

Sex and Gender

Some definitions

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Sex and Gender

- **Sex** refers to biological differentiation: biologically-based assignment of sex as male or female at birth
- **Gender** refers to roles, attitudes and behaviours, socially prescribed to individuals, in all areas of their action, as related to their sex assignments.
- The term **gender** refers to socially constructed, broadly shared expectations and norms in society about appropriate male and female characteristics, behaviours and roles.
- Such norms influence social interaction and structure the social and personal relationships between men and women.

Gender inequality

- refers to the fact that men and women face differential social opportunity (access to resources, margin for action) and power (agency) based on gender.
- ***Gender equality*** refers to legal frameworks, policies and mechanisms which create formally equal opportunities for men and women in society to realize their potential and to benefit equally from opportunities and power in decision-making.

Gender is not a category but a relationship

- The concept of gender expresses a social difference (of the type of prestige/value, power, rights and obligations) between the sexes which is continuously constructed and reconstructed in the course of social interactions.
- If men know less about the risks of HIV but pretend to know more than women this is a conventional expression of masculinity (competency).

Gender Equity

- Regardless of the principle of equality men and women have **biological differences**. For ex., they have differential vulnerabilities to sexually transmitted diseases and to HIV/AIDS.
- Sex in all times and places has been socially controlled. Different systems of sexual rights and obligations form the basis of what we call gender.
- ***Gender equity*** refers to the notion that differences between men and women can be socially constructed in ways which recognize the specific needs of each gender.

Gender: a system of representations

- Every system of representations is constructed as a system of binary oppositions: strong and weak, active and passive, powerful and submissive...masculine and feminine...
- These oppositions form systems of representations that guide our actions in concert with our sex.
- The history has been such that these representations situate men higher than women...

Gender mainstreaming

- This is the other aspect of the modern reconstruction of gender relationships
- According to international conventions “**gender mainstreaming** is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels, and as a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” (ECOSOC 1997/2)

Principles of gender analysis

In the area of HIV prevention gender analysis must adhere to at least four principles:

- (1) Gender equality can be achieved only by recognizing the different impact of norms or measures on women and men according to their diverse life situations.
- (2) Gender-based analysis is an integral part of the substantive analytical process and must be applied at each stage of this process.
- (3) Gender-based analysis focuses not only on results but also on concepts, arguments and language used in the work process.
- (4) Gender-based analysis must lead to remedies of inequality.

Structural inequalities may be due to policies, not necessarily - to discrimination

- These principles imply that above all, gender inequality has to be recognized politically as a possibility so as to be studied seriously. Also, these principles require not only consideration in policy formulation and policy-making but also *adequate organization of professional networks involved in gender analysis of HIV prevention and AIDS care.*



**Thank you for
attention**