

What's the difference – sex and gender? 1 h 15



FORB AND GENDER

GAME

PLENARY EXERCISE

About the exercise

TARGET AUDIENCE

Best suited to faith-based/grassroots communities and civil society organisations/human rights defenders. Aimed at groups with little (if any) prior knowledge of the concepts of sex and gender.

PURPOSE

- To introduce the concepts of sex and gender to participants. (Note: this exercise does not deal specifically with non-binary gender identities or roles.)
- To enable participants to analyse the roles played by men and women in their communities and any limitations placed upon these roles, recognising the roots of these in societal and cultural norms.

DESCRIPTION

This exercise starts out as a fun, competitive drawing and word game that draws out gender stereotypes within the context. Participants are then gently challenged to unpack these stereotypes and discuss if and how women, men and society as a whole are negatively affected or benefit from these norms.

Instructions

RESOURCES AND ADVANCE PREPARATION

- Flipchart sheets and marker pens for participants.
- Prepare one flipchart sheet with the heading 'MALE' and one with the heading 'FEMALE' and stick these up next to each other on the wall in the training room.
- Prepare a flipchart sheet or PowerPoint slide containing the 'Know the difference' illustration below.
- Ensure there is enough space in the training room for a quarter of the participants to form a queue in front of the flipcharts. Ask participants to move tables out of the way if necessary. Arrange the rest of the seats in a semi-circle around the space for the queues.



KNOW THE DIFFERENCE: SEX AND GENDER

SEX

Biological and physical characteristics that distinguish males and females.

GENDER

The social, cultural, economic and psychological attributes that are associated with being male or female in a society.

HOW TO INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE 3 MIN

- Go round the group giving each person a number from one to four. Ask all the number ones to form a queue in front of the flipchart with 'MALE' written on and all the number twos to form a queue in front of the one saying 'FEMALE'. (Ask those with number three and four to watch and cheer their colleagues on for the moment.)
- Give the first person in each queue a marker pen. Tell the two groups that they are in a competition and that when you clap three times, the first person in each line should start drawing on the flipchart – group one should draw a man and group two a woman. Tell them that when you clap three times again, the pen should be passed to the next person in the queue who continues with the drawing and the first person goes to the back of the queue. There is only one rule about the drawing – it is forbidden to cross out anything that has already been drawn.

HOW TO RUN THE EXERCISE 70 MIN• **GAME ROUND ONE** (10 MIN)

Clap three times to start the game. Vary the pace, allowing participants very little or a bit more time to draw, keeping it fairly fast-paced so that everyone gets a couple of turns. This makes it more fun for participants and spectators.

After a series of turns, when participants have reached a point where they have started to add various details (necklace, hat, cigarette, handbag, etc.), give a round of applause. Thank the participants and ask them to return to their seats.

• **GAME ROUND TWO** (10 MIN)

Ask group three to line up in front of the male drawing and group four to line up in front of the female drawing for the second round of the game. Tell the participants that this round is different. It is not a drawing competition, but a word competition. The aim of the game is to write as many words as possible around the pictures. Each person may write ONE word only – a characteristic that they associate with men (group 3) or women (group 4), and then pass the pen to the next person and go to the back of the queue and waiting for their turn again. The winning team will be the one that can mention the most 'characteristics', so they need to write fast!

Be careful not to mention any examples of characteristics – leave it to the participants to come up with ideas. Be sure to encourage them and remind them that this is a competition!

When there are around 15 words on the lists stop the game. Thank the participants and ask them to return to their seats. Calculate the number of words mentioned on each flipchart sheet and announce the winning team.

• **PLENARY EXERCISE** (20 MIN)

Start the plenary discussion with the following questions:

- What do you see in the drawings groups 1 and 2 made?
What's the difference?
- Write words that come up around the drawings
– for example beard, breasts.

Pause the discussion after a few minutes. Go through all the words on the 'male' flipchart sheet one at a time. For each word ask if all men have that characteristic and then ask if there are women who also have this characteristic. If the group agrees that this is a solely male characteristic, then circle it. If the group agrees that not all men have the characteristic and that this characteristic can also

TIP! At first, this can be funny. Allow the conversation to unfold for a few minutes, but not too long!

be found in women, cross it off. Go through the examples fairly quickly, rather than having long discussions on each point.

Continue in this manner going through all the characteristics listed for men, and then repeat the exercise for all the characteristics listed for women, asking if all women really have that characteristic and if any men might have that characteristic too.

If need be, gently challenge with examples, e.g., "Are you sure that there are no affectionate men ... have you never seen a father or grandfather that you would describe as caring?" Or "Are you sure that there are no physically strong women... have you ever watched women wrestling? Or carrying firewood down the mountain, etc. Wouldn't you say they are strong?"

When this process is finished, look at what has been crossed out and what has been circled. Usually, a large number of words relating to gender stereotypes are crossed out, but a few words linked to biological sex remain, such as motherhood, fatherhood etc.

Comment that although you asked them to list the characteristics that they associate with men or with women, not so many of the words are circled as being unique to women and men. Ask participants for their reflections on the exercise and the words that are left on the list for example using the following questions:

- What do you think this means?
- Isn't there a difference between men and women then? Or what is the difference?

Encourage critical reflection without offering your own opinion.

• **PLENARY DISCUSSION** (30 MIN)

Introduce the plenary discussion as follows. Display the pre-prepared PowerPoint slide or flipchart sheet showing the definitions of sex and gender and read out the definitions. Make the following points:

- Sex is about our biology and physiology. Men and women are physically different – only women can bear children or breastfeed.
- Gender is different. Gender is about the social, cultural, psychological and economic attributes a society associates with being male or female – about the societal expectations, roles and limitations placed upon men and women on this basis.
- As individuals, we often internalise these ideas as though they are universally true or factually correct.
- In fact, these roles, expectations and limitations vary a lot between communities and cultures, even within the same country, and shift and change over time. They develop organically in our communities, cultures and in and through the religious interpretations we learn and teach. They can also develop as a result of external influence – for example through colonial influence.

Lead the plenary discussion with the following questions:

- Do socially constructed attitudes, expectations and roles given to men and women in our culture positively or negatively affect women and men? In what ways?
- Do these expectations and roles benefit anyone? Who and how? Are there institutions that benefit?
- Is there a cost to wider society in maintaining some of these gender roles, especially over time?

TIP! In most contexts this topic is sensitive – try not to be provocative but do challenge participants gently. Be prepared with plenty of examples!

TIP! Prepare some examples you can draw on that are relevant for your context to help stimulate the discussion.

HOW TO CONCLUDE THE EXERCISE 2 MIN

Thank everyone for their engagement in the discussion. Wrap up by reminding them of the key difference between sex and gender: sex refers to the biological and physical characteristics of men and women, while gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expectations, and attributes that a society considers appropriate for women and men.

**ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGY**

This exercise can be run more simply and calmly by cutting the drawing/word competition at the beginning, dividing into groups and asking groups to draw either a man or a woman and write words they associate with men and women around their drawings. After the groupwork, proceed with the plenary exercise and discussion, following the instructions as above.

Source

Adapted from the activity “What is feminine and what is masculine?” in [Church and Gender Equality](#): Resource and Tool Box, PMU Interlife.