



FOCUS 'N GE

Plan International Canada | March 2017



DID YOU KNOW?

The Evolution of GE in Plan International:

Gender equality and mainstreaming formally adopted as corporate directives in 2004.

The *Gender Equality Protocol* approved in 2005.

Because I am a Girl report is launched in 2007.

ROA approves a regional gender policy in 2010.

The Global Gender Equality Reference Group (GGERG) is put into place in 2010.

Plan's Policy on Gender Equality is approved in 2011.

RESA pilots the Gender Equality Self-Assessment (GESA) process in 2011.

Plan is recognized as a lead organization on girls' rights at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)—2010 & 2011.

Plan's Strategy on Gender Equality (2012-2016) is launched in 2012.

Plan's Strategy on Gender Equality (2012-2016) externally evaluated.

Revised policy/strategy coming soon.

A MESSAGE FROM THE GENDER EQUALITY TEAM

Hey all!

Happy International Women's Day! This day is all about unity, celebration, reflection, advocacy and action. It has been observed since the early 1900s reflecting women's struggle for equality and celebrating their social, economic, political and cultural achievements. We invite you to **Be Bold** and add your voice **For Change** by clicking on the global campaign link on the last page.

What better day, to launch the first CNO **Focus 'n GE!**



Through this bulletin we will periodically invite you to pause and reflect on gender equality: what it means to you personally and at work. We will share news from the GE world; offer actionable content; provocative thoughts; thematic discussions and fun tidbits. But above all we invite you to engage and contribute to the discussion with your ideas, stories and articles! Send us your burning question too!

As we move towards being mission driven and GE being a core mission, we will all have to walk the talk of gender equality.

Let's walk together. And as we walk, let's talk, to get to the same GE talk!

And so we begin our **Focus 'n GE** series by laying the GE foundation. Many of you may already know these concepts, but a refresher is always good for solidifying our shared understanding!



UNDERSTANDING GENDER EQUALITY

SEX VS. GENDER

Sex and Gender are fundamentally different.

Sex is about **biological differences**. People are born male or female. With a few exceptions, they remain male or female throughout their lives in terms of their biological make-up. The biological differences between men and women are universal and are generally difficult to change.

Gender on the other hand is about the **social differences** and relations between men and women, girls and boys, that are learned, vary widely within and between cultures, and change over time.

Unlike gender, sex differences are not affected by history or culture. For example, at all times in history and in all societies it remains true that only women can give birth and breastfeed and only men can produce sperm.

Gender is an **important variable in society** and intersects with other variables such as age, class or caste, race or ethnicity, or disability, and by the geographical, economic and political environment.

Gender roles, values, norms and stereotypes

People from different cultures and traditions usually have different ideas and expectations about the *characteristics, abilities and behavior* of women/girls and men/boys—or femininity and masculinity.

Gender values and norms are ideas people have on what men/boys and

women/girls should be like. For example, in many societies women should be “feminine”: beautiful, obedient and good housewives. Men, on the other hand, are expected to be “masculine”: strong, brave and leaders of the family and community.

Gender roles are activities that men/boys and women/girls carry out. They vary according to individual characteristics of people, the socioeconomic, political and cultural context. Gender roles can be rigid or flexible, similar or different, conflicting or complementary. Gender roles change over time. For example, in many societies the roles of men and women are segregated by sex with men working outside the house and women responsible for family and household chores at home. However these roles are increasingly interchangeable between men and women.



WOMEN'S ROLES: THE “TRIPLE BURDEN”

Productive: work that generates production or income and has economic value

Reproductive: procreation and wellbeing of family as well as continuity of the society includes biological, labour and social reproduction

Community: collective organization of social events and services

GENDER STEREOTYPES are unquestioned beliefs about women and men that are seen as true and unchangeable. They are notions about what boys and men, girls and women are capable of doing, for example, women are better housekeepers and men are better leaders.

GENDER SOCIALIZATION

Gender socialization is the process of learning gender roles. Expectations about what it means to be a boy/man or girl/woman shape our lives. Parents, teachers, friends, media, education, religion, and the community take part in it.

Our ideas and experiences about gender affect what we do and how we relate to others in every aspect of our lives. It **impacts everyone**—from birth through childhood, adulthood and old age. It leads us to adopt **attitudes and expectations** about males and females. It guides who has **power** and who is **valued**.

Four Key Impacts of Gender Socialization:

1. Boys/men and girls/women are praised, rewarded and punished for different behaviour and activities
2. Boys/men and girls/women limit their expectations of each other and themselves based on gendered roles and stereotypes
3. Girls/women and boys/men are given different access to resources and opportunities based on these socialized roles and stereotypes
4. Girls/women and boys/men experience different types and (degrees) of benefits from development—and also different exposure to risks



“WE ARE ALL INFLUENCED BY GENDER.”



SEX OR GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION!

Most legal texts use the term **sex discrimination**. However, some laws now also use the term **gender discrimination**. In either case it is *any* distinction, exclusion or preference based on sex or gender values, norms or stereotypes, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity and treatment. In most countries, discrimination based on sex is prohibited by law. In practice, however, women around the world including Canada continue to encounter discrimination in one form or another in life and at work.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect. **Direct discrimination** exists when unequal treatment between the two sexes stems directly from laws, rules or practices making an explicit difference between them. For example, a labour code providing that women will receive less pay than men because of their sex, laws which do not allow women to sign contracts but allow men to do so, or setting different legal ages of marriage for girls and boys.

Indirect discrimination means rules and practices which appear neutral but in practice lead to disadvantages. For example, paying women less than men for the same job or setting job

requirements or criteria which are seemingly neutral but are irrelevant to the job (such as requiring a minimum height or weight for a manager) and in practice exclude a large percentage of female or male applicants.

THE DOUBLE WHAMMY OF DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination usually does not come as a stand-alone event, and is not an exceptional or aberrant occurrence, resulting from isolated acts. It is a systematic phenomenon, deeply embedded in the way societies and organizations function—known as structural discrimination. Repeated experiences with discrimination are internalized and perpetuated leading to a vicious cycle of cumulative disadvantage.



SO WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY?

It is **NOT** about having the same number of men and women, or girls and boys, in all spheres and activities. And it is **NOT** about treating men and women, boys and girls, exactly the same.

Equal is not the same!

Four elements defining gender equality:

1. Women/girls enjoy the same status in society as men/boys and are equally respected
2. The different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women/girls and men/boys are considered and valued equally
3. Their rights, opportunities and responsibilities do not depend on whether they are born male or female
4. They have the same power to shape their lives and are free to develop their personal skills and make choices without limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and biases.

Promoting **Gender Equality** means transforming **power relations** to create a **just** society for all! It is **our goal** in all we do!

Gender equity

A common error is to conflate gender equality with gender equity. They are not the same. Gender equality is the goal and gender equity is the **means** to the goal of attaining gender equality. It is the approach that ensures both sexes are treated fairly and both are given an equal chance towards equal outcomes in their lives. It is the means to create an equal and level playing field for both sexes. For example, if there is inequality in school enrolment rates between boys and girls and action is taken to prioritize the enrolment of girls compared to boys, that action, does not discriminate against boys, but is positive or affirmative action (also known as positive discrimination) towards girls. This action can be vice versa too, if boys are at a disadvantage, relative to girls. A typical example relating to boys is exclusive breastfeeding. In many societies fewer boys are exclusively breastfed compared to girls due to the notion that boys need to grow stronger and need more

DEBUNKING SOME COMMON GENDER MISNOMERS!

“There is no use in distinguishing between sex and gender because men and women have always been like they are now.”

Not true, as the roles of women and men differ in societies and have changed and continue to change over time!

“We can’t expect men and women to be the same because they are, in fact, different.”

True and difference is not bad but there is a distinction between difference and inequality. The difference between males and females is not a problem. The problem is that we are taught to value male characteristics over female characteristics. The point is not to eliminate the difference, but to understand and eliminate the inequalities that are based on these differences.

“Women and men are hard-wired to perform certain roles naturally, not all roles are learned.”

The nature vs. nurture debate is unresolved. We cannot claim to know with absolute certainty what babies are born with and what characteristics are developed in life. Gender allows us to distinguish between biological and social characteristics. For example, we can’t say for certain whether males or females are born caregivers. But, it is undisputable that societies have historically expected only women and girls to care for their households thereby limited their opportunities and choices

sustenance resulting in placing boys at a health disadvantage as they are fed other foods. In this case the approach will be to promote exclusive breastfeeding of both boys and girls but specifically focussing on boys. This illustration below defines gender equity.



Such measures are special, usually temporary and designed to redress the effects of past or continuing discrimination and inequality. Such action does not imply that its beneficiaries have something wrong with them or are disadvantaged by nature. They are based on the recognition that inequalities have become entrenched in institutions and societies.



WHAT WOULD AN **EQUITABLE** APPROACH BE IN THIS STORY?

The Fox and the Crane (equal treatment does not mean the same treatment)

The fox invited the Crane to dinner. He served the food in a large flat dish. The Crane with her long, narrow beak could not eat.

The Crane invited the Fox to dinner. She served the food in a deep vase, and so the Fox with his short, wide face could not eat.

Both friends had an equal opportunity for nourishment, but each time one of them could not take advantage of the opportunity.

GENDER GAP VS. GENDER JUSTICE

Gender gap

Difference in attainment of basic capabilities between women/ men and boys/girls.

Gender justice

Ending inequalities that result in the subordination of one sex relative to the other (usually women and girls) by emphasis on transforming unequal power relations.

EMPOWERMENT

Plan International defines power as the ability to shape one's life and one's environment. Gender-based empowerment involves building women's and girls' assets (social, economic, political and personal), strengthening their ability to make choices about their future, and developing women's and girls' sense of self-worth and their belief in their own ability to control their lives.



UNPACKING “POWER”

Social position affects a person’s power in relation to others. This is why all social relations are essentially power relations. But is all power the same? Not so...think about the types of power defined above. What examples come to your mind?

Every aspect of our work can increase or decrease existing power imbalances. We need to always be mindful how gender, age and position affect people and take steps to ensure equality for all!

GENDER NEEDS

Roles of men and women are different therefore their needs are different!

Practical needs are basic needs or survival needs, e.g. food, water, shelter, income, clothing and healthcare. Meeting practical needs is about improving living **conditions** of men/boys and women/girls.

Strategic needs or interests are the needs for equality and empowerment of both women/girls and men/boys, e.g. sharing of family care and decision making, political participation, freedom from violence etc.. Meeting strategic needs is about redressing inequalities and improving the **position** of women and girls relative to men and boys.



POWER OVER is the ability to control others, or to impose views, needs or desires over them.

POWER WITHIN is the confidence, skills and assets that can move someone to claim their rights, even when they are in a marginalised position.

POWER WITH comes from working with others to claim our rights and to achieve collective goals.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S CRITERIA TO ASSESS OUR PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS

GENDER-UNAWARE: do not recognize gender issues, reproduce gender stereotypes and tend to aggravate gender inequalities between girls/ women and boys/men.

GENDER NEUTRAL: recognize differences between girls/women and boys/men, but don't call attention to gender discrimination or inequality and so tend to reinforce gender inequalities.

GENDER-AWARE: challenge gender stereotypes, expose gender-based discrimination and seek to improve the daily condition of women and girls by addressing practical gender issues. They do not try to transform gender relations.

GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE: address the root causes of gender inequality and promote the value of women and girls. Explicit intention to transform unequal gender power relations. The focus goes beyond improving the condition of women and girls and seeks to improve their social position.

GE UPDATES

- Our series of **GE training** for CNO started in October 2016: two have been completed in Toronto; one with the Programs Department and one with the Emergency Response team. The next is on 15-16 March 2017 in Ottawa. Stay tuned for the next round of GE training for the Programs team and tailored ones by thematic in 2017!
- **International Women's Day** (IWD) is on March 8. It is a global day to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities. The UN theme for 2017 is: "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality" linking with the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. The global campaign Be Bold For Change is up and running with many cool features and resources you could check out! **#BeBoldForChange**



FEEDBACK AND NEXT BULLETIN

We hope this was useful! But we would love to hear from you on what needs to be improved and what topics you would like to see in the next **Focus 'n GE!**

Send a line to our amazing Programs Assistant, Daniela: DDonia@plancanada.ca