

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must often be available to compensate for women's historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality. Gender equality requires equal enjoyment by women and men of socially-valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Where gender inequality exists, it is generally women who are excluded or disadvantaged in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources. Therefore a critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives. Gender equality does not mean that men and women become the same; only that access to opportunities and life changes is neither dependent on, nor constrained by, their sex. Achieving gender equality requires women's empowerment to ensure that decision-making at private and public levels, and access to resources are no longer weighted in men's favor, so that both women and men can fully participate as equal partners in productive and reproductive life.

Gender equality, also known as sexual equality or equality of the sexes, is the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making; and the state of valuing different behaviors, aspirations and needs equally, regardless of gender. The term gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. In most societies, being a man or a woman is not simply a matter of different biological and physical characteristics. Men and women face different expectations about how they should dress, behave or work. Gender equality also means that all genders are free to pursue whatever career, lifestyle choice, and abilities they want without discrimination. Their rights, opportunities, and access to society are not different based on their gender. Gender equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex in opportunities, the allocation of resources and benefits, or access to services.

Gender equity refers to the fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. The concept recognizes that women and men have different needs and power, and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalance between the sexes.

Gender equality is the goal, while gender neutrality and gender equity are practices and ways of thinking that help in achieving the goal. Gender parity, which is used to measure gender balance in a given situation, can aid in achieving gender equality but is not the goal in and of itself. Gender equality is more than just equal representation, it is strongly tied to women's rights, and often requires policy changes. As of 2017, the global movement[which?] for gender equality has not incorporated the proposition of genders besides women and men, or gender identities outside of the gender binary.

UNICEF says gender equality "means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike.

On a global scale, achieving gender equality also requires eliminating harmful practices against women and girls, including sex trafficking, femicide, wartime sexual violence, gender wage gap,[2] and other oppression tactics. UNFPA stated that, "despite many international agreements affirming their human rights, women are still much more likely than men to be poor and illiterate. They have less access to property ownership, credit, training and employment. This partly stems from the archaic stereotypes of women being labelled as child-bearers and home makers, rather than the bread winners of the family. They are far less likely than men to be politically active and far more likely to be victims of domestic violence. As of 2017, gender equality is the fifth of seventeen sustainable development goals (SDG 5) of the United Nations. Gender inequality is measured annually by the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Reports.

What is gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for integrating gender concerns in the analysis, formulation and monitoring of policies, programmes and projects. It is therefore a means to an end, not an end in itself; a process, not a goal. The purpose of gender mainstreaming is to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in population and development activities. This requires addressing both the condition, as well as the position, of women and men in society. Gender mainstreaming therefore aims to strengthen the legitimacy of gender equality values by addressing known gender disparities and gaps in such areas as the division of labour between men and women; access to and control over resources; access to services, information and opportunities; and distribution of power and decision-making. UNFPA has adopted the mainstreaming of gender concerns into all population and development activities as the primary means of achieving the commitments on gender equality, equity and empowerment of women stemming from the International Conference on Population and Development.

Gender mainstreaming, as a strategy, does not preclude interventions that focus only on women or only on men. In some instances, the gender analysis that precedes programme design and development reveals severe inequalities that call for an initial strategy of sex-specific interventions. However, such sex-specific interventions should still aim to reduce identified gender disparities by focusing on equality or inequity as the objective rather than on men or women as a target group. In such a context, sex-specific interventions are still important aspects of a gender mainstreaming strategy. When implemented correctly, they should not contribute to a marginalization of men in such a critical area as access to reproductive and sexual health services. Nor should they contribute to the evaporation of gains or advances already secured by women. Rather, they should consolidate such gains that are central building blocks towards gender equality.

Benefits of gender equality

Achieving gender equality will have a significant positive impact on the world. Here are just a few of the benefits:

1. Better business

Studies show that gender diversity improves an organization's innovation and productivity. When women are given equal education (and as a result, equal job opportunities) compared to men, the businesses they join thrive.

2. Better economy

When women can participate in the economy in the same way as men, the economy does better. Closing the gender pay gap plays a significant role in this. Studies show that if OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries matched Sweden in their female employment rates, the GDP would increase by \$6 trillion.

3. Reduced poverty

Girls and women make up the world's poorest populations. Because they aren't given equal education, job opportunities, and income, cycles of poverty repeat themselves. By giving women the same opportunities as men, it would raise up entire families from poverty and reduce the world's poverty rate.

4. Better health

Because of barriers like income and lack of education, access to good healthcare is often challenging for women. Even without those obstacles, women are often not taken seriously. There's also less research on conditions that mostly affect women. If gender equality became realized in healthcare, women would get better care, leading to improvements in a society's overall health. Studies also show that gender equality has a link to the improvement of children's health. Women with equal education and income can care for their children better.

Effect of gender equality

What would gender equality mean in practice? How would the world be different? Here are just a few of the outcomes:

1. More girls would be educated

A lack of education is one of the most significant results of gender inequality. If girls' education was given the same priority as boys', more girls would be in school. This would set them up for better job opportunities and income in the future.

2. More women would be in the workplace (and workplace leadership)

Currently, women are not as represented as men in the workplace, especially in leadership. If barriers to their success were removed, they would be better represented.

3. Families would be stronger

Men are negatively affected by gender inequality. This is especially clear when it comes to paid family leave. Because women are considered the primary caregivers for children, men are often unable to get time off. This is also true when it comes to caring for older family members. If both men and women

were able to take time off for family without discrimination based on gender, it would strengthen families.

4. More women would participate in politics

Most political systems are still biased in favor of men. If gender equality was realized, the world would see a lot more women engaged in the political process. This includes political leadership.

How can we make gender equality a reality?

The world is a long way from achieving gender equality. What needs to happen for it to become real?

There are three essential actions:

1. Awareness

The first step toward any progress is awareness. If a society isn't able to acknowledge gender inequality, changes will be nearly impossible. To make gender equality a reality, people need to be aware of the current state of affairs and the benefits of change.

2. Education

Many believe that the most significant obstacle to gender equality is unequal access to education. Without the same education as boys, girls are limited in their income and job prospects. This has a domino effect in every area of their lives. To tackle gender inequality at the start, education for girls and women needs to be a top priority.

3. Legislative support

There are many laws and systems in place that fuel gender inequality. To break those systems down, laws that discriminate need to be repealed and new laws put in place. These laws hold organizations and institutions accountable. Governments, legislators, and activists all play a part in this process.