UNIT 1 The basics

What does gender mean? What does it mean for the roles and expectations of women and men generally and for girls and boys in school?

This first unit lays the ground for the rest of Action Guide. You can start with this unit, or you can refer back to it later if you are already familiar with the concepts.

This unit looks at:
- People's understanding and experiences of gender
- Gender stereotypes and identities
- The relationship between gender and schooling and with education more broadly

Topic 1.1 Gender concepts
What does gender mean? How do people experience gender equality or inequality in their lives? How are you aware of gender in your day-to-day life and work? This topic will help you to:
- Relate basic concepts of gender to your own experience
- Define key terms

Topic 1.2 Stereotypes
After you have thought about your own experiences of gender and terms used in discussing it in Topic 1.1, this topic brings us on to stereotypes and identities. It will help you to:
- Question stereotypes of gender roles and expectations
- Relate them to your own experiences and your practice in school

Topic 1.3 Gender and education
Here we look more generally at gender and education. This topic will help you to:
- Explain how education is important for gender equality
- Outline ways in which schools are critical as a force for gender equality

Links

UNIT 2
The wider context

The basic thinking for Unit 1 underpins the analyses in Unit 2.

UNIT 3
A whole school approach

Concepts and ideas from Unit 1 can be used in raising awareness. And experiences across the school can add to the understanding of the basics.

UNIT 1 The basics

UNIT 4
Teaching and learning

Concepts and ideas from Unit 1 can be adapted as activities for use with students and teachers. And their experiences can strengthen the basic concepts.

UNIT 5
Approaches and methods

The approaches in Unit 5 are strengthened by drawing on the ideas and concepts discussed in Unit 1.

Topic 1.1 Gender concepts

What does gender mean? How do people experience gender equality or inequality in their lives? How are you aware of gender in your day-to-day life and work? These questions are a good starting point.

This topic will help you to:
• Relate basic concepts of gender to your own experience
• Define key terms

First there are some activities to help you reflect on your own experience and understanding. Then there are activities to help you explain key terms. Finally there is an example of a training session used to help teachers think about gender.

Thinking about gender

As a starting point for thinking about gender, it is useful to focus on your own early experiences. This can help you remember the messages, spoken or unspoken, that you received from family, friends and peers. You will become more aware of the influences that shape expectations about women and men: how they should behave, what they can do and what they are like.

This activity asks you to think back to when you first became aware of gender issues in your own life. Spend a few minutes thinking about these questions and make brief notes. Try to think about your own values and attitudes and how they came about.

ACTIVITY **Thinking about gender**

When did you discover that you were different from the opposite sex?

What messages did you receive as a child about gender – about the roles, qualities and expectations for girls and boys, women and men?

Where did these messages come from (e.g., family, peers, media)?

What messages did you get from your school?

How did this early learning shape your adult values and attitudes?

ACTIVITY 1.1.1

How you have replied to this activity will depend on your own experiences. If this is the first time you have done an activity like this, how did you find it? For example, you may realise that you make unconscious assumptions about the differences between boys and girls. You may also have thought about other forms of diversity and inequality, such as ethnic, religious or economic ones. You may notice the important part school can play.

Here are some other people's responses to the questions.

Experiencing gender

When did you discover that you were different from the opposite sex?
'When I was four years old, my mother would always buy a dress for me, and shorts and a shirt for my brother. She insisted that I should sit properly because I was a girl. I should kneel down when receiving something and I should always be with her in the kitchen.'

'Traditional names in Botswana communicate the roles we are expected to perform in society. Girls: 'one who fetches water', 'beauty', 'love'. Boys: 'the shepherd has come', 'the leader has come', 'a brave one'. Our roles are constructed through folktales and sayings, which typically associated girls with beauty, domestic work and child care, boys with leading and rearing cattle.'

What messages did you receive as a child about gender – about the roles, qualities and expectations for girls and boys, women and men?
'That girls have certain specific roles that they must stick to in the domestic arena. That to prove I am a good girl, leading into a good woman, I have to be careful about the way I speak, dress, dance, eat, conduct myself in society. I must not use expletives, I must always wear a long dress that covers most of my body, I must not do jumping, waist moving and knee parting dances. I must not eat a lot. I must never refuse to do chores even when I am tired, I have to take care of my young sister and younger nephews during parents' absence.'

'These definitely develop over time into more constraining stereotypes (particularly as a teenager). Only over time have I noticed how constraining gender norms can also be for men. As teenagers men had more fun, less boundaries. As adults less patriarchal-thinking men face enormous challenges.'

Where did these messages come from?
Family, families of friends, church, society at large, school, peers, books, TV, other media

What messages did you get from your school?
'Teachers encouraged boys to work hard because they will have a responsibility to look after their families as compared to girls who are

supposed to marry. Sciences subjects are for boys. Football is for boys. Woodwork is for boys. Home management, food and nutrition are for girls. But I was as intelligent as a boy when doing sciences.'

'I must have beautiful and presentable handwriting. I must look neat in my dressing, the way I wash, and that I must walk in a ladylike posture.'

How did this early learning shape your adult values and attitudes?
'Early socialisation was seen as instilling discipline and moulding children into responsible adults, but the modern age in a way undermines these structures. I tend to differ from the traditional set up and agree with the modern, to say I can also do any work irrespective of sex – and that is why I emerged as one of the ladies' school heads.'

'I am one person torn between two persons! I tend to want other girls to emulate my younger self. I feel I lost some freedom of childhood which nobody can restore now. I do feel embarrassed when women behave in ways that the society does not value.'

[SOUTHERN AFRICA TRIALLING WORKSHOP]

Has the activity raised any further points for reflection or discussion? If so, note them down. You could also try out the activity with colleagues and then compare and discuss your experiences.

Defining terms

There are a number of key terms in common use when discussing gender.
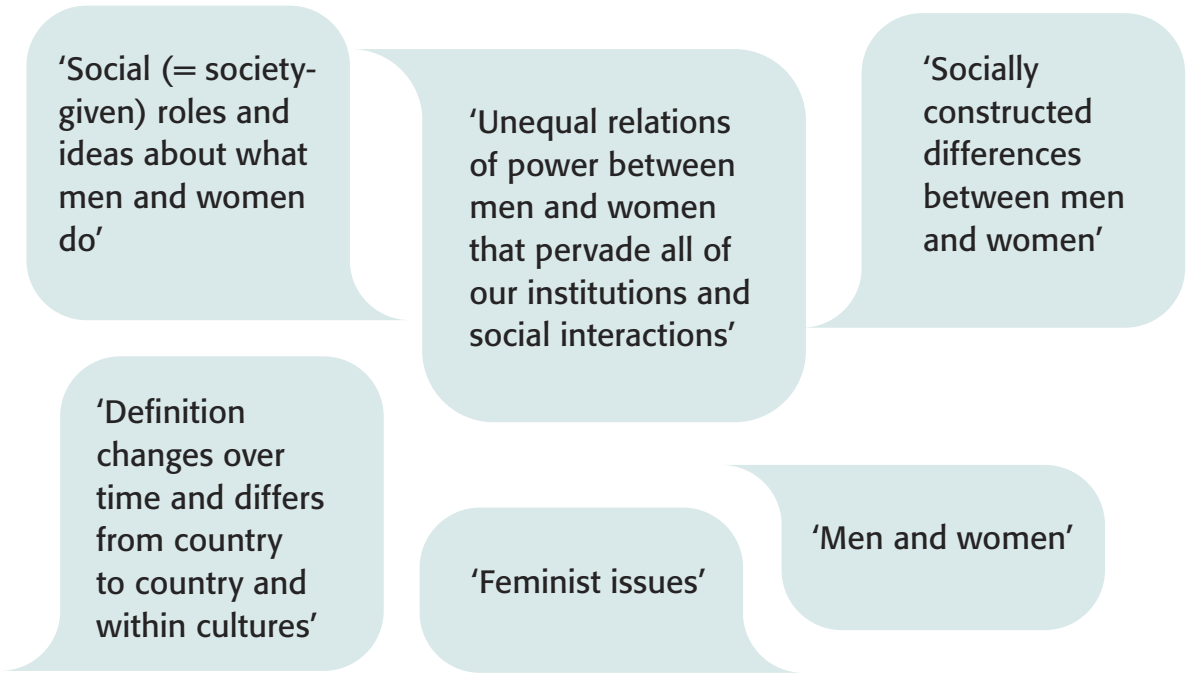
First there is the word 'gender' itself. This can be confusing: often people think it is another word for 'sex' or for 'feminism', or even just for 'women'.

What do you think of when you hear the word 'gender'? How would you explain the term to someone else? Try not to look at the examples that follow before writing your own answer.

ACTIVITY **Defining gender**

When I hear the word 'gender', I think …..

ACTIVITY 1.1.2

Here are some answers people have given. They raise different aspects of gender.

'Social (= society-given) roles and ideas about what men and women do'

'Unequal relations of power between men and women that pervade all of our institutions and social interactions'

'Socially constructed differences between men and women'

'Definition changes over time and differs from country to country and within cultures'

'Feminist issues'

'Men and women'

The working definition used in this Action Guide is:

Gender means the socially constructed differences between women and men. They differ from one culture and society to another, change over time and define who has power and influence over what.

Sex means the biological differences between women and men.

Here is a short self-test that was originally used as part of a staff development session in Malaysia. Are the following statements to do with gender or sex? Tick a column. (The answers are given at the end of this topic.)

ACTIVITY **Gender or sex?**

		Gender ✔	Sex ✔
1	Men like football.		
2	Women breast feed.		
3	Women give birth, men do not.		
4	Women are gentle, men are coarse.		
5	Women in rural sub-Sahara Africa are poorer than men, have lower literacy levels, less access to education, health services and food resources.		
6	Teaching as a career is for women.		
7	A lot of women cannot make free and independent decisions, especially on sexual relationship.		
8	Men's voices change when they become mature, women's do not.		
9	The risk of being infected with HIV for a woman is related to the sexual activity of her partner.		
10	In ancient Egypt, women inherited property, men did not.		
11	In Britain, most workers in the construction sector are men.		
12	Men must have sons to continue their lineage.		
13	In 1999, male youth in Uganda thought that having children would increase their status and prove that they are men.		
14	Between 6-7 million people in this world are drug addicts, 80% are males.		

[MALAYSIA ACTION PROJECT]

ACTIVITY 1.1.3

How did you get on with that activity? The statements can be useful for helping people tell the difference between sex and gender and can be used as a tool in staff development or raising awareness.

There are a number of terms to do with gender that come up often in this Action Guide. They are helpful tools if you understand how they are generally used.

Which of the terms in the glossary are you familiar with already? Write definitions in your own words for those. If there are some you do not know, have a guess at what you think they mean.

ACTIVITY **Glossary**

gender

....

gender analysis

....

**gender-aware
(and gender-sensitive)**

....

gender balance

....

gender equality

....

gender equity

gender-inclusive

....

gender mainstreaming

....

gender parity

....

gender policy, types of:
gender-blind

gender-neutral

gender-specific

gender-redistributive

....

gender relations

....

gender-responsive

....

gender roles

....

gender system

ACTIVITY 1.1.4

Now look at the short glossary provided at the end of this topic and compare your definitions. At first these terms may seem like jargon, but they are useful tools for analysis and planning. You can refer back to the glossary as you work through the Action Guide – you don't have to memorise the meaning of the terms.

This topic has dealt with gender awareness. Here is an example of a gender-awareness session for teachers used in schools in the Seychelles.

Gender-awareness training for teachers

Topic: Glossary of Gender Terms
Objectives:
* To provide staff with the necessary knowledge and tools to integrate **gender** issues into their work
* To increase awareness and reduce the **gender** bias that informs the actions of individuals

Activity 1: 2.15 – 2.30 pm
Terms and definitions
In groups of four, participants discuss the terms and definitions in the **glossary of gender terms** handout

Activity 2: 2.30 – 2.45 pm
Reflections
* Participants will reflect and share instances of when and where and with whom they have applied some of the terms
* Plenary

Activity 3: 2.45 – 3.00 pm
* Each group to list two classroom or school practices/activities to show understanding and awareness of the terminologies below that will contribute in reducing gender bias
  - Gender-blind
  - Gender awareness
  - Gender sensitivity
  - Gender equality
  - Gender equity

[SEYCHELLES ACTION PROJECT]

The example shows a simple way of planning a staff development session around material from the Action Guide. However, it is worth remembering that that this would just be one session in a series. Raising awareness and changing ideas takes more than a single afternoon.

The ideas and activities can be used to raise gender issues with people involved – teachers, students, parents, community representatives and other professionals who will need to understand these concepts for their work.

Review

At the end of each topic there is a review of what you have covered. You can use it to assess your progress. Look again at the objectives at the beginning of this topic. Check if you can now do them. Look through your answers to the activities and see if you want to add to them. You should now be better able to

• Reflect on your own experience of gender
• Use key terms and concepts in raising gender awareness

Answers to activities

ACTIVITY 1.1.3 **Gender or Sex?**
    Statements 2, 3 and 8 are to do with sex.
    All the rest are to do with gender.

ACTIVITY 1.1.4 **Glossary**
gender
The socially constructed differences between women and men. These differ from one culture and society to another, change over time and define who has power and influence over what.

....

gender analysis
Systematic study of the differences between men's and women's, girls' and boys' roles, positions, privileges and access to resources. Gender analysis involves collecting sex-disaggregated data; in other words data that present information separately for men and women, girls and boys.

....

gender-aware (and gender-sensitive)
Able to highlight gender differences and issues and incorporate them into strategies and actions.

....

gender balance
Equal or fair distribution of women and men within an institution or group. It gives equal representation.

....

gender equality
Means women and men have equal rights. They should have the same entitlements and opportunities. Equality is rights-base.

....

gender equity
Means justice so that resources are fairly distributed, taking into account different needs. *Note: 'gender equality' and 'gender equity' are sometimes used interchangeably; there is no agreement about the exact difference between them.*

gender-inclusive

Language or behaviour that minimises assumptions regarding gender.

gender mainstreaming

The process of integrating gender into all policies, programmes and activities.

gender parity

In schools, having an equal number of boys and girls.

gender policy, types

gender-blind

Ignores different gender roles and capabilities. Assumes everyone has the same needs and interests.

gender-neutral

Not aimed at either men or women and assumed to affect both sexes equally. However, it may be gender-blind.

gender-specific

Recognises gender difference and targets either men or women within existing roles.

gender-redistributive

Seeks to change the distribution of power and resources in the interest of gender equality.

gender relations

Social relationships between people (women and men, women and women, men and men). They reflect gender difference as constructed in a particular context or society. Gender relations intersect with other social relations based on age, class, ethnicity, race, sexuality and disability.

gender-responsive

Able to respond to and deal with the gender issues that arise from gender analysis.

gender roles

Learned behaviours in a society/community. They condition which activities are seen as male and female. Gender roles are affected by age, class, race, ethnicity, religion and by geography, economics and politics. Gender roles often respond to changing circumstances, e.g., development efforts. Both men and women play multiple roles, such as productive, reproductive or community roles. Women often play all three roles at once, hence the terms 'triple role' or 'multiple burden'.

gender system

The socially constructed expectations for male and female behaviour. Prescribes the division of labour and responsibilities between women and men, and gives them different rights and obligations. The gender system defines males and females as different and justifies inequality on that basis.

Topic 1.2 Stereotypes

You have thought about your own experiences of gender and terms used in discussing it as you worked through Topic 1.1 Gender concepts. You reflected on messages about gender and how these affected your values and attitudes.

This brings us on to stereotypes and identities.

This topic will help you to:
- Question stereotypes of gender roles and expectations
- Relate them to your own experiences and your practice in school

So what are stereotypes and why do they matter? Spend a couple of minutes now noting your answers in your own words.

ACTIVITY Defining stereotypes

What are stereotypes?

Why do they matter?

ACTIVITY 1.2.1

A **stereotype** can be defined as a fixed image of a type of person - or set of characteristics that many people believe represents a that type of person. Often this fixed image will be false or oversimplified. For example:

'Girls are caring, gentle, passive, respectful and obedient'

'Boys are strong, noisy, leaders'

Why do stereotypes matter? There are a number of possible reasons:
- Unexamined stereotypes that people may think are 'commonsense' or 'natural' can justify unequal treatment of whole groups.
- They can be used as a reason to prevent people of either sex developing their own potential. So a girl may feel she can't do science and become a scientist, or a boy may feel he has to act tough and can't show caring emotions.
- Set ideas about what is 'natural' can be used to justify different treatment. These differences become accepted as social norms. They underpin the way people understand what it means to be a girl or boy, woman or man – in other words, how they construct their gender identity.
- Stereotypes also affect aspirations – what someone thinks they can do, their ambitions.
- Finally, stereotypes colour other people's expectations – for example, what teachers or parents think a child can achieve.

Gender stereotypes are linked to the idea of gender identity.

Gender identity refers to the set of roles, characteristics and behaviour that is prescribed for a particular sex in each society. It is learned through a socialisation process within the family and in the wider society.

However 'boys' and 'girls' are not uniform categories. Gender identity is not fixed. There is a range of **masculinities** and **femininities** – a variety of ways in any context that men and women, boys and girls understand what it means to be male or female.

So why do people conform to gender stereotypes? A common explanation is that women and men act in accordance with the social roles expected of them. Then they come to accept them as natural and as how they are expected to act.

The next activity asks you to think about how stereotypes have affected you in your own life, both personal and professional.

ACTIVITY **Reflecting on stereotypes**

Write down your reflections on these questions.

1 When you were a child, what stereotypes influenced your view of what you could do?

2 Without these stereotypes, how might things have been different for you?

3 Now you are an adult, what stereotypes influence your view of what you yourself can do?

4 As an adult, what stereotypes do you have about other people?

ACTIVITY 1.2.2

Your answers will be personal to you, but we hope the activity will help you think about how stereotypes can get in the way and can be limiting. Here are some responses from women workshop participants.

Experiencing stereotypes

When you were a child, what stereotypes influenced your view of what you could do?

'All challenging chores were for boys. Sciences subjects were for boys. All whites are rich and clever.'

'Ethnicity influences the assertiveness of most people – for example, a woman from a minority group would not see themselves married to a man from a superior group.'

'Ladies were not seen to teach some subjects, e.g., music was seen as a men's activity, done in the evenings and girls' movement was usually restricted. Spending time with the opposite sex was regarded as bad.'

'Racial stereotypes have been a daily drag! On moving from Zimbabwe to South Africa as a young adult it was impossible to avoid being stereotyped and boxed. Even in Zimbabwe a white person with black friends is seen as "special" and "different" and there are many assumptions attached to this.'

Without these stereotypes, how might things have been different for you?
'It would have been easier to become what we are and what we are good at. I would have done better in science subjects. Things would have been different.'

'You shouldn't have to worry about what you are allowed to do, being embarrassed if you say or do something you shouldn't, being silenced by difference.'

Now you are an adult, what stereotypes influence your view of what you yourself can do?
'I am limited and sometimes lack confidence. I rely on my husband to make important decisions.'

'I am far less influenced by my own stereotypes as an adult, but far more affected by others' stereotypes of who I should be. Gender stereotypes predominate. Cultural assumptions and racial stereotypes are a daily reality in South Africa and stereotypes about lifestyle become more important as you get older – do you work? Do you have children? Are you married? If not why not? Who do you live with? Etc.

As an adult, what stereotypes do you have about other people?
Stereotypes have caused many internal battles about what I felt important and valued, and what other people wanted me to be. Over time you learn what gender roles you are prepared to take on and keep, those you want to keep, and then those that make no practical sense to your lifestyle or personality. Ultimately as a feminist and gender activist, I have learned to accept my own gender identity as my choice and my uniqueness, within the boundaries I am prepared to work within and the need sometimes for silence.
[Southern Africa trialling workshop]

The above responses are by women. The short reading that follows, from a study of Caribbean masculinities, looks at the impact of stereotyping on boys and its implications for education. It also raises the issue of masculinities and homophobia.

Developing boys' identity

IIn the past, academic excellence was largely, if not entirely, a male domain. However, with education increasingly becoming 'common ground', boys are left with fewer opportunities to establish their gendered identity through education; and academic achievement furnishes those needs less readily.

In contrast, fundamental biological differences mean that physicality has been preserved as a way of asserting masculine difference, and the 'outdoors' remains boys' territory. In the Caribbean and elsewhere, outdoors physicality seems to have gained pre-eminent importance for developing a boy's identity. While this 'retreat to physicality' may well benefit sporting achievements, there are also important negative consequences. Opportunities to prove one's gender identity through physical dominance increasingly take the form of hard, physical, risk-taking, hyper-masculine, sometimes antisocial acts including bullying, harassment, crime and violence.

Meanwhile, boys who do achieve in academic pursuits are at risk of being considered 'suspect' by their peers and of becoming the subject of gender taboos. This includes boys who show a preference for reading, who regularly reported receiving homophobic criticism, perhaps the deepest of all masculine taboos.

The research also sheds light on HIV risk. Through the twin mechanisms of obligation and taboo, a wide range of risks, including sexual risks, have become resiliently embedded in the social fabric and are, as a result, highly resistant to change.

I call this phenomenon 'social embedding'. Social embedding has its impact by way of gender roles, peer group dynamics, stigma and taboo and socioeconomic factors. To address social embedding and to achieve sustained, widespread results, strategies for producing grassroots social change with embedded behavioural outcomes will be required.
....

Data from the present research adds a further dimension to the analysis of Caribbean boys' educational achievements. The research supports previous findings that boys' affinity with public space and physicality is linked to the development of masculine identity. Moreover, in contemporary Caribbean settings, this identity seems to preferentially elevate hard, aggressive, dominant masculinity as the epitome of manhood – perhaps increasingly so in recent years. Certainly, gang culture and music laced with violent allusions have become more prominent in the Caribbean in the last couple of decades. But the present research also adds data concerning the role of masculine taboos in creating social 'no-go zones' for young men – one of which increasingly seems to be education.

A surprising but important finding that has emerged is the role of homophobia in stigmatising boys who are academically inclined. This

stands out as a consistent and deep-seated phenomenon, not a minor diversionary issue. In the first instance, the role of homophobia seems difficult to account for, but it starts to make sense in the light of recent research that has found that homophobic abuse is a mechanism that is primarily used by male peer groups to police manhood (by stigmatising boy's transgressions from authorised masculinity and 'failed' masculinities) and is only secondarily concerned with sexual practice (Plummer 2005*). In this sense, as a repository for 'failed manhood' and as a mechanism for policing particular forms of masculinity, homophobia is rightly seen as being a gender prejudice – one which weighs heavily on the lives of all men. Gender in development programmes therefore need to take a much more active interest in it – this is no peripheral issue.

*Plummer D (2005) 'Crimes against manhood: homophobia as the penalty for betraying hegemonic masculinity', in Hawkes, G and Scott, J (eds), *Perspectives in Human Sexuality*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Plummer D (2007) 'Has learning become taboo and is risk-taking compulsory for Caribbean boys? Researching the relationship between masculinities, education and HIV', paper based on research commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat, University of the West Indies.

The following short reading discusses gender identity further. It looks at the way gender interacts with other forms of social identity and reminds us that there are other types of diversity and inequality.

What does it mean to be a man or a woman?

The social construction of gender identity, or what it means to be a woman or a man in a given context, is underpinned by prevailing ideas about the roles that are appropriate for men or women and how what is done by women and men is valued, both socially and economically. Most societies observe some gender division of labour within the home, with women taking primary responsibility for caring for the family, while men tend to be associated with work outside the home, often on a paid basis. This division of labour goes some way towards explaining the gender inequalities in human capabilities which can be observed in a number of contexts.

Gender ideologies vary over time and across societies, and gender identities are also influenced by other social identities including religions. The interplay of gender with other forms of social identity gives rise to variations in the inequality experienced by different groups of women. Thus gender equity measures for women who are positioned differently on account of their race, ethnicity, economic class, caste or religion need to take into account both the various constraints on, and opportunities for, their full participation in development.

The 'geography' of gender inequality also shows differences between

countries and regions in the levels of freedom granted to women.

Source: Subrahmanian, R (2007) *Gender in Primary and Secondary Education: A Handbook for Policy-makers and Other Stakeholders*, New Gender Mainstreaming Series on Development Issues, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

In schools stereotyping can have a great impact on expectations of boys and girls – for example, how teachers expect them to behave or perform, or what they allow or encourage them to do. Stereotyping can affect boys quite as much as girls when children are forced to conform to prescribed expectations of what it means to be male or female. The next activity looks at some common stereotypes.

ACTIVITY **Stereotypes in schools**

- Look at the following lists of stereotypes, which have all been expressed by teachers.
- Tick those that are commonly held in your culture.
- Add others not on the list.

GIRLS	BOYS
Like reading and writing	Are competitive
Are responsible and punctual	Learn best through practical work
Are serious	Are good at maths and science
Are hardworking	Are rude and ill-disciplined
Are smarter than boys	Are smarter than girls
Can't do heavy work	Are confident
Are shy and vulnerable	Are domineering
Are attentive	Play around
Concentrate	Shouldn't do home economics
Others	*Others*

ACTIVITY 1.2.3

From your own careful observation and reflection on school life: Which are true? What are they based on?

Now read this account of stereotyping, which outlines the attitudes of some teachers in the Seychelles.

Stereotypes in schools

The large majority of teachers stated that they did not differentiate between boys and girls in the classroom. They treated both sexes equally and saw them all as 'students'. They enjoyed teaching both genders equally.

Technical teachers said they sometimes treated boys and girls differently. Girls would be given plastic to work with instead of wood because of their inability to handle heavy machines, and in agriculture girls would be made to weed and boys to hoe. The lack of protective clothing and appropriate facilities made the teachers extra protective towards the girls.

In spite of their statements on equal treatment of the genders, teachers held very stereotyped views on how girls and boys differed in their learning styles and their abilities. In one school, teachers were of the view that boys learnt best by discovery, investigation, practical 'hands on' experience, group work and asking a lot of questions. They had more enquiring minds than the girls. They were better at maths and general concepts. They learnt through 'manipulation and visuals'. Girls were more reserved and learnt by rote. They were more organised and self-motivated and liked to copy notes. They were also more independent learners and liked reading and writing. Their preference was for a 'book-based style.' Many teachers said that teaching boys posed more of a challenge and teachers 'had to go that extra mile'. In general they felt girls were better at languages and boys at science.

Teachers in the private school had less polarised views on the learning abilities of boys and girls. They had high expectations of both genders and felt that the boys could be very competitive when challenged. A couple of teachers said they had a marked preference for teaching boys.

With regards to attitude towards work and behaviour, the majority of staff from state schools spoke very highly of girls who they thought were naturally more responsible, serious and mature than the boys. Girls volunteered to do presentations and help out in school. They were punctual and more regular at handing in homework. Boys were playful, although they tended to pick up at post-secondary level. They were disruptive, rude and hard to control. They liked to rebel and challenge authority. Teachers said that these negative attitudes in boys were inculcated and tolerated at home and in families and there was very

little the school could do to combat that. According to one headteacher, the home culture encouraged girls to stay home and study while boys were allowed to run wild. He quoted the example of an Indian boy who was the star student at the school a few years previously. His academic success was attributed to the fact that 'he was brought up the way girls are' in Seychellois society.

[SEYCHELLES ACTION PROJECT]

Do these teachers' views reflect your own thinking or that of your colleagues? Have they perhaps made you more aware of stereotypes?

Of course students themselves accept and conform to stereotypes. Look at these student voices from a gender awareness-raising workshop at a secondary school in Rajasthan, India.

Gender roles and responsibilities

Students' responses during student workshop in India

Girls	Boys
Cooking food, making tea	Making tea
Cleaning utensils(morning/evening)	Delivering milk at the dairy
Sweeping and mopping floor	Purchasing food items from
Fetching water from hand pump	the market
Fetching water on bicycle	Helping father in the shop
Fetching fuel wood	Feeding and grazing livestock
Washing clothes	Working in the field
Feeding livestock	Playing cricket
Working in the field	
Preparing the beds at night	
Taking care of siblings	
Teaching younger siblings/helping them with homework	
Watching TV	

[INDIA ACTION PROJECT]

These responses suggest that these girls see themselves as more confined to domestic life, while boys see themselves as having more extended roles and activities.

Parents too hold stereotypes, as the following example illustrates. It outlines a gender sensitisation session for parents with feedback on their reactions.

GENDER SENSITISATION FOR PARENTS

DATE: 13 March 2008   **TIME:** 1.30 pm

OBJECTIVES:

*   To share results of gender study
*   To present objectives and activities of the pilot study at the school
*   To increase awareness of how the socialisation process in homes affects boys and girls
*   To explore how parents can contribute to the success of the pilot project on gender.

1.30 – 1.35	Welcome and Introduction
1.35 – 1.55	Icebreaker Short sketch about stereotypes, presented by students, followed by discussion
1.55 – 2.15	Presentation of the main findings of study: Construction of masculinity and femininity Discussion on impact in schools
2.15 – 2.25	Purpose of the study
2.25 – 3.00	Share outcome of parents' questionnaire Group work discussion: How would parents like to participate?
3.00 – 3.05	Evaluation: three things they have learnt

Feedback on gender sensitisation for parents

Parents present participated well and shared concerns when seeing the gap in performance between boys and girls.

From the discussions it came out that some parents could identify themselves in the sketch presented by the students. This means that they are heavily reinforcing gender stereotyping of both boys and girls at home. Since this is a cultural issue, as it is how most of them were raised, it is going to be very challenging to change the perception of some of the parents. However, the encouraging sign is they were able to willingly voice that they reinforce stereotyping, and the gap in the performance of boys really shook them up, especially the parents of boys.

Some results of the gender study carried out in June 2007 were presented to them. The emphasis was placed on the students' notions of masculinity and femininity. It was also pointed out to parents that the boys seem to be comfortable believing that they do not have to work as hard as girls to secure a working place. This really made some parents think as a lot of them do not necessarily keep 'tabs' on their boys as they do girls, and the boys' attitude that they do not need to do much to 'get in' is really a serious one. The boys therefore do not push themselves hard enough (or do not see the reason to work hard) to produce good results. What is sad is that they really have low self-esteem where academic performance is concerned.

[SEYCHELLES ACTION PROJECT]

The example shows that though the parents tended to reinforce gender stereotyping, the session helped them become aware of this and see why it matters.

The ideas and activities in this topic can be adapted to raise issues about stereotyping with people involved. This includes teachers and other professionals who need this understanding in their work in schools, as well as students themselves and parents.

ACTIVITY **Raising awareness of stereotypes**

How can you work with students, colleagues, parents, school governors and others involved to help them question stereotypes? Try to think of three ways.

1

2

3

ACTIVITY 1.2.4

You may have thought of ways of using activities about stereotyping from this topic, or ways of working the questions raised into staff development or into dealing with parents, guardians and others. There is more about working with students in Units 3 and 4.

Review

Look again at the objectives at the beginning of the topic and at your answers to the activities. Now that you have completed this topic, you should be better able to:

- Explain what is meant by stereotypes and identities
- Question common gender stereotypes and expectations in your own professional and private experience

Topic 1.3 Gender and education

So far in Topics 1.1 and 1.2 you've thought about your own experiences of gender and the impact of stereotypes. Now we look more generally at gender and education.

This topic will help you to:
*   Explain why education is important for gender equality
*   Outline ways in which schools are critical as a force for gender equality

First, here is a reminder of the importance of education in development.
*   Education is universally recognised as playing a key role in development – personal, social and economic. It is always a priority for attention and resources.
*   Everyone has a right to education. It has benefits for everyone who undergoes schooling – providing the skills of reading and writing and the ability to communicate and express oneself.
*   Education helps people achieve their other rights, such as the right to justice or to political participation.
*   The education of women is important given their reproductive role and their traditional role as homemakers and carers. Women who are educated tend to have smaller families, fewer of their children die in infancy, and their children are healthier and better educated.
*   Educated women are better prepared to enter the paid labour force, more able to contribute to a country's social, economic and political life and better placed to bring about change.

Yet education is still characterised by extensive gender inequalities.

Why is gender equality important and why are we still mainly talking about girls and women? The facts and figures given in the box on the next page show that it is still girls and women who are the most disadvantaged by gender inequality in education.

Key facts and figures

- Of 75 million primary stage children out of school, 55 per cent are girls. (1)
- There are almost 800 million people aged 15 and above living without basic literacy skills worldwide, of whom 64 per cent are women (2)
- Of 180 countries that have been monitoring progress towards gender parity in education, 76 have not yet achieved equal numbers of girls and boys in primary school, and the gender disparities are nearly always at the expense of girls (3)
- In some countries, girls outperform boys in school, but later fail to gain equality in work or political participation. In the poorest countries it is girls who face barriers to equality of opportunity, and do not achieve equal outcomes from education.
- Education is a right. Girls who are not in school and women who are illiterate are being denied their right to education.

(1) UNESCO (2009) 'Education for All', EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Paris.

(2) UNESCO (2004) 'Education for All', EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005, UNESCO, Paris.

(3) UNESCO (2005) 'Education for All', EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006, UNESCO, Paris.

Source (except first bullet): Aikman, S and Unterhalter, E (eds) (2007) *Practising Gender Equality in Education* Oxfam, Oxford, p. 17.

In the next example, the words of students themselves express reasons why education, and specifically literacy, is important for both women and men.

Why is literacy is important for women and men?

(based on responses from an activity in a co-ed Indian secondary school on World Literacy Day, 8 September 2008)

'It is essential for women and men to be literate. Earlier women were not allowed to get out of their homes but now women are working outside their homes, so they need to be literate and educated'

'Literacy is important for men as they contribute to the growth of the country. With literacy men can tackle various problems and evils. Women should be literate as they also contribute to the growth of the country'

'It is important for both women and men to be literate so that they can help in eradicating superstitions and discriminatory practices'.

'If the girl is educated she will take better care of her children and

home, she will also educate her own family as well as society and she will be respected by everyone in the society.'

'If the boy is educated he will serve the nation and will earn an income for his family and will take care of the well being of his family'.

'Literacy is important for women as it helps enhance their status and take responsibility'.

'If women are literate they can get jobs and take care of their health needs as well of their families. They would also be free from social pressures as well as peer pressure'.

'Literate men can get better jobs and fulfill all the needs of their families'.

'Literacy is essential for the development of mental and physical abilities of women. It also helps women take decisions independently'.

'If women are literate they will not be exploited and we would have a civilized society'

'It is important for both women and men to be literate as they can resolve their differences amicably and they will not fight with each other'

'Literacy is important for both women and men as it is their right. Both women and men have a right to education and no one should be denied this right.'

[INDIA ACTION PROJECT]

These students came up with strong arguments. You might like to think about whether your students could express such clear reasons, and what kind of activity you might do with them to help them think about the importance of education and literacy for both women and men.

The issue is not just about ensuring that boys and girls have equal access to schooling – in other words, about gender parity. It is also a question of gender equality and gender equity. If you are not sure about these terms, use the next activity to remind yourself what they mean.

ACTIVITY Explaining gender terms

Imagine you have to explain the difference between the following terms to a colleague. Write short definitions you could use.

gender parity

gender equality

gender equity

gender-aware

gender-responsive

ACTIVITY 1.3.1

If you had any trouble with your definitions, you can look back at the glossary at the end of Topic 1.1.

In education, gender equality means:
- Acting to change the structures and processes to ensure equal entitlements and opportunities
- Facing up to the ways schools may be maintaining inequalities
- Looking beyond schooling itself to the opportunities and outcomes it opens up
- Providing education that is about social change and transformation, directed towards empowerment and action
- Within the school, areas for action to achieve gender equality are those covered in this Action Guide, such as school processes and organisation, staff development, community links, curriculum and practical arrangements
- Gender equality in education means a quality education – and the other way round. You can't have one without the other.

Schools alone cannot solve all the problems of gender inequality in society, but there is much they can do to contribute to gender equality and combat

inequality. And conversely there is much they can do to reinforce and perpetuate inequalities. In other words, schools can act as a positive force for change and transformation or they can act as a negative force that impedes progress in this area.

Here are two contrasting examples of the impact of schooling. The first example comes from a learning project in India designed to achieve fundamental change for the girls involved, with further impact on their families and communities.

Social Learning in India

The Social Learning Package was first developed in the context of a residential school programme, known as Udaan (the flight), for accelerated learning for girls in rural India. The girls were in the age group of 9–13, had either never been to school or had dropped out after attending for only a few months or a year, and came from deprived social and economic backgrounds where there was no guarantee of continuing their education beyond primary level.

It was felt that these girls needed a structured curriculum not only in language, mathematics and science but also in something extra that was clearly directed at developing them 'into self-confident individuals, who could think critically, visualise their own potentials and be conscious of their social responsibilities'.

The rationale behind taking social learning as a concurrent stream of education was to provide them with the necessary means and exposure for developing a critical faculty of their own. Social learning taking place in the family or community is limited in its scope by the experience, traditional, knowledge and social interactions of that community. There is often an uncritical and unquestioning acceptance of certain world-views. Many a time, these world-views are narrow and parochial. The package was conceived to provide a counter to this form of social education.

Source: Jha, J (2008) 'Social Learning Package: Education for empowerment' in *Commonwealth Education Partnerships 2008/2009*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

The package depends for its success on the dialogue that takes place between the teacher and the student as well as between student and student. Dialogue takes place in conversations, discussions, and questions and answers. The children have to begin to trust the teacher and develop a close relationship with her for an open and honest dialogue to take place.

Source: Care India (2008) 'Guidelines for use for Grades 6, 7 and 8', *Social Learning for Upper Primary Schools: A Reference Manual for Teachers*, Care India, New Delhi, p. 8.

Note: See APPENDIX III for more information on the Social Learning Package.

The second example, by way of contrast, shows how beliefs and practices at policy and school level can block change and reinforce inequalities. It comes from Nigeria.

Gendered micropolitics in school

The only female principal in the schools surveyed happens to head an all-girls school. Her deputies, however, are (all) males, as they are expected to guide her in the running of the school, since women are thought to lack the requisite leadership qualities and skills.

The principal narrated the experience of her former employment as the head of a co-educational school where upon resumption of duty several male teachers resigned their appointments because they could not tolerate a female principal. The Ministry reasoned with the 'protesters' and posted her to a girls' school. She also reported having been intimidated to be sensitive about her actions so that she would not be labelled as a non-performer as a result of being female. This finding is important in the sense that it explains one of the reasons why schools reproduce and transmit gendered beliefs and practices from one set of students to another. Provided that gendered micro-politics persists among teachers and are actively supported by the policy-makers, as shown in this case, there is little hope for redressing and structurally wiping out harmful gendered traditional practices.

[Nigeria Gender Analysis Study]

Do either of these examples echo your own experiences?

How can schools act as a positive force for change and transformation? This guide draws on the experiences of schools and teachers to try and answer this question. But at the outset, take a fresh look at your school and think about how it could be a positive force.

ACTIVITY **School as a force for change**

List five ways your school could be a force for change.

1

2

3

4

5

ACTIVITY 1.3.2

You may have identified a whole range of things, which may be at school level or at micro or classroom level. They may be the kind of things mentioned earlier in this topic, and covered in this Action Guide, such as working with children, parents and staff to change attitudes, working on school ethos and policy, classroom organisation and teaching styles. You may already have some clear changes in mind, drawn from your own experiences.

Practical changes may be underpinned by more general activities like creating awareness, gathering information, handling conflicts, creating sustainable change and increasing understanding.

So far in this topic you have looked at the importance of education for gender equality and thought about ways schools can be a force for change and the need for them to be gender-responsive.

Now think about your own objectives and plan for using this Action Guide. If you did the action plan in the Introduction, you may have already thought about this; look back at your plan and see if you want to add to it now. If you haven't already done it, we suggest you look at it now and then think about the questions below.

ACTIVITY **First steps**

Your objectives?

Your first steps?

When will you take the first step?

ACTIVITY 1.3.3

There will be all kinds of answers to this depending on your context and role. Here are some examples.

A headteacher might have

• a general objective such as: make school more gender-responsive

• a specific objective such as: do something to encourage more girls to stay in school longer

• a first step might be to start planning a preliminary consultation

A teacher might have

• a general objective such as: persuade management and colleagues of need to make school more gender-responsive

• a specific objective such as: solve discipline issues in a mixed class that are preventing both boys and girls in different ways from achieving their potential

• a first step might be to meet with close colleagues to sound out other opinions

Whatever your objectives and planned first steps, think about what you need to do to achieve them and how you can best use this Action Guide to help you.

Review

Now that you have reached the end of this topic, review what you have covered. Look again at the objectives at the beginning of the topic and at your answers to the activities. You should be better able to:

- Explain the importance of education for gender equality
- Consider ways schools can help or hinder gender equality
- Plan what action can be taken in your own school to make it more gender-responsive