

## Increasing Knowledge and Awareness about Gender

### Description of tool:

This tool provides 28 sample exercises that teachers/facilitators can use to help young people better understand what gender is and how it affects their lives. The activities aim to achieve the following learning objectives: 1) Improve understanding of what gender means, and of the difference between gender and sex; 2) Increase young people's awareness of gender roles and attitudes; 3) Help young people to think about how gender roles and stereotypes are created; and 4) Explore the impact of gender on young people's lives, especially their ideas about sex and relationships and expectations about their sexual behaviour. Two Fact Sheets, entitled "The Rights of Young People" and "Sex and Sexuality", are provided to support the activities.

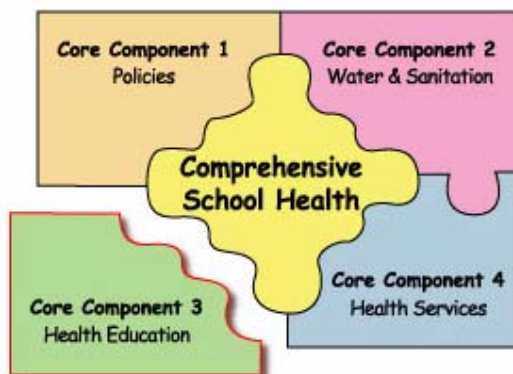
The information in this tool was adapted by UNESCO from the following publication:

Commonwealth Secretariat and Healthlink Worldwide, 2001. **Gender and Relationships: A Practical Action Kit for Young People**. London: Commonwealth Secretariat and Healthlink Worldwide.

<http://www.genderandaids.org/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=122>

### Description of document:

Gender has an enormous impact on male and female behaviour, but most young people are not aware of its effect on their lives. This kit aims to raise awareness of the importance of gender issues in sexual and reproductive health, and help peer educators and adults working with young people to integrate gender issues into sexual and reproductive health programmes. It includes basic fact sheets, information on planning programmes, activities for peer educators and facilitators, activities for young people, and a resource list.



This information or activity supports Core Component #3 of the FRESH framework for effective school health: **skills-based health education**. It will have a greater impact if it is reinforced by activities in the other three components of the framework.

## Increasing Knowledge and Awareness about Gender<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction: What is gender and why is it important?

Every society has its unique ideas about what is considered masculine or feminine—or how boys and men, girls and women should behave—and this is what the term “gender” refers to. Unlike sex, which is defined by the biological differences that make individual members of a species male or female, gender refers to the qualities, roles and behaviours that individuals learn, and are expected to model, *based on their sex*. Gender roles can be affected by factors such as education or economics, and can vary widely within and among cultures. While an individual's sex does not change, gender roles—being socially determined—can evolve over time.

#### Defining gender

**Sex** describes whether someone is male or female according to biological differences. It is determined before we are born.

**Gender** describes whether someone is masculine or feminine according to behavioural differences, for example, how they dress and act towards others, the kinds of work they do and their status in society. These characteristics are defined by each culture so they can be different in different cultures and they can change.

**Gender roles**—ideas about how men and women should behave—are created by society, culture and traditions. As they grow up, girls and boys learn about how women and men should behave from their parents, community, religious institutions, schools, and the media. Gender roles are also different for people of different ages—for example, young girls may be given very different tasks and levels of responsibility from their grandmothers. Gender roles vary from one society to another and change as society changes. Because gender roles are created by society, it is possible to change them.

Gender affects every aspect of our lives: from how we feel about ourselves and the goals we set; to the educational, recreational and work opportunities we have; to the nature and extent of our participation in social and civic life and the way we practice our religion; to the way we dress, the way we express our feelings, and the nature of all of our relationships with others. Unfortunately, gender roles and expectations are frequently identified as factors hindering the equal rights and status of women with adverse consequences that affect life, family, socio-economic status and health. And yet, most people are not aware of the effect of gender on their lives, or, that because gender roles are created by society, they can also be changed.

In recent years, discriminatory conditions and practices based on gender have been cited to explain why women and girls—who represented only a small fraction of the HIV-infected population initially—now account for 47% of all people living with HIV worldwide, and for 57% in sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, gender has been shown to influence both the nature of the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and the way in which a person experiences the illness and the epidemic. Gender roles affect if and when people have sex, whom they have sex with and if they protect themselves against pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted

infections (STIs). Gender discrimination helps to explain women's and girls' greater vulnerability to HIV infection, their disadvantaged position in coping with it and their greater suffering from its effects. In fact, though girls and women are somewhat more vulnerable to infection because of biological factors, experts agree that the main reason that women and girls are disproportionately harmed by HIV and AIDS is skewed power relations and concepts of masculinity that undermine their right, and their ability, to make their own decisions in relationships, the family and society.

Half of all new HIV infections (around 6,000 per day) now occur among young people between the ages of 15 and 24. The loss of productive human capital and the burden of exploding costs for health and other social services threatens to reverse decades of progress in many developing nations. Women's empowerment has long been recognised as a key action for improving health, reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development. In the face of HIV/AIDS, it is more important than ever before. But this can only occur if gender-based discrimination that victimizes and marginalizes girls and women is recognised, challenged and overcome.

Provided below are a number of exercises which can be used with young people (and with some adaptation, also with adults) to help them understand and evaluate the role that gender plays in their own lives, the lives of others and the societies in which they live.

**ACTIVITY SET 1:**  
Improve understanding of what gender means,  
and of the difference between gender and sex

**Exercise**

**1**

**Sex and gender**

**PURPOSE:** To understand the difference between sex and gender  
**TIME:** 45 minutes  
**MATERIALS:** Sheets of paper  
**PREPARATION:** Write the following statements (without the answers given in brackets) on separate sheets of paper. Add your own local examples.

*Women give birth to babies, men do not. (sex)*

*Little girls are gentle, boys are not. (gender)*

*Men's voices break at puberty, women's do not. (sex)*

*Women can breastfeed babies, men cannot. (sex)*

*In England, most construction workers are men. (gender)*

*In ancient Egypt men stayed at home and did weaving, women handled family business and inherited property while men did not. (gender)*

1. Explain to the group the difference between sex and gender (see *Introduction* and *Fact Sheet 2: Sex and Sexuality*).
2. Give a sheet of paper with one of the statements on it to each person in the group.

3. Ask them to decide whether the statement refers to sex or to gender, and prepare to be able to explain why. Allow 5-10 minutes for this.
4. Ask each member of the group to say what he or she decided and why. Then discuss the answers.

### Discussion points

*Did any of the statements surprise the group?  
Gender roles vary between cultures and over time. Are any gender roles different for the cultures within your group?  
Are there gender roles which young people have changed since their parents' time?*

## Exercise 2

### Being a girl, being a boy

**PURPOSE:** To explore what is good and bad about being a girl or a boy  
**TIME:** 45 minutes  
**MATERIALS:** Small pieces of paper, pens or pencils and a large sheet of paper

1. Ask the girls in the group to complete the following sentences:

*I'm happy that I'm a girl because...  
I wish I was a boy so that I could ...*

Ask the boys in the group to complete the following sentences:

*I'm happy that I'm a boy because ...  
I wish I was a girl so that I could...*

2. Give the group five minutes to do this. Or read out the sentence and ask the groups to draw a picture showing their answer to each of the two sentences.
3. Collect the papers and write the answers on a large sheet of paper (or arrange the drawings) under each of the four headings.
4. With the whole group, discuss the differences in the answers given by the boys and the girls.

**Note to the facilitator:** *This activity can also be done as a song and dance game. Each person takes it in turn to sing their sentence as they dance in the middle of the circle.*

## Exercise 3

### Gender roles

**PURPOSE:** To explore what is good and bad about being a girl or a boy and social attitudes and expectations  
**TIME:** 45 minutes  
**MATERIALS:** Small pieces of paper, pens or pencils and a large sheet of paper  
**PREPARATION:** Write the incomplete sentences on a large sheet of paper

1. Choose six incomplete sentences (some examples are given below). Write these out before the session on a large sheet of paper and then read them out to the whole group.

*The best thing about being a man is...*

*A man would never let a women see...*

*A boy would be praised by his parents if...*

*The parents of a boy let him...*

*A girl would be praised by her friends if...*

*Men get embarrassed when...*

*Parents expect boys to...*

*Boys are allowed to...*

*Women really want to...*

*A girl would get teased if she...*

2. Ask the participants individually to complete the sentences using their sheets of paper. Give them 10 minutes to do this. Then ask the group to form pairs and discuss their completed sentences.
3. With the whole group, ask each pair what their responses were. Are there any responses that most people got the same?

### **Discussion points**

*Are there different answers for boys and girls? Are girls and boys expected to behave in different ways?*

*Who has these expectations of your behaviour? Parents? Other grown ups? Friends?*

*Are there some attitudes towards women that you don't feel comfortable with? How can you change things?*

*Are there some attitudes towards men that you don't feel comfortable with? How can you change things?*

### **Exercise**

## **4**

### **Gender assumptions—Tendai**

**PURPOSE:** To think about what assumptions we make about boys and girls, based on their gender

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Copies of worksheets 1 and 2. Tendai can be a boy's or a girl's name. Instead of Tendai, use a local, gender-neutral name.

1. Ask participants to form two small groups.
2. Give a copy of worksheet 1 to one group and a copy of worksheet 2 to the other group. Do not tell the group there are two different Tendais.
3. Ask the group to discuss the questions on the worksheet in their small groups and to write their answers.
4. With the whole group, feed back some of the answers. Discuss what different assumptions are made when Tendai is female or male, and why.

### Worksheet 1: Tendai

Tendai is 10 years old. He lives with his mum and dad. He likes playing sports and listening to music. His best friend lives next door.

1. Which sports do you think Tendai likes playing?

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2. Who do you think is his favourite band?

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3. What do you think his best friend is called?

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4. What do you think he does when he comes home from school?

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5. What do you think his favourite colour is?

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6. What do you think his favourite food is?

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7. What job do you think he wants to do when he grows up?

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### Worksheet 2: Tendai

Tendai is 10 years old. She lives with her mum and dad. She likes playing sports and listening to music. Her best friend lives next door.

1. Which sports do you think Tendai likes playing?

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2. Who do you think is her favourite band?

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3. What do you think her best friend is called?

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4. What do you think she does when she comes home from school?

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5. What do you think her favourite colour is?

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6. What do you think her favourite food is?

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7. What job do you think she wants to do when she grows up?

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Exercise  
**5**

## Gender assumptions—agree/disagree

PURPOSE: To explore gender attitudes

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Large sheet of paper

1. Explain that you will read out some statements. If they agree, participants should go to one end of the room. If they disagree they should go to other end of the room. If they are not sure they should stay in the middle of the room.
2. Read out the statements one by one—not more than six. Here are some examples to choose from, but you may want to use some of your own:

*Boys are stronger than girls.*

*The way you look is more important than the way you behave.*

*Girls are more emotional than boys.*

*Looking after children is not a man's job.*

*Girls want to get married more than boys.*

*A girl should always do what her boyfriend tells her.*

*Sport is more important for boys than girls.*

*Girls need to find a good husband; boys need to find a good job.*

*A boy who likes cooking and looking after children is not a real boy.*

*Boys are less good at showing sympathy than girls.*

3. When participants have moved to their chosen place in the room, ask one person from each end of the room to give reasons for their choice. Tell the group that they can change their mind and move after hearing other people's reasons.
4. When you have gone through all the statements, bring the group back together and discuss what people think. Did the boys choose different ends of the room from the girls? Where do we get these ideas? Did some boys or girls change their minds after hearing what other people said? If so, ask them to say why.
5. Ask the group to divide into smaller groups and rewrite the ideas so that girls and boys are equal. For example, Sport is important for boys and girls. Ask each group to read out one (or more, as time permits) of their rewritten ideas.

**ACTIVITY SET 2:**  
**Increase young people's awareness of gender roles and attitudes**

**Exercise**

**1**

**Exploring media images of gender stereotypes**

**PURPOSE:** To explore how the media reinforces gender roles and stereotypes

**TIME:** 45-60 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Magazines, scissors, paper, pens

1. Divide the group into two smaller groups. Give each group some magazines. Ask one group to make a collage of the way women are portrayed and the other group to make a collage of the way men are portrayed, using pictures they have cut out of the magazines. If you do not have magazines, give them a large sheet of paper and pens and they can draw images instead of cutting them out. Allow about 20 minutes for this.
2. Bring the groups together to look at and discuss the collages they have made. Discuss the images, how these images maintain roles and stereotypes (a stereotype is a general assumption about what something or somebody is). Are these images accurate? How do young men and young women feel about being portrayed in this way?
3. Next, ask the whole group to think about television advertisements in which men and women are shown.
4. Return to the two small groups. Ask the groups to develop skits to act out one advertisement, with gender reversed (males play female parts, females play male parts). Allow 15 minutes for this.
5. Ask the groups to perform their advertisement. With the whole group, discuss how it felt to be a male playing a female or a female playing a male. Did it feel strange? If so, why?

**Exercise**

**2**

**Exploring male and female images**

**PURPOSE:** To explore female and male images and gender stereotypes

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Large sheet of paper

**PREPARATION:** Examples of images of women and men, for example, pictures from magazines and newspapers, and the words of popular songs

1. Ask the group to brainstorm ideas about the way that women and men are depicted in films, TV dramas, songs, proverbs and religious epics. Write the words up on a large sheet of paper under the headings 'male' and 'female'.
2. Organise the group into pairs. Give each pair two pictures taken from a magazine that show a man or a woman. Ask the pairs to discuss these images and to think about the following questions: What are the men and women doing? What characteristics do they show?



3. Bring the group back together. Ask each pair to talk about their materials and what they noticed about the images of males and females.
4. In the large group, discuss the roles that society expects men and women to play. What are the common stereotypes of males and females (for example, men are strong, women are weak)? Make a list of these stereotypes on a large sheet of paper.

**Discussion points:**

*From the materials, what are the images of male characteristics? Of females?  
Which of these characteristics do you think are realistic or not realistic?  
What do these images suggest that girls and boys can do?  
How are you similar to the images? How are you different?  
How do you feel about the stereotypes that are common in your society?*

**Exercise**

**3**

**Where do we get our ideas about gender?**

**PURPOSE:** To think about sources of information and attitudes about gender  
**TIME:** 60 minutes  
**MATERIALS:** Cards or small pieces of paper  
**PREPARATION:** Large sheet of paper or chalk to write on the floor

1. Brainstorm with the group all the sources of information and attitudes about gender, sex and sexual behaviour they can think of, until you have as many ideas as there are participants in the group. For example, friends, parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers, television, films, teachers, health workers, churches, politicians, advertising, pop music, magazines, books.
2. Write one idea on each card.
3. Draw a line on a large sheet of paper or on the floor. Write 'very helpful' at one end, 'not at all helpful' at the other end, and 'somewhat helpful' in the middle.
4. Give one card to each person in the group.
5. Ask each participant to come forward and put their card at a point on the line indicating how helpful they think it is as a source of information.
6. Discuss with the group why they have put the cards in different places.

**Discussion points**

*Do you receive different information from different sources? If so, what it is like to have so many different messages coming from different sources?  
Which sources have the greatest influence on you?  
Which sources are most helpful?  
Which ones are most accessible?  
How could less helpful sources become more helpful?  
What consistent messages would you like young people to receive?  
How do young people deal with confusing messages?*

**Exercise**

**4**

**Early messages and influences**

**PURPOSE:** To consider who and what influences ideas about gender

**TIME:** 30 minutes

1. Ask everyone on their own to think what messages they received from their mother and from their father, or from any one else, about the way that men and women should behave.
2. Divide into small groups of girls and boys and ask them to discuss these thoughts. Ask the girls to brainstorm messages that girls receive, using the following sentence beginnings:

*Girls are...*

*Women should...*

*Men like women who...*

*Girls who...*

*It is best if women...*

Ask the boys to do the same using:

*Boys are...*

*Men should...*

*Women like men who...*

*Boys who...*

*It is best if men...*

3. When the groups have finished, ask them to consider which messages are relevant to them, which have a positive effect on their behaviour and which may have a negative effect. What would they need to change the negative messages to if they were going to make healthy decisions?

**Exercise**

**5**

**Family expectations**

**PURPOSE:** To think about the way girls and boys are treated in families

**TIME:** 30 minutes

1. Divide the group into groups of two or three people. Ask them to think about the first time that they became aware that boys and girls are treated differently and to spend some time discussing these memories.
2. Then ask the small groups to develop a short role play to explain what they have discussed. Allow about 15 minutes to develop the role plays.

3. Ask each group to present their role play.

### Discussion points

*How were the males and females presented differently?*

*What differences are girls and boys born with? What differences do we learn? How do we learn these differences?*

*Are girls and boys and men and women treated differently in families? In what situations?*

*What does your family expect of you?*

### Exercise

## 6

### The value of boys and girls

**PURPOSE:** To explore social gender attitudes and values

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Two large sheets of paper

1. Ask the participants to imagine they are recently married and expecting a child.
2. Ask them to think what sex they would choose for this child, and the reason for their choice. Go around the circle asking each person to say what sex and why—write the choices and reasons on two large sheets of paper everyone can see. Write the total number who would choose a girl and the total who would choose a boy.
3. Discuss the reasons and people's assumptions about girls and boys (for example, boys will continue the family name, support the family and care for parents in their old age, girls will help in the home, get married).
4. Ask the group if they think that this will happen to them. Have some of these assumptions changed?

### Exercise

## 7

### Male and female roles

**PURPOSE:** To think about what roles men and women are expected to have

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Papers, pens, large sheet of paper

1. Divide the group into smaller groups. Give each group a large sheet of paper and ask them to divide it into three columns: female, male, either.
2. Ask them to first think about clothing and to write under the columns which types of clothes they think it is OK for females to wear, which for males and which either can wear.
3. Repeat the activity for other categories such as jobs and tasks around the house, playing sports, etc.

## Discussion questions

- How does your community view girls?*
- How does your community view boys?*
- How do you see yourself?*
- Are your views different from those of the community?*
- What ideas about girls would you like to change?*
- What ideas about boys would you like to change?*
- What can we do to change them?*

### Exercise

## 8

### Radha's story

- PURPOSE:** To consider what early marriage means for girls  
**TIME:** 60 minutes  
**MATERIALS:** Copy of 'Radha's story' adapted to the local situation

1. Ask the group to tell a story about anyone they know who was married at a very young age. Ask them to describe what happened to that girl.
2. Use the following questions to facilitate a group discussion:
  - What does early marriage mean for girls?*
  - Why do people in the community think marriage at a young age is good? What are the disadvantages?*
  - How can the situation be changed? Who can change the situation?*
3. Ask someone in the group to read Radha's story aloud.

#### Radha's story

'When I grew up it was emphasised that I should be a dependent wife and devoted mother. I was only allowed to be educated up to secondary level. As soon as I started menstruating my family started talking about marrying me off. For two years my parents hunted for a suitable husband. Prospective grooms and their relatives would come to look me over. For some I was not fair skinned enough. For others I was not beautiful enough. At last one family chose me and the dowry haggling began. Eventually an amount was agreed upon. My father went into debt for my wedding preparations.

After the wedding I went to stay with my husband's family. I was soon into the routine of washing, cooking and cleaning. I was made to observe as many rituals as possible for my husband's welfare and so that I would have a son.

Unfortunately my first child was a daughter. Everyone mourned her birth. My husband refused to talk to me for several days. During my second pregnancy I was threatened with being thrown out of the house if I didn't produce a son. Luckily for me I had a son. I feel very angry when my daughter is treated unfairly.'

4. After hearing the story, ask the group to discuss:

*What is Radha telling us?*

*Is her story familiar?*

*Are there cultural beliefs and traditions that oppress women in our society?*

*Who is responsible for the sex of a baby?*

### Exercise

## 9

### How young men and women spend their time

**PURPOSE:** To explore differences in gender roles and activities

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Large sheet of paper, paper, pens

1. Ask the participants to think about how they spend their time, what things they do every day (for example, spending time with friends, domestic chores), every week (for example going to the market, going to the disco), or less often (for example, visiting relatives, taking part in a local festival).
2. Ask the young men to form one group and the young women a separate group.
3. Ask each group to create their own activity clocks showing what they do each day, for example, 5:00 a.m. wake up, 5:30 a.m. milk the cows. Ask them to create activity clocks for adult men and women. Ask them to think about what they do during the day.
4. Bring the groups back together and look at the activity clocks.

#### Discussion points

*Are there differences in the things that young men and women and adult men and women do?*

*Are there differences in work, responsibilities, leisure time and activities?*

*Are these good? Are there things that you would like to change?*

*Do you think a man and woman who are married and have a family share the work load and responsibilities or do you think one of them does more work?*

*Do you think a man and woman who are married and have a family have equal power in their relationship or do you think that one of them has more power?*

### Exercise

## 10

### Women can't do that work

**PURPOSE:** To think about gender roles and stereotyping and where these ideas come from

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Cards or small pieces of paper, with various local occupations written or drawn on them, e.g. farmer, cook, maid, engineer, brick maker, bicycle repairer, teacher, nurse, doctor, food-stall vendor, vegetable seller, typist, architect, business person

1. Put the cards in a container.
2. Ask someone in the group to pick out a card and to act out the occupation shown on it. After the group has guessed what the job is, ask the person acting it if women can do this work. After he or she answers, ask the group whether they agree or disagree, and why. Then ask the group to vote on whether they agree or disagree and record the votes.
3. Continue until all the pieces of card or paper have been read out. Remind the group about how they have voted.

### Discussion points

*Are the reasons why some jobs can and cannot be done by women and men valid?*

*What prevents men or women doing some jobs?*

*What do 'women's' jobs have in common and 'men's' jobs have in common?*

*How is society changing? Can the group think of things—in their country or elsewhere—that women do now that they didn't do in the past?*

### Exercise

## 11

### Thinking about behaving differently

**PURPOSE:** To encourage the community to consider gender roles and making changes

**TIME:** 45-60 minutes

1. Ask the group of young people to create a drama to be shown to the community about gender issues and their effects.
2. Perform the drama in the community. Do this once without allowing interruptions.
3. Then repeat the performance, but this time give the audience a chance to stop the action at any point to discuss what is happening and how they think the characters could change what they do or say to improve the situation.
4. Follow the drama with a discussion. You can use the following questions to start discussion:

*How have gender roles changed in your lifetime?*

*How can greater equality between men and women benefit everyone?*

*What further changes would you like to see in the next generation?*

These activities can be taken further. For example, you can work with the community to draw a history map—draw a map of the village and the places that girls and boys go now and a map of where girls and boys went when their grandparents were young. Ask grandparents and young people to draw the map together and discuss how things have changed.

**ACTIVITY SET 3:**  
**Help young people to think about how gender roles and stereotypes are created**

**Exercise**

**1**

**Exploring gender stereotypes**

**PURPOSE:** To explore gender stereotypes and their effects

**TIME:** 30-45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Cards or pieces of paper, tape

1. Brainstorm with the group all the words describing 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics that they can think of. Write each word on a card or piece of paper.
2. Give each participant a card and ask them to pass the cards among themselves until you say stop.
3. When you say stop, ask the participants to tape the card to the front of their clothes. Ask each participant in turn to describe how they feel about the characteristic on their card.
4. Discuss how attaching fixed characteristics or roles to males and females can limit opportunities for both men and women. Ask the group to imagine a world where there are no differences in the way girls and boys are treated at home, at school, or anywhere. Ask a few of the group to describe what they imagined.

**Exercise**

**2**

**The advantages and disadvantages  
of being a man or a woman**

**PURPOSE:** To consider the effect of gender roles on women and men

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Large sheets of paper, pens

1. Divide participants into four smaller groups. Give each group a large sheet of paper and pen. Ask each group to appoint a recorder to report back to the whole group.
2. Ask the first group to list all the advantages of being a woman in our society, the second group to list all the advantages of being a man, the third group all the disadvantages of being a woman and the fourth group all the disadvantages of being a man.
3. Display the sheets of paper and ask each reporter to read out their group's list.
4. Discuss the similarities and differences between the lists. Ask if men and women are limited by gender roles and how? Are any of the roles interchangeable?

**Exercise**  
**3**

## Hopes and dreams

**PURPOSE:** To consider how gender roles and expectations affect young people's ideas about their future

**TIME:** 45-60 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Large sheets of paper, pens

1. Ask the group to divide into separate small groups of young men and young women. Ask them to discuss their hopes and dreams for the future.
2. Each group should make a list of the ten things they would like to do in the next ten years. They should then arrange these ten things into three categories: definite (those they are certain they will achieve), possible (those they may achieve with luck or hard work), and unlikely (those they are unlikely to ever achieve). Ask them to write the ten things under each category on a large piece of paper.
3. Ask the groups to think about the barriers that prevent them from achieving the things in the possible and unlikely categories (for example, you may dream of becoming a pilot, but there are no women pilots in your country). Ask each group to write the barriers on a separate large piece of paper.
4. Put the pieces of paper up on the wall. Bring the groups back together and ask them to tell the rest of the group about their ten things and how and why they put them into the three categories.

### Discussion points

*What differences are there between young men's and young women's hopes for the future?*

*Are the barriers real?*

*Where do they come from?*

*Can they be changed?*

**Exercise**  
**4**

## Exploring the impact of gender on young men

**PURPOSE:** To discuss young men's beliefs about themselves and about sex

**TIME:** 30 minutes

1. With a group of young men, discuss the following statements.

*In general, men:*

- *Hide certain feelings*
- *Are independent and don't ask for help*
- *Avoid talking about personal matters*
- *Compete with each other*
- *Are brave, strong and take risks*



- *Have a need to prove their manhood*
- *Measure their value by their ability to earn money and support their family*

*About sex, men:*

- *Pretend they know it all*
- *Feel that sex keeps them healthy*
- *Feel the need to perform*
- *Find it difficult to talk about*

## Exercise

### 5

## Debate

PURPOSE: To explore the possibility of change in gender relations

TIME: 45 minutes

PREPARATION: Write the statement on a large sheet of paper

1. Explain to the group that they are going to have a debate. The statement they are going to debate is *'The world would be a better place if men and women respected each other'*.
2. Divide the group into two smaller groups. Ask the first group to discuss among themselves arguments to support this statement. Ask the second group to discuss among themselves arguments against this statement. Allow about 20 minutes for the groups to develop their arguments.
3. Bring the two groups back together. Facilitate the debate, with each group taking it in turn to put forward their arguments.
4. Allow 20 minutes for the debate. At the end ask the group to vote in favour or against the statement. Ask the participants if any of them have changed their minds after hearing the arguments.

#### ACTIVITY SET 4:

Explore the impact of gender on young people's lives, especially their ideas about sex and relationships and expectations about their sexual behaviour

##### Exercise

## 1

### Sex and sexuality

**PURPOSE:** To help young people understand what sexuality means to them and how it is defined by society

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Drawings or photographs of a number of different scenes that can reflect sexuality (you can draw your own pictures or use newspaper or magazine photos). Make sure that there are enough for at least two pictures for each participant

1. Tell the group that this activity is for them to think about the different ways that we can show our sexuality. Ask them what they understand by the words 'sex' and 'sexuality'. You can use Fact Sheet 2 as a hand out or write up the group's own definitions.
2. Place drawings or photos face upwards on the floor leaving room for everyone to move around freely to select the drawings or photos of their choice. Invite people to choose one or two photos which best reflect what the word 'sexuality' means for them.
3. Allow five to seven minutes for people to make their selection (if people want to, they can share the same card). Then invite everyone to talk in turn about the photo(s) they have chosen.

#### Discussion points

*Does everyone have the same views about the different forms of sexual expression? Does it matter that we have different views?*

*Does the gender of the people involved in the pictures affect our views about the picture? How? Are there ways that each person can express their sexuality in positive ways and avoid the negative ways?*

##### Exercise

## 2

### Factors and actors

**PURPOSE:** To explore things that influence young people

**TIME:** 30-45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Paper, pens, 16 large sheets of paper

1. Ask the group to divide into four small groups.
2. Give four large sheets of paper to each group. Ask them to write 'Physical' on sheet 1, 'Social' on sheet 2, 'Emotional' on sheet 3 and 'Spiritual' on sheet 4.

3. Explain that our own sexuality is affected by many things around us—our physical health and development (physical), the society we grow up in (social), how we feel (emotional) and our beliefs about the world (spiritual).
4. Ask each group to brainstorm the factors, influences and experiences, both positive and negative, belonging to each heading which might shape or influence a person's sexuality.
5. Ask each group to feed their responses back to the larger group and then discuss which of these factors are influenced by our gender.

**Exercise**

**3**

**Sexuality information game**

**PURPOSE:** To understand what different forms of sexual expression are possible  
**TIME:** 30 minutes  
**MATERIALS:** Copies of the sexuality information worksheet. (You can add other definitions for other local practices, for example polygamy. You can use pictures instead of writing and ask people to explain what each picture means and what the official and local name for this is.)

1. Give copies of the worksheet to small groups of two or three people. Ask them to match up the words to the definitions by joining up the boxes on each side of the worksheet—or you can cut up the boxes to make a matching card game.

Words
A. Celibacy
B. Heterosexual
C. Homosexual
D. Gay man
E. Lesbian
F. Bisexual
G. Monogamy
H. Affair

Definitions
1. Someone who is attracted to, or has sexual relationships with, the opposite sex (a man with a woman or a woman with a man).
2. When a person has a sexual relationship with someone else without their partner knowing.
3. Someone who is attracted to, or has sexual relationships with, both men and women.
4. A man who is attracted to, or has a sexual relationship with, another man.
5. When someone has a sexual relationship with only one person.
6. When someone chooses not to have sexual relationships.
7. Someone who is attracted to, or has sexual relationships with, people of the same sex (a man with a man or a woman with a woman).
8. A woman who is attracted to, or has a sexual relationship with, another woman.

2. After the quiz, ask participants for their answers. Agree on the correct answers: A6, B1, C7, D4, E8, F3, G5, H2.
3. Discuss each of the words and how the group feels about them.
4. Explain that our sexuality and sexual expression is affected by our sex, but also about the choices and feelings that each of us has as individuals.

### Discussion points

*Are there myths and stereotypes about different people?*

*Are there different laws for men and for women? What does the group feel about this? (Do the girls in the group feel differently about this to the boys?)*

*Explain that everyone has their own sexuality and sexual expression and we should not assume that everyone is the same.*

**Note for the facilitator:** *You may find that some forms of sexual expression, such as homosexuality, are not considered to exist locally. It is important to remember that many forms of sexual expression are considered taboo, or are illegal, but are still practised. Make sure everyone has the chance to ask questions and express their viewpoint—unless they are being abusive about other people. There may be young people in the group who are attracted to the same sex but are afraid to say this. Your role as a facilitator is to make sure people do not think that one choice is 'right' and another is 'wrong'.*

### Exercise

## 4

### Same sex attraction

**PURPOSE:** To think about what it feels like to be lesbian or gay

**TIME:** 40 minutes

1. Explain what the different terms, heterosexual, homosexual (gay and lesbian) and bisexual mean.
2. Ask the group if they have heard these terms before and, if so, in what situations.
3. Suggest to the group that many people are gay and lesbian so that it is possible that a friend may tell them that they are lesbian or gay.
4. Ask the group in small groups to discuss what they would say or do if a friend told them they were gay/lesbian for about 10 minutes.
5. Each group should share these ideas with the rest of the group, who can comment on or question these ideas.
6. Discuss the importance of friends and friendship. Does it matter if your friend is lesbian or gay?

Alternatively, ask the group to imagine that they are an 'agony aunt' in a local newspaper. Hand out the letters below and ask them to write an answer.

'I'm fourteen-years-old. Two years ago there were rumours going around my school because I told a so-called friend that I loved this other girl. Because of this stupidity, I wasn't the only one who suffered—the girl herself was teased and she got really upset. She still talked to me even though we were both called lesbians. However, I can't bring myself to get close to her now because of the rumours. I haven't spoken to her for six months even though I'd love to be her best friend, but not more.'

Caroline

'I have a very big problem. I am gay. I don't know how to tell my friends and my father would kill me if I found out. I've a boyfriend and he has also not told anyone. Please can you tell me how to tell my friends, or even if I should? I think that some of them must know as I have never had a girlfriend and I always walk around with boys.'

Upset and puzzled

**Note to facilitator:** *It is important to make sure you communicate a positive message about homosexuality—that people practise a wide variety of sexual behaviour including homosexuality and that this is OK. Also explain that not every man who has sex with other men sees himself as gay or homosexual. Many men who have sex with men are married and have families. Discourage people from making negative or abusive comments about homosexuals in the group.*

## Exercise

### 5

## Being different

**PURPOSE:** To think about how each person is different in order to increase participants respect and understanding of other people

**TIME:** 30 minutes

1. Discuss how we all have similarities and differences. What is good about this? What is good about people being different?
2. Give each person four pieces of paper and ask them to draw and/or write two ways they are similar and two ways they are different.
3. Collect the 'similar' pieces and discuss them with the group.
4. Repeat this with the 'different pieces'.
5. How many of these similarities are linked to whether we are male or female and how many are not?

## Exercise 6 Feeling different

**PURPOSE:** To look at why we feel people are different and to identify times when we felt different and what it felt like

**TIME:** 45 minutes

1. Ask the group to sit in a circle. Explain to the group that they are going to play a game of observation (looking closely).
2. Ask four people to go in the centre of the circle and then ask the rest of the group to find out who is the odd one out, and say why. Possible ways to select the group include:
  - Three people who are wearing a similar item of clothing (such as a skirt) and one who is not (such as trousers)
  - Three people who have braided hair and one who has not
  - Three girls and a boy or three boys and a girl

After two or three goes, ask others to choose the 'odd one out'.

3. Once the group has guessed who is the odd one out, encourage other people in the group to ask that person about how they felt: for example, good or bad; happy or sad; proud or ashamed.
4. Then divide the group into groups of four. Ask them to talk about their best friends, about how they are different and if it matters. After about 10 minutes, ask the group to feed back what they discussed and any conclusions they reached.
5. Ask each person to write a story or poem that describes a time when they thought they were different from other people and say how it felt.
6. If you like, you can then ask the group to think about a time they saw someone being treated badly for being different and write a journalist's 'eye-witness' account of what they saw. Ask them to offer a solution to the situation at the end of the writing.

**Note to facilitator:** Make sure that the 'out' person is 'in' in other parts of the activity.

## Exercise 7 Drawing up your bill of sexual rights

**PURPOSE:** To decide what is the right choice for us and how to stand up for this

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Copy of Fact Sheet 1: The rights of young people

1. Ask the group what they understand 'rights' to be. Brainstorm their ideas on a piece of paper—encourage people to write down any ideas and not to judge their ideas or those of other participants

2. Show the group FACT SHEET 1, give them time to read it or read it aloud, and discuss any issues that they want to raise from this.
3. Ask them what they think sexual rights and responsibilities are.
4. In small groups, ask them to draw up their own bill of sexual rights. Allow about 30 minutes for this.
5. In the large group, share the ideas. Ask the group:  
Which rights do we find it easiest to claim? What helps us claim our rights in these situations?  
Which rights are hardest for us to claim? What gets in the way of our claiming these?  
Are sexual rights especially difficult to claim?
6. Give everyone a clean piece of paper and ask them to make their own decorative, personalised bill of rights which they can take home.

These are examples that other groups of girls have drawn up:

I have the right to:

- know what I want to know about sex when I need to know it
- ask about sex without being judged
- express and explore my sexuality as long as it does not hurt anybody
- sexual pleasure
- not to be judged because of my sexuality
- change my mind
- ask my partner to wear protection/practice safer sex
- confidentiality
- not to be abused in any way
- access to services without judgement
- be respected for who I am and what I am
- say 'NO' to any sex that I don't want at any time
- knowledge that helps me acknowledge and control my sexual health
- be taken notice of.

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## Fact Sheet 1: The Rights of Young People

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There are a number of international conventions, to which almost all the governments of the world have committed themselves, that protect the rights of youth, children, and women and girls. For example:

***The Convention on the Rights of the Child*** states that youth have the right to information and opportunities to develop life skills, education, health and other services. They also have a right to a safe and supportive environment free from exploitation and abuse (both in their immediate environment of family, friends and service providers, and the wider environment created by social values, norms, policies and legislation) and opportunities to participate in civil society, particularly in decisions that affect their lives.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that girls and women have equal rights with boys and men and emphasises young people's right to health education and to seek and receive information in the context of enjoying the highest possible standard of health.

***The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*** includes the rights of girls and women to be protected from commercial sexual exploitation, to participate in decision making, to have equal access to education, training and employment opportunities, to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent, to decide on the number and spacing of their children, and to have equal access to property in marriage.

***The Fourth World Conference on Women*** produced a platform for action that included promoting access to education about sexual and reproductive health for adolescents of both sexes and programmes to sensitise boys and young men to gender equality.

Governments have committed themselves to protecting the rights of girls, promoting their social and physical development, eliminating discrimination, violence and negative cultural attitudes and practices, and presenting positive images of girls and their potential. These include commitments to: establish policies that increase equality of status, welfare, opportunity; make literacy and numeracy programmes available to girls not attending school; ensure that girls and young women have equal access to economic resources; and invest in education and skills development for girls and women.

Governments have also targeted discriminatory attitudes and harmful practices to be addressed including: son preference, restrictions on girls' access to food, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, sexual violence. Other important targets include encouraging a more equal sharing of household work, reducing the heavy workload of women and girls, enforcing a minimum age of marriage, promoting equality, cooperation, mutual respect and shared responsibility between girls and boys and women and men.



### **The Rights of Young People**

All young people regardless of sex, religion, colour, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability have the following rights as sexual beings:

**The right to be yourself** – free to make decisions, express yourself, to enjoy sex, to be safe to choose to marry or not marry, to plan a family.

**The right to know** – about sex, contraceptives, HIV/STIs, and about your rights.

**The right to protect yourself and be protected** – from unplanned pregnancies, HIV/STIs and sexual abuse.

**The right to have health care** – which is confidential, affordable, of good quality, accessible, and given with due respect.

**The right to be responsible for one's own actions and those that affect others.**

**The right to be involved** – in planning programmes with and for youth and in decisions that affect your lives.

Source: IPPF poster

#### **Young people demand a say:**

At the 1995 International Conference on STIs/AIDS, a delegation of young people aged 14-24 years from 11 African countries issued a declaration of their needs and priorities, which have been endorsed by the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) as essential for effective AIDS action.

**Youth participation** – involve us in planning, implementation and evaluation and policy development in community decision-making processes.

**Youth-friendly services** – support the provision of services, including centres where we can access information, support and referral.

**Parental involvement** – strengthen the capacity of parents and other significant persons in our lives to better communicate with us and provide guidance to us, our brothers and sisters.

**Education about HIV/AIDS and sexuality** – promote skill-based education on physical development, reproductive health and sexuality for both in and out of school youth.

**Protection of girls and young women** – prevent the sexual abuse and exploitation of girls in vulnerable situations; sensitise boys, young men and elder men.

**Partnerships with people with HIV and AIDS** – build networks between young people with HIV/AIDS and other youth to promote prevention of HIV/AIDS, protection of human rights and acceptance of people with HIV/AIDS in society.

**Young people's commitments** – commit ourselves to responsible decision making about our own sexual behaviour and positively influence our peers.

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## Fact Sheet 2: Sex and Sexuality

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**Sex** is biological—it is whether a person is born male or female.

**Sexuality** is how a person feels about his or her body and the way that the person acts depending on these beliefs. Everyone has a sexuality. It is made up of many different parts of our personality, sensitivities and preferences. Our gender and sexual orientation are a part of our sexuality.

Sexuality covers all kinds of relationships and ways of expressing ourselves sexually. Words like *heterosexual*, *bisexual* and *lesbian* can help define someone's sexual orientation, but the boundaries are not clear cut for everyone.

One way of looking at sexuality is to break it into three parts.

- A person's relationship with him or herself: including personal fantasy and masturbation.
- A person's relationship with other people: the intimate and sexual relationships we have with other people.
- A person's relationship with his or her community: how we express our sexuality to others and how society affects that expression.

Sexuality may not feel like a particularly important part of everyone's life. It's important not to feel pressured into being sexually active just because it seems like 'everybody's doing it'. They're not!

*Homosexual* means being sexually attracted to people of the same sex (men attracted to men, or women attracted to women). This is also called being *gay* and, for women, *lesbian*.

*Heterosexual* means being attracted to people of the opposite sex (men attracted to women, or women attracted to men).

*Bisexual* means being attracted to both men and women.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Commonwealth Secretariat and Healthlink Worldwide, 2001. *Gender and Relationships: A Practical Action Kit for Young People*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat and Healthlink Worldwide.