make our communities secure.

Gender equity is a process of being fair to women and men. Gender equity includes all the actions, attitudes, and assumptions that provide opportunities and create expectations about individuals leading to equal treatment and equal outcomes for girls and boys, women and men. Gender equity means giving girls and boys, men and women an equal chance at opportunities, resources and support.

Gender **equity** is not the same as gender **equality**. Gender equality means that the outcomes are the same for women and men. Gender equity is how we reach those outcomes, how we move towards gender equality. For example, gender equity means that parents value education for girls and boys equally and offer similar support to both. Gender equality means girls are able to reach the same level of education as boys, and have access to similar jobs.

Gender equity is not just about equal resources. For example, a husband saying that his wife is allowed to ask for as much money as she needs for household expenses is not a gender equitable relationship. Gender equity is about men and women having equal control and decision making power. In this example, gender equity would mean the woman would not have to rely on the husband to allow her to spend money on household expenses. They would decide together how money should be spent, listening and respecting each other's ideas.

Gender equity is also about ensuring that girls and boys are given the same opportunities and support and allowed to develop to their full potential. It is important to look at gender norms which prioritize boys over girls, giving boys more attention and placing greater value on their development, education and goals while limiting or devaluing girls' goals and ambitions.

Gender equity in relationships is also about decision making and control. For example, if a couple decides to get married, and the man wants to move but the woman does not, who makes the decision? Who makes decisions about using birth control or condoms? Are there different expectations for men and women in relationships about who they can see, about going out alone, or with friends?

Gender equity in the workplace means ensuring that women and men are treated fairly, given the same opportunities for advancement and paid the same amount of money for the same work. It means that their performance is measured by the same standards and that men are not treated better than women. It also means that sexual harassment is treated as a serious abuse of power, incidents are investigated and punished, and a culture of respect is developed with no tolerance for harassment.

Sexual harassment means any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. It usually refers to unwanted sexual advances and requests for sexual favors in the workplace, including for example, a colleague repeatedly making sexual advances when he has been told they are unwelcome, or a boss suggesting that someone will not get a promotion if she does not sleep with him. However, sexual harassment also includes similar situations in the community. For example, if a woman is told she needs to sleep with the man from whom she buys food for her family, that is sexual harassment. If a sugar cane grower is told she needs to sleep with the person who is buying the sugar cane, and that is her only means of livelihood, that is also sexual harassment.

If a person is sexually harassed they should report the event to authorities as soon as possible. Speaking out about what is happening is the only way to begin bringing attention to the matter and fight back against this harmful action. A victim may not be the only person that has suffered this abuse, there could be other people. A victim of sexual harassment could speak with the managers of the company or the boss of the employee who conducted the harassment, the police, community leaders or organizations that work in the area of gender relations, gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

Gender equity in the community involves ensuring that women are allowed to participate fully and equally in the community's social, economic and political life, and not limited by the community in the choices they make because of gender norms. Practically, it means ending laws, practices and attitudes that discriminate against women in the community.

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. It includes denying opportunities and privileges to someone because of their sex. What does this mean? Any barrier that a woman has to face which prevents her from doing the basic things she needs to do to carry on her life, including getting a job, buying food, fish, water and other essentials for her family and getting health care, and which she faces because she is a woman (and men don't face the same barriers) is discrimination.

While gender equity in the community has a lot to do with government action, such as passing laws, it also has even more to do with the actions and attitudes of community members. The community plays a large role in how women and girls are viewed and how they are treated, whether they are given the same respect and whether their goals and ambitions are valued as much as those of men and boys. A woman who finds herself in a very unequal situation, at home or in the community, may feel it is too difficult to change her situation. She may feel that there will be little support if she tries to create some change. But it is important to remember that women all over the world have been advocating for equality for a long time. Strong local women's groups exist in many communities that could serve as resource centres, and places to get assistance. By speaking out and joining together, women have brought significant change to areas many felt would never change.

Gender equity in the community also involves taking action to correct historical inequity and inequality. For example, if girls have historically been excluded from certain schools or programs, steps should be taken to actively recruit, support and keep girls in those programs. If women have historically been excluded from positions of leadership in the community, steps should be taken to actively encourage and support women's participation in leadership roles. Laws that discriminate against women should be changed or done away with. These steps need to be taken to ensure that gender equality can be reached in the community.

Gender equity and equality have benefits for individual, family and community physical and mental health, economic development and family and community stability.

Gender-based violence against women is “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or violence that affects women disproportionately.” Violence against women includes “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”

Gender-based violence:

- Is violence that is committed against women because they are women.
- Is violence that affects only women, or women more than men, because they are women.
- Includes physical, psychological (emotional), or sexual harm, or the threat of harm.
- Includes violence in the public and the private sphere – that is, violence that occurs in the house or in the bedroom, by family members, as well as violence occurring in the open, by strangers.

Gender-based violence can occur in many forms and in many situations, in the home and in the community. While this session focuses on two particular forms of gender-based violence, intimate partner and sexual violence, other forms include trafficking of women and girls, sexual harassment, harmful traditional practices or rituals such as female genital mutilation, and early marriage and slavery of women and girls.

Intimate partner violence, sometimes known as domestic violence, is defined as “actual or threatened physical or sexual violence or psychological or emotional abuse directed towards a spouse, ex-spouse, current or former boyfriend or girlfriend, or current or former sexual partner.”

Sexual violence is defined as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.” It includes:

- Actual or *threatened* violence, physical, sexual or emotional.
- Any sexual act or *attempt* to obtain a sexual act, in any setting, home, community, school, work, church, regardless of the person’s relationship to the victim. This includes threatening, coercing, or using blackmail to obtain a sexual act. And it includes *any* sexual act, not only penetration with a penis.

Gender-based violence against women, intimate partner or domestic violence, and sexual violence occur in great numbers in every community and every culture. Studies conducted around the world show that on average, one in three women will experience some form of violence during their lifetimes.

Gender-based violence against women is deeply rooted in traditional gender norms. It is also fueled by harmful traditional ideas of masculinity. These ideas of masculinity can be changed, and need to be changed. Gender-based violence is sometimes excused and accepted as “culture” or “tradition,” but is not an unchangeable part of any culture.

Gender-based violence is particularly rooted in the idea of male power over women. It is used by men who are afraid they do not seem masculine enough and want to show they can control and dominate a woman. This idea is important to recognise because many people still believe that gender-based violence against women is provoked by women themselves. Women’s actions are somehow responsible for making men violent. A woman who has been sexually assaulted, for example, is often questioned about the clothes she wore and whether she had been talking with the rapist or “leading him on.” Her character is called into question. Men cannot control their sexual urges, and should not be punished for acting on those urges if a woman dresses in a “provocative” manner.

But rape and sexual violence are not about feeling sexually attracted to someone. Many men feel sexually attracted to women and don't assault them. Rape and sexual violence are about the need to control women. And that must be changed.

Gender-based violence has serious, often long-lasting consequences that extend beyond the individual victim.

Physical health consequences include:

- Serious, long-lasting pain and injury.
- Disability (limbs and senses).
- Deformity.
- Reproductive and sexual health problems including infertility, gynecological disorders, pelvic inflammatory disease, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy complications, miscarriage, unsafe abortions and unsafe pregnancies.
- Death.

Emotional and mental health consequences include:

- Depression.
- Suicidal thoughts and attempts.
- Mental trauma: serious impact on a person's emotional and mental health, including nervous breakdowns and shock.
- Loss of memory or the ability to think clearly.

Consequences for the family include:

- Children who witness violence demonstrate high rates of emotional health problems.
- Children who witness violence are more likely to be violent with other people themselves or be more accepting if they experience violence later on.
- Physically incapacitated or traumatized women may be unable to take care of their children.
- Physically incapacitated or traumatized women may not be able to return to work, resulting in a loss of resources for the family.

Consequences for the community include:

- Violence prevents women from fully participating in their communities, socially and economically.
- Violence against women in families is closely associated with greater overall violence in the community and society.
- Greater violence in the community and society undermines overall security in the community.
- Violence against women also has tremendous economic costs for the community, including the direct costs of health, social and legal services and the indirect costs of lost resources.

Women who are victims of gender-based violence should talk to a health worker, community leader, their family members, the police, community organizations, and women's groups that work on gender-based violence or a trusted source to get help with the problem. Women should recognize that it is their right to live a life free from violence. It is important to break the silence around the issue of gender-based violence. Women can start by letting a friend or a relative know about the violence they are experiencing. Gender-based violence affects countless women in every community.

By breaking the silence, women can find the support they need from hearing about other women's stories and recognizing they are not alone. They may want to get together with other women to form a support group for discussing what options they may have. Gender-based violence is a crime in Kenya.

Survivors should never be afraid of reporting such violence to the police, even if the police do not appear helpful. If necessary and possible, women should find emergency shelter. Numerous women's groups provide legal assistance and other forms of counselling for survivors. It is also a good idea to get some assistance with the process of reporting crimes, which many groups provide.

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.