# Gender Concepts

## Quick Guide

**Gender** refers to a range of characteristics that a society defines as being masculine or feminine. It describes the state of being a woman, man, girl, or boy in a particular culture, at a particular point in time.

**Gender equity** is the process of being fair to women and men, girls and boys.

**Gender equality** refers to equal exercise of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards by women, men, girls, boys. It does not mean women, men, girls & boys, are the same, but that their exercise of rights, opportunities & life chances are not governed, or limited, by whether they were born female or male.

**Empowerment** refers to the process of building capacities through which an individual can make choices and take decisions about his or her own life.

**Equality of opportunity** is where women, men, girls & boys are able to take advantage of opportunities to undertake something that is of interest or value to them.

**Women’s empowerment** refers to the process where women attain & exercise agency in their lives, with equal access with men to resources, opportunities & power.

**Equality of outcome** is where women, men, girls and boys benefit from an intervention: a policy, programme or project benefits women and men in an equitable way.

**Agency** refers to the capacity of an individual, or a group, to make choices and to act on the choices made.

**Gender exploitative** is when an intervention (e.g. policy, programme, project, service) reinforces, perpetuates or exacerbates gender inequalities, discriminatory gender stereotypes and oppressive gender roles.

**Gender blind** is the failure to recognise the influence of gender, resulting in an intervention (policy, programme, project, service) that perpetuates inequalities, potentially causing harm and delivering temporary, rather than sustainable, changes.

**Gender sensitive** describes an intervention (e.g. policy, programme, project) that considers and aims to address the specific needs, interests, capacities and contexts for women, men, girls and boys, but does not address gender relations and the distribution of power between women, men, girls and boys, for sustainable outcomes.

**Gender transformative** is an initiative (e.g. law, policy, programme, project) that changes gender relations in favour of the equal sharing of power by women, men, girls and boys.

**Gender mainstreaming** is a strategy for achieving gender equality and is the process of assessing implications for women and men of a planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels.

**Gender parity** (or “balance”) refers to equal numbers of women and men, or of girls and boys, in a particular setting, situation, forum or body.

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**Practical needs** are material needs related to survival: what must exist in order for a person to live a decent life.

**Stakeholders** are any persons, groups or institutions that have an interest in, or can influence, a WFP intervention (policy, programme, project, service etc.).

**Stakeholder analysis** is the systematic identification and assessment of different individuals and groups who have an interest in, can influence and/or can be impacted by a WFP intervention – positively or negatively.

**Protection** refers to activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the intrinsic rights of all individuals (in accordance with international humanitarian law), taking into account differences in age, gender, minority or other background and status.

**Sexual abuse** refers to the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

**Sexual harassment** includes any unwelcome sexual advance or unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

**Sexual exploitation** is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

**Harassment** is any improper conduct by an individual that is directed at and offensive to another person and that the individual knew, or reasonably ought to have known, would cause offence or harm to that person.

**Gender-based violence (GBV)** is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering: threats of such acts; coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private spaces.

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