

# GENDER EQUALITY

RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS AND FACILITATORS



# Gender Equality

**Gender inequality remains one of the deepest rooted issues globally.** From sports fields to the highest levels of government, it exists in all nations in the world. The United Nations have set 17 Sustainable Development Goals for all countries - from Ireland to South Sudan. These to be achieved by 2030 and one of these targets is gender equality. Currently, no country in the world is set to meet this target. Use this resource to explore what gender inequality is, how it impacts on whole communities and what your students can do to take action.



**Note:** Gender is a sensitive and complex issue. The material in this resource is intended to begin the discussion with students specifically about gender inequalities related to the work of Concern overseas primarily focusing on women as they are often amongst the most vulnerable. For more information about the gender spectrum visit <https://spunout.ie/life/article-amp/a-z-of-gender-identity>

## Definitions

**What's your gender? What's your sex?** Two questions that most people have been asked before. But what are you really being asked?



### Gender

Gender is **“the socially constructed characteristics of women, men, girls and boys”**. This is what is widely or traditionally considered ‘normal behaviour/ attitudes’ in a society or community for males and females (clothing, professions, attitudes, etc.). These vary in different society's communities and time periods over history. These norms can be changed and challenged. E.g. in China blue is considered a feminine colour and in western countries it is considered masculine



### Sex

The different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females, such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, etc.\*

\*Definitions taken from the World Health Organisation

## Gender inequality by numbers:



Around **650 million women and girls** in the world today who were married before age 18. Niger has the highest rate of child marriage in the world with 76% of girls married before 18 (UNICEF, 2018)



Women spend roughly **three times as many hours** in unpaid domestic and care work as men (UN Stats 2018)



The **average life expectancy of men globally is lower** than women. In young men aged 15-29, the top three causes of death are road traffic accidents, interpersonal violence and self-harm (UN Stats 2015)



An estimated **781 million people** (15+) are illiterate. Nearly two thirds of them are women (The World's Women, UN, 2015)




Women and girls are responsible for **water collection in 80 per cent of households** without access to water on premises. Managing periods is also difficult if water, soap and safe toilet facilities are scarce (UN Women, 2018)



Globally, women are **14 times more likely than men** to die during a disaster (UN Women, 2018)

## ACTIVITY ONE:

### Moving debate

 10 minutes



This activity can be used to begin the discussion about the terms 'gender' and 'sex'. Before you start this activity, it is important to emphasize to students to be respectful of other people in the room.

#### Instructions:

1. Designate one side of the room 'AGREE' and the opposite side 'DISAGREE'. The space inbetween is a scale (students can strongly agree, be undecided, not too sure but verging more towards disagree...etc.)
2. Ask the students to gather in the middle of the room and show/read out the first statement. Ask them to move to point on the scale which fits their opinion
3. Ask students to share their opinions and encourage discussion of each point
4. Repeat this for each statement

#### Discussion:

- If you are using this activity before sharing the definitions above, explain that the statements are mixed up and talking about different things (gender and sex). Discuss as class and then share the definitions.
- If you are using these after sharing the definitions, ask students to discuss which statements refer to gender norms and which refer to sex differences.
- How might gender stereotypes (such as those here) impact on a person's opportunities, choices and rights? You may wish to share some of the statistics from the first page for this task.

#### Statements

- Boys prefer the colour blue – **False. This is a gender norm which differs between cultures**
- Women and men have different hormones – **False (they have different amounts of the same hormones). This is a sex difference**
- Girls are more emotional than boys – **False. This is a gender norm.**
- Men can breastfeed – **False. Someone who is born biologically male cannot breastfeed. This is a sex difference.**
- Males are natural leaders – **False. This is a gender norm.**



## Concern and gender equality

Gender equality refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of men and women. All of Concern's programmes overseas include tackling gender equality as women are often the most at risk of extreme poverty, hunger and violence. Below are just a few examples of our gender programmes in one of our programme countries, Malawi.

### Right to Learn:

**Supporting girls to achieve their right to education and freedom from Gender Based Violence (GBV)**

School related gender based violence (SRGBV) is a big obstacle to girls education in Malawi.

Concern are working with communities and Theatre for Change to empower students in primary schools to identify, report and address violence against girls with the aim of ensuring a safe place to learn for all!

In this photo (right), Miss Malawi is visiting primary school students as part of the programme (Mervis Nyirenda/July 2018)



### Engaging men

Concern used to focus primarily on women in tackling gender inequality but as the men weren't on board, many women felt like when they went home they "left their rights at the door". Concern, through local partner NGOs, is working with men in communities, to provide a space to discuss attitudes and expectations related to being male and female, and how these cause harm to all people in the community, but especially woman and girls. Gender equality cannot be achieved if men in the community are not engaged, consulted and trained as allies and ambassadors – for sustainable change a whole community needs to be on board!

### Graduation programmes

Female headed households are among the poorest in Malawi. In the communities we work in Malawi, many women are taking part in our 'Graduation programme'.


This supports the poorest households in a community to 'graduate' out of extreme poverty and to sustain this. The programme gives monthly cash support to families, support to save for difficult times, and provides training in business skills.



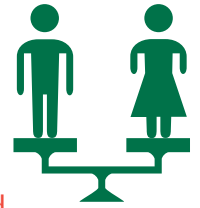
Check out this video, 'Samantha Barry in Malawi with Concern' (which can be found on **YouTube**) find out more about the Graduation and Engaging Men programme!

Stawa and Esme, who are in this image, are members of the Graduation programme in Mangochi, Malawi (Concern Worldwide/May 2019)

## ACTIVITY TWO: Gender Equality Video

 Five minutes

Use this video to introduce students to inequalities that women are facing around the world. The video can be found on Concern's **YouTube** channel titled "Why striving for gender equality is important" (2:23min)



### Video Questions:

1. Where does Malawi rank on the UN's Gender Inequality Index (as of 2018)? .....
2. What is the link between hunger and gender inequality for women and their communities?  
.....  
.....
3. Why do you think that women often have limited control over finances (economic resources)? Do you think this ever happens in Ireland?  
.....  
.....
4. What are two things that you can do to take action in your community on gender inequality?  
• .....  
• .....
5. In your opinion, do you think that Ireland is doing enough to tackle gender inequality?  
.....  
.....

### Extension and research activities:

1. Find out what the bottom ten countries are on the *UN's Gender Inequality Index*. Choose one these and research it to find out about what life is like there as a girl or woman.
2. All of Concern's programmes overseas are all **gender sensitive**. This means they identify and take into account the different needs, abilities, and opportunities of girls, boys, women and men. Find out more about Concern's gender programmes and the communities that we work with: <https://www.concern.net/what-we-do/gender-equality>



## ACTIVITY THREE: Gender Equality Big Steps

 25 minutes



Use this activity to explore how gender inequality holds people back from accessing their rights and opportunities all over the world.

**Preparation:** Give students their role play card in advance and ask them to find out more about the country that the person on their card lives in. Visit *Concern's blogs* online to find information and and find out about the lives of people that we work with.

### Need:

- Role play cards (below) printed out with one for each group/ pair/individual students
- A clear space so that students can move with ease
- The statements displayed on a board for all to see

### Instructions:

1. Ask students or a representative from each group to line up as if they are in a race and explain that for every statement that they believe to be true for the person on their card, they will move forward one step
2. Read each statement aloud, giving students a chance to decide if they should move or not
3. At the end, ask students to look around the room. What have they noticed? What do they think this represents? Ask them to take turns reading aloud their role play card to the class.
4. Explain that the statements are examples of gender inequalities and ask students to reflect on the following:
  - What does a step forward represent? And the finish line? [They represent opportunity, human rights access and the finish line, equality]
  - Where did you end up? How does it feel to be there looking around the room?
  - What were the things that specifically were holding you back? How can these be overcome?

### Statements

- I can choose to continue my studies or take up any profession I would like
- I am safe from harm
- I can marry or be in a relationship with whoever I choose
- My opinions are respected
- I have enough food, water and access to sanitation facilities

**Top Tip:** Use the role play cards in our [SDG 11: Reduced Inequalities](#) resource (pages four and five) which contain more detail and different examples in addition to these!



## ROLE PLAY CARDS

### Asmaa, 15, from Malawi

A few years ago my friends all started getting boyfriends. I didn't want to be left out, so I did too. After a few months, I fell pregnant. My boy is 18 months old now. I love him but it has changed my future. Since I now have responsibilities, I can no longer attend school. I earn very little and sometimes there is not enough to buy the food we need.

### Ciara, 17, from Kilkenny

My dreams one day are to be a civil engineer as I love knowing how things work and problem solving – my family just keep telling me is a man's job though and I'll struggle to get jobs. But I don't care – I'm still going to try. People at school can be mean about it too and I've had some issues with bullying in the past.

### Maryaam, 16, from Syria

Before the war, life was good. But a few years ago because of the violence at home we had to move to a refugee camp in Turkey. I had to leave school and I can see no way that I can go onto university like I had planned to study maths. Especially now as I just got married. My parents think it was the best way to keep me safe... maybe it is, but I had hoped for other things before marriage. Life here is hard and there is never enough food and water. I hate the toilets as there are not enough of them and they are far away from our dwelling.

### Gloria, 13, from Democratic Republic of Congo but living in Galway

We had to leave home because of the violence. It was very frightening and sometimes I still dream about it. My family and I are asylum seekers and live in a Direct Provision centre. I don't like it here – there are rules about when and what we eat (even for the grownups!) and there are lots of people here – I don't always feel safe. I'd love to be a social worker one day to help children like me but I'm not sure if my family can afford it.

## Gender Based Violence (GBV)

GBV is one of the biggest human rights violations in existence today. It is violence directed towards a person because of their sex or gender identity – it is mostly directed towards women and girls, but can affect anyone.

Violence is not just physical – it is any force with the intention of causing harm, hurt or death. It takes many different forms and is often related unequal power dynamics (e.g. showing that you have power over someone else).

Psychological Violence	Sexual Violence	Physical Violence	Economic Violence
Actions that cause psychological harm to someone. This may include isolation from others, verbal aggression, threats, intimidation, humiliation, stalking and insults.	Any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence, coercion and without consent	Any action that causes physical harm as the result of unlawful physical force	This is actions which control and monitor a person's use of money, threats of denying access to money and denying access to money



**87,000 women globally** were intentionally killed in 2017, more than half (58%) were killed by intimate partners or family members. This means that 137 women across the world are killed by a member of their own family every day (UN 2018)



**One out of three students** across the world have been bullied by peers at school. Girls and boys are equally likely to experience bullying. Boys are more likely to experience physical bullying than girls, with girls more likely to experience psychological bullying (e.g. being ignored, left out, being subject to nasty rumours). (UNESCO 2018)



**An estimated 35% of women** worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence in their lives by an intimate partner or someone who wasn't their partner at some point in their lives (WHO 2013). 41% of Irish women know someone in their family or friends who have experienced intimate partner violence. (FRA 2014)



**82% of female members of parliament** who participated in a study in 39 countries across 5 regions experienced some form of psychological violence (remarks, gestures and images of a sexist or humiliating nature) while in their role. They pointed to social media as the main place where psychological violence was carried out (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2016)

### Discussion Points

1. Look at the statistics above and the different forms of violence. How might each of these types of violence impact on a person's life? Does it impact on all people the same way?
2. GBV affects women and girls disproportionately, but it is also experienced by men and boys to a lesser degree too. It is very hard to find statistics about this though. Why do you think that is? How does that link to gender inequality?
3. How does gender based violence prevent the global community from reaching the global goals?

# Take Action



## Gender inequality is a **BIG ISSUE** that plays a big part in:

- Keeping people trapped in poverty due to lack of opportunities
- Forcing people into doing things they do not want to do
- Reducing literacy levels globally
- Negatively impacting on peoples health



... And as a consequence of these takes away peoples dreams, ambitions and rights.

By taking action on gender inequality, you are taking a stand against the issues above and showing solidarity with all those impacted by this crisis.

## SPEAK ACT DO

Speak, Act, Do is a programme to support students and teachers in taking action on important global issues which impact our world!

Choose a topic, do your research, organise two actions (a solidarity action and a community action) to address a global justice issue and then share this with other schools at our Agents of Change event!

**Visit our website to find our simple guide to Speak Act Do or email [schools@concern.net](mailto:schools@concern.net) to find out more.**

Below are a few ideas about how you can get involved!



### Concern Actions

- Hold a moment of silence or ask your school community to wear a certain colour as a visible show of solidarity with those experiencing gender inequality
- Organise a stunt for International Women's Day on March 8th to raise awareness of gender inequality globally
- Design poster, a postcard or make a short film to raise awareness of gender inequality in Concern's partner countries and share these in your local community

### Local Actions

- Survey your school community about their attitudes, experiences and understanding of gender equality in your school community. Is there an area in particular that you can try and make change in?
- Run a peer to peer workshop or world café in your school. A great idea is to make this intergenerational so that people of all ages can learn from one another
- Organise a debate on a gender related motion! One example recently from Concern Debates is "For Women to Access Leadership Positions Gender Quotas Must be Implemented"



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**CONCERN**  
worldwide

ENDING  
EXTREME POVERTY  
WHATEVER  
IT TAKES