

## **UNIT TWO**

### **KEY CONCEPTS AND ISSUES IN GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Unit Introduction**

Dear learner, in this unit, it is aimed at introducing you to the basic concepts and issues raised in development debates and public policies regarding gender. The content of the unit is organized in such a way that you will easily acquaint yourself with the terms, concepts and the issues dealt with in gender and development. Some of the key concepts and issues raised in this unit are sex and gender, patriarchy, gender roles and gender division of labor, gender discrimination and gender gap, and gender equality and equity.

#### **Section-one: Sex and Gender**

##### **Section overview**

In this section, you will be acquainted with the concepts of sex and gender, origins of the concepts, and the inherent imitations to the male-female distinctions in integrating women to the development agenda.

#### **1.1 Sex and Gender compared**

The English-language distinction between the terms, ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ was first developed in the 1950s and 1960s by British and American psychiatrists and other medical personnel working with intersexes and transsexual patients. Since then, the term gender has been increasingly used to distinguish between sex as biological and gender as socially and culturally constructed phenomenon. Feminists have used this terminology to argue against the ‘biology is destiny’ line, and gender and development approaches have widely adopted this system of analysis.

Sex=gender?

“Sex marks the distinction between women and men as a result of their biological, physical and genetic differences...Gender roles are set by convention and other social, economic, political and cultural forces” (One World Action Glossary: <http://owa.netxtra.net/indepth/project.jsp?project=206>)

Whilst often used interchangeably, ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are in fact distinct terms. ‘Sex’: a person’s sex is biologically determined as female or male according to certain identifiable physical features which are fixed. Whereas biological sex is determined by genetic and anatomical characteristics, gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. From this perspective, sex is fixed and based in nature; gender is fluid and based in culture. This distinction constitutes progress compared with ‘biology is destiny’, that is, nature determines one’s class, status and life outcomes.

Whereas sex refers to the biological differences between women and men that generally tends to be permanent and universal, gender refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men in a given culture or location. These roles are influenced by perceptions and expectations arising from cultural, political, environmental, economic, social, and religious factors, as well as custom, law, class, ethnicity, and individual or institutional bias. Gender attitudes and behaviors are learned and can be changed.

? Dear learner, what do you think are the limitations of male-female distinction?

## **1.2 Flaws in male-female distinction**

Firstly, the male-female distinction is criticized for ignoring the existence of persons who do not fit neatly into the biological or social categories of women and men, such as intersexes, transsexual, and transgender people. ? Dear learner, who do you think are intersexes and transsexual people? Are people of these characteristics found in your community or society?

Inter-sex people are born with some combination of male and female characteristics. Transsexual people are born with the body of one sex, but feel they belong to the ‘opposite’ sex. There are also people with characteristics of transgender. Transgender people are those who feel they are neither male nor female, but somewhere in between. Hijras are a South Asian transgender population.

“(Sex) in human beings is not a purely dichotomous variable. It is not an evenly continuous one either.... a fair number of human beings are markedly intersexual, a number of them to the point

where both sorts of external genitalia appear, or where developed breasts occur in an individual with male genitalia, and so on". (Geertz, Clifford., 1983, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books, p81)

On the other hand, women's marginalization has often been seen as 'natural' and a fact of their biology. However these biological differences cannot explain why women have less access to power and lower status than men. To understand and challenge the cultural value placed on someone's biological sex, and unequal power hierarchies, scholars argue that we need the relational concept of 'gender'. 'Gender' and the hierarchical power relations between women and men based on this are socially constructed, and not derived directly from biology. Gender identities and associated expectations of roles and responsibilities are therefore changeable between and within cultures.

Use of the term gender, rather than sex, therefore, signals an awareness of the cultural and geographic specificity of gender identities, roles and relations. The use of the term gender also recognizes gender inequality as the outcome of social processes, which can be challenged, rather than as a biological and immutable phenomenon. For this reason, its use can generate considerable opposition, particularly from conservative religious and cultural groups but also in mainstream development institutions. Yet, it is a pragmatic term in which possibility for social change and hopes for improvements in the conditions of women is embedded.

The other limitation of male-female distinction is that for many people the sex categories of female and male are neither fixed nor universal, but vary over time and across cultures. Accordingly, according to some people and in some societies, sex, like gender, is seen as a social and cultural construct. Hence, the value of the distinction between the terms 'sex' and 'gender' has just been challenged.

"If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all" (Butler, Judith., 1990, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York & London: Routledge, Chapter 1: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire, p346)

A similar assertion that brings into light the existence of more than two biological sexes also objects to the male-female distinction of the human community. You would also learn from this line of argument from the following assertions.

*“We believe it is indispensable to deconstruct the binary sex/gender system that shapes the Western world so absolutely that in most cases it goes unnoticed. For ‘other sexualities to be possible’ it is indispensable and urgent that we stop governing ourselves by the absurd notion that only two possible body types exist, male and female, with only two genders inextricably linked to them, man and woman. We make trans and intersex issues our priority because their presence, activism and theoretical contributions show us the path to a new paradigm that will allow as many bodies, sexualities and identities to exist as those living in this world might wish to have, with each one of them respected, desired, celebrated” (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission [IGLHRC], 2005, Institutional Memoir of the 2005 Institute for Trans and Intersex Activist Training, p8 <http://www.iglhrc.org/files/iglhrc/LAC/ITIAT-Aug06-E.pdf>)*

## **Section-two: Patriarchy**

### **Section overview**

Drear learner, from the previous section, we hope that you have understood that gender is a socially constructed phenomenon. In this section, we will introduce you to the instrument of this socialization. This is patriarchy. Patriarchy is not only the means of socialization but also its result which pervades almost all male-dominated societies as an institution of socialization and worldview creation.

#### **2.1 What is patriarchy?**

Patriarchy literally means the “rule of the father”. A theoretically countervailing term to patriarchy is matriarchy. Matriarchy is the “rule of the mother”. ‘A patriarchy’ is a society in which formal power over public decisions and policy-making is held by adult men; ‘a matriarchy’ is a society in which policy is made by adult women (Ruth, 1995). Closely related

terms to patriarchy and matriarchy are patria-lineal and matrilineal as well as patria-local and 'matrilocal'. Patria-lineal societies are societies in which decent is traced through males (father's bloodline) and patria-local is a condition where domicile after marriage is with husband's family. Matrilineal societies are societies in which decent is traced through females (mother's bloodline) and matrilocal is a condition where domicile after marriage is with the wife's family.

Feminists use the term patriarchy to denote a culture that embodies masculine ideals and practices. What do you think is masculinity? Feminists refer to masculinity as those behaviors and attributes socially perceived to characterize maleness. These attributes include: aggressiveness, courage, physical strength and health, self-control and emotional reserve, perseverance and endurance, competence and rationality, self-reliance and autonomy, individuality, sexual potency. There are also parallel attributes associated with femininity, that is, what constitutes femaleness. These attributes include: passivity, timidity, fragility and delicacy, expressiveness, frailty, emotionality, needfulness, dependence, humility, chastity/innocence or receptivity and hospitability).

Another related concept to patriarchy is patriarchal ideology. Patriarchal ideology is a system of ideas based on a belief in male superiority and sometimes the claim that gender division of labor is based on biology and scriptures. ? Dear learner, what do you think is the impact of patriarchy? The most problematic aspect of patriarchy is its invisibility in society. Some people regard patriarchy as "...an elephant in the room". Patriarchy is an issue that almost all people are aware of but which is never addressed directly by those involved with social inequality and public policy. Despite the inconceivable injustices done to women, people of either sex hardly consider it as a serious problem. Because it operates under a mind-control serving instruments, patriarchy becomes an invisible reality in which people unconsciously engage. Patriarchy operates as the most potent form of control that reigns not just over the body but essentially over the mind. It works as a brainwashing instrument that perpetuates the most stable and effective form of slavery where the slaves were unaware of their condition, unaware that they were controlled, and instead believing that they have freely chosen their life condition, here femininity and its trappings. As a result some women even acted side by side with men in the control of women by patriarchy. Women have very often supported the patriarchal status quo; they have backed men, and instructed their daughters and granddaughters in the duties of being and

becoming ‘good girls’ and women of character. With the same token, patriarchy is a vividly observable reality but people have consciously undermined it, making it a consciously entrenched system unconsciously exercised and vice-versa. However, because its impact is so huge on society, it cannot also be overlooked in a conscious world of enlightened and responsible citizens.

Patriarchy has made women and men to move into and live in two different conceptual universes of the same world wherein they absorb (learn, grow and act) two separate images of the same reality. Women and men had long come to see the world systems and themselves differently. Patriarchy’s powerful agencies of idea formation and worldview creation are religion and belief systems, environment and philosophies, education and curriculum, and social science and the media.

Patriarchy generally meant that there is male domination of ownership and control, at all levels in society, which maintains and operates the system of gender discrimination as justified by the patriarchal ideology. Patriarchy has maintained control over women and over the institutions that guide the political, economic and cultural arrangements governing the lives of women. Patriarchal institutions are, therefore, regarded as central causes of social and material inequalities in maledominated societies. While it is commonplace to discuss the impact of gender inequality on women and girls, and while it is also becoming very common to discuss its impact on men and boys, its general impact on all public policy is least discussed and considered. However, patriarchal masculinity is almost globally dominant, and that this dominance is reflected in unhealthy and antisocial patterns of socialization which affect most if not all children and adults in almost all societies worldwide.

2.2 Hegemonic masculinity ? Dear learner how do you understand patriarchal socialization and hegemonic masculinity?

Dear learner, we have said that patriarchy is the systematic domination by men of women and of other men. Masculinities are the range of alternative ways (national, social, racial, sexual) in which male gender relations are expressed. Hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity which is culturally and politically dominant at a particular time and place. What do we mean by hegemony? Hegemony is a subtle and complex process whereby particular beliefs, values and

ideologies are reinforced by those with political and cultural power such that they become perceived as both natural and inevitable. Hegemony in this sense entails that there is no alternative and no other better ways to think and act. Hegemonic assertions superimpose the dominance of an institution or ideology over any other rival under its domain. This results in social inequality. Social inequality refers to unfair or unjust differences in the determinants or outcomes of social utilities (including health and education) within or between defined populations. This might lead to structural violence. Structural violence is sufferings caused by public policies and institutions. Such structural relations include civil, social and economic relations of public policy.

Hegemonic masculinity refers to a specific form of gender relations that has for many years remained globally dominant. It is one of the variant of masculinity which is characterized by generally agreed upon negative and positive attributes associated with what is constituted in maleness. Dear learner, the table below presents lists of these masculine attributes.

| Perceived positive attributes of masculinity | Perceived negative attributes of masculinity | Contested attributes |
|--|--|----------------------|
| Strength                                     | Toughness                                    | Individualism        |
| Protectiveness                               | Aggressiveness                               | Competitiveness      |
| Decisiveness                                 | excessive risk-taking                        | Rationality          |
| Courage                                      | suppression of emotions                      | Practicality         |

What is specially worrying about the hegemonic dominance of this form of masculinity is the fact that worldwide acceptance of childhood socialization into the above negative features of the hegemonic masculinity subsequently results in power inequalities between individuals, between social/racial/ gender groups and between institutions —and in turn— in the individual and the structural violence through which power inequalities are expressed in public policies.

Generally, the fact that the patriarchal institution socializes boys and girls to the world of differing gender perceptions and expectations has resulted in gender stereotypes.

## **Section-three: Gender Roles and Gender Division of Labor**

### **Section overview**

Dear learner, from your study of the previous section, we hope that you have acquainted yourself with how patriarchy guides women and men to move into and live in two separate conceptions of the same world. It is now easier to deduce that these conceptions determine what particular roles women and men play in society, the places they occupy and the values attached to their occupations. In this unit, we will introduce you the socially determined roles of women and men that have given rise to gender division of labor.

### **3.1 Gender roles ?**

#### **What do you think are gender roles?**

Gender roles are the activities ascribed to men and women on the basis of perceived differences. “Gender division of labor” is a term used in gender literature to mean the roles and tasks assigned to women and men on the basis of perceived gender characteristics and attributes, irrespective of ability and skills. While one’s sex does not change, gender roles are learned and change over time. They vary from culture to culture, and often from one social group to another or within the same culture. Gender roles vary according to class, ethnicity, and race. For example, in India, unskilled labor is considered “women’s work” while in Africa it is “men’s work.” In Europe and the United States, the contribution men make to domestic activities is becoming increasingly important and visible. Factors such as education, technology, economy, and sudden crises like war and famine also cause gender roles to change from time to time across cultures and within the same culture and sex-class. ? What do you think are the problems associated with gender roles? Gender is a basic organizing principle of societies, particularly in the division of labor in families, communities, and the marketplace. Although gender roles limit both women and men, they generally have had a more repressive impact on women. Women frequently have responsibilities related to their reproductive roles (child bearing and child



rearing) and the associated tasks such as managing the family and the household. Both women and men are involved in productive labor, which includes wage employment and production of goods. However, their functions and responsibilities differ. Women's productive work is typically less visible and lower paid than men's. In some cases, work done primarily by men would immediately turn to low-pay-jobs and less prestigious when women begin to do it, and conversely, "women's work" earns higher pay when done by men. Similarly, women frequently earn less than men in the same job. At the community level, men may tend to have formal leadership roles and perform high-status tasks while women often do the organizing and support work. Most women's development projects also fail to recognize the triple roles of women, and focus only on women's reproductive work as caregivers to children and families. ? What do you think are the major spheres of life where gender differences are reflected? Dear learner, the following are major sphere of life where gender differences are reflected. Social Different perceptions of women's and men's social roles: the man seen as head of the household and chief bread-winner; the woman seen as nurturer and care-giver. Political Differences in the ways in which women and men assume and share power and authority: men more involved in national- and higher-level politics; women more involved at the local level in activities linked to their domestic roles. Educational Differences in educational opportunities and expectations of girls and boys: family resources directed to boy's rather than girl's education; girls streamed into lesschallenging academic tracks. Economic Differences in women's and men's access to lucrative careers and control of financial and other productive resources: credit and loans; land ownership.

From those occupations and preoccupations of men and women, it if possible to conclude that:

... many of the activities that consume women's time—cooking, childcare, cleaning—are not considered "work" because they do not involve earning an income. Women's time is therefore considered less valuable than men's because they may not earn cash. When women are involved in earning income for the family, they generally continue to have all the additional responsibilities within the home. The perception of women's activities as not being valuable and women's limited ability to earn an income result in women having less power in the family and the community. ...women's triple roles: reproductive, productive, and community [are always the case in point]. (The CEDPA Training Manual Series Volume III, 1996)

3.1.1 The triple roles of women ? What do you think are the triple roles of women? Because women are active in all three types of labor (reproductive, productive, and community), they are said to have “triple roles.” i) Reproductive roles: refer to child-bearing and child rearing and related responsibilities fulfilled by women. They include pregnancy, giving birth to a child, breast-feeding and associated roles of women such as raising children, caring for other family members, and household management tasks, as well as home based production. ii) Productive roles: refer to production of goods for consumption or income through work in or outside the home. iii) Community management: refers to tasks and responsibilities carried out for the benefit of the community.

Women are expected to balance the demands of these three different roles and hence they should be recognized for their contributions. The tasks women usually perform in carrying out their different roles do not generally earn them an income. Women are often defined exclusively in terms of their reproductive roles, which largely concern activities associated with their reproductive functions. These reproductive roles, together with their community management roles, are perceived as natural. But because these roles do not earn income, they are not recognized and valued as economically productive. Women’s contributions to national economic development are, therefore, often not quantified and hence invisible. In many societies, women also carry out productive activities such as maintaining smallholder agricultural plots in farming systems. These tasks are often not considered as work and are often unpaid. Women may also perform many roles which attract wages in both the formal and informal economic sectors. But women’s economically productive roles, in contrast to men’s, are often undervalued or given relatively little recognition.

### **3.2 Gender division of labor ?**

**What do you think is gender division of labor; how do you relate to gender roles?**

Gender division of labor is defined as the socially determined ideas and practices which define what roles and activities are deemed appropriate for women and men. Whilst the gender division of labor tends to be seen as natural and immutable, in fact, these ideas and practices are socially

constructed. This results in context-specific patterns of who does what by gender (=gender roles) and how this is valued.



Gender divisions of labor are not necessarily rigidly defined in terms of men's and women's roles. They are also characterized by co-operation in joint activities, as well as by separation. Often, the accepted norm regarding gender divisions varies from the actual practice. However, roles typically designated as female are almost invariably less valued than those designated as male. Women are generally expected to fulfill the reproductive roles. Men tend to be more associated with productive roles, particularly paid work, and market production. In the labor market, although women's overall participation rates are rising, they tend to be confined to a relatively narrow range of occupations or concentrated in lower grades than men, usually earning less. ? Dear learner, what do you understand from the following assertion?

“Women's labor is not infinitely elastic. It cannot stretch to cover all the deficiencies left by reduced public expenditure. It cannot absorb all the shocks of adjustment.” (Elson, 1995:15)

Both women and men engage in productive roles. But what do you think is the problem with women's productive roles? Historically, women's productive roles have been ignored and undervalued, particularly in the informal sector and subsistence agriculture. This has led to misconceived development projects. For example, the services of extension agents and agricultural inputs being targeted at men. Because women's labor is undervalued, it is often assumed by mainstream development policies to be infinitely elastic. For example, policy makers expect that women can take on roles previously fulfilled by public services, such as care for the sick and elderly, when cutbacks are made.

? Dear learner, what do you think should be done to promote women's productive roles?

Women's productive roles could be better recognized and gender-sensitive development interventions be promoted if the following conditions are fulfilled. These are:

-  Formal documentation and recognition of women's roles and the related time burden'
-  Measure all forms of economic activity by gender. International organizations have already begun to implement it.

- ✚ Redefinition of ‘economic activities’ that include subsistence farming, food processing and home-working ‘in anticipation of profit’.
- ✚ Employing time-budget-surveys to measure women’s input into reproductive work.
- ✚ Gender and development policies and programs can challenge and a change woman’s socially prescribed roles in pursuit of gender equity.
- ✚ Training women and employing them in jobs previously under males’ domain. They may include water technicians, builders, etc.
- ✚ Establishing proper remuneration for programs aiming to increase women’s participation in spheres beyond the household.
- ✚ Reduction of women’s responsibilities in the home increased cooperation of men.

## **Section-four: Gender discrimination**

### **Section overview**

Dear learner, you have learnt that traditional gender roles and gender division of labor have resulted in unfavorable outcomes for women that put them at a disadvantaged position in society. In this section, you will learn about gender discrimination that furthers gender gaps in society.

### **4.1 Gender discrimination**

“Not all women are poor, and not all poor people are women, but all women suffer from discrimination” (Kabeer, 1996:20) ? What do you think is gender discrimination?

Gender discrimination refers to the systematic, unfavorable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender, which denies those rights, opportunities or resources. Across the world, women are treated unequally and less value is placed on their lives because of their gender. Women’s differential access to power and control of resources is central to this discrimination in all institutional spheres, i.e. the household, community, market, and state.

? How does gender discrimination occur in the household, community, market and in the state?

Within the household, women and girls can face discrimination in the sharing out of household resources including food, sometimes leading to higher malnutrition and mortality indicators for women. This is termed as intra-household resource allocation. At its most extreme case, gender discrimination can lead to ‘son-preference’, expressed in ‘sex-selective-abortion’ or female feticide. In the labor market, unequal pay, occupational exclusion or segregation into low skill and low paid work limit women’s earnings in comparison to those of men of similar education levels. Women’s lack of representation and voice in decision-making bodies in the community and the state perpetuates discrimination, in terms of access to public services, such as schooling and health care or discriminatory laws. The law is assumed to be gender-neutral when in fact it may perpetuate gender discrimination, being a product of a culture with oppressive gender ideologies. Even where constitutional or national legal provisions uphold gender equality principles, religious or other customary laws that privilege men may take precedence in practice. However, the law, when reformed with women’s input, can be a potent or powerful tool for challenging discrimination, if combined with other strategies, including capacity-building to overcome barriers to claiming rights. Dear learner, the box below provides some figures and facts about women revealing the distribution of resources by gender at the global level.

#### Gender discrimination:

- ✚ women work more than 67% of the world’s working hours;
  - ✚ women (particularly those in developing countries) work for about 17 hours a day;
  - ✚ women produce about 50% of the world food;
  - ✚ women’s earnings range from 50-85% of men’s earnings ; or women earn less than 10% of the world income;
  - ✚ 2 out of 3 of the world’s illiterate people are women;
  - ✚ 2 out of 3 of the world’s poor are women;
  - ✚ Women own only about 1% of the world property;
  - ✚ globally women make up just over 10% of representatives in national government;
- (Adapted from Oxfam, 1995:181, and ‘Facts and Figures’ section)

## **? How do you think that international human rights instruments serve in promoting women's human rights?**

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 brought into international focus the rights of women as human rights, including the right to be free from discrimination. Women activists regard this convention as a key tool to support their struggle against discrimination in all spheres, pushing governments towards attaining these internationally recognized minimum standards.

### **Section-five: Gender Equality and Equity**

#### **Section overview**

Dear learner, the whole idea behind gender issues is gender inequality and the consequential inequities in the distribution of almost all resources in societies. Gender equality and gender equity are the primary objectives in gender and development. The term 'gender equity' is often used interchangeably with 'gender equality'. Here, a distinction is drawn between these two concepts, reflecting divergent understandings of gender differences and of the appropriate strategies to address these differences. You will learn about gender equality and equity in this section.

#### **5.1. Gender equality ?**

##### **Dear learner, how do you define gender equality?**

Gender equality denotes women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere. This expresses a liberal feminist idea that removing discrimination in opportunities for women allows them to achieve equal status to men. In effect, progress in women's status is measured against a male norm. ? Dear learner, how do you think gender equality addressed?

Equal opportunity policies and legislations tackle gender equality through measures that increase women's participation in public life. For example, some countries have developed institutions for National Service for Women (NSW) to set up Equal Opportunities Plans for Women. This focused on equitable participation in education, the labor market, health

services, and politics. Judicial reform is another key tool in the fight for equality, but lack of implementation and enforcement might limit its impact.

? Dear learner, what do you think is the limitation inherent to gender equality?

The focus on what is sometimes called formal equality, does not necessarily demand or ensure equality of outcomes. It assumes that once the barriers to participation are removed, there is a level playing field. It also does not recognize that women's reality and experience may be different from men's.

5.2. Gender equity ? Dear learner, how do you define gender equality?

Gender equity denotes the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources. The goal of gender equity, sometimes called substantive equality, moves beyond equality of opportunity. It requires a more transformative change. It recognizes that women and men have different needs, preferences, and interests and that equality of outcomes may necessitate different treatment of men and women. ? Dear learner, how do you think gender equality addressed?

An equity approach implies that all development policies and interventions need to be scrutinized for their impact on gender relations. It necessitates a rethinking of policies and programs to take account of men's and women's different realities and interests. So, for example, it implies rethinking existing legislation on employment, as well as development programs, to take account of women's reproductive work and their concentration in unprotected, casual work in informal and home-based enterprises. It is worth examining the content of policies, not just the language, before deciding whether equity or an equality approach is being followed. Gender equity goals are seen as being more political than gender equality goals.

Most development specialists agree that sustainable development is not possible without the full participation of both halves, female and male, of the world's population. Development policies that incorporate gender as a factor reflect a growing understanding of the necessity for women's and men's full and equal participation in civil, cultural, economic, political, and

social life. Genderfocused development means that female and male infants are given equal opportunities to survive; boys and girls are equally nourished and educated; and women and men have equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from social, economic, and political processes. With equity, women and men will enjoy full and equal legal rights and access to and control over resources. Together, women and men can participate in building more equitable, secure, and sustainable societies. Two international conferences, the first on population and development in Cairo (1994), and the second, on women in Beijing (1995) laid the foundation for incorporating gender equality and gender equity in development. They state:

*Advancing gender equality and equity and the empowerment of women...are cornerstones of population and development related programmes...The full and equal participation of women in civil, cultural, economic, political and social life, at the national regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, are priority objectives of the international community (International Conference on Population and Development, 1994). Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centered sustainable development (The Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995).*

### **Unit summary**

Dear learner, in this unit, you have learnt about key terms and concepts in gender and development. The major issues covered include: sex and gender, patriarchy, gender roles and gender division of labor, gender discrimination and gender gap, gender equality and equity, and women's empowerment. Whereas sex refers to the biological differences between women and men that generally tends to be permanent and universal, gender refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men in a given culture or location. These roles are influenced by perceptions and expectations arising from cultural, political, environmental, economic, social, and religious factors, as well as custom, law,



class, ethnicity, and individual or institutional bias. The use of the term gender, rather than sex, signals an awareness of the cultural and geographic specificity of gender identities, roles and relations. Patriarchy has made women and men to move into and live in two different conceptual universes of the same world wherein they absorb two separate images of the same reality and see themselves differently. The fact that the patriarchal institution socializes boys and girls to the world of differing gender perceptions and expectations has resulted in gender stereotypes. This same institution gave rise to ascribed gender roles and gender division of labor. Gender roles are the activities ascribed to men and women on the basis of perceived differences. Because women are active in all three types of labor (reproductive, productive, and community), they are said to have “triple roles.” Men also carry out triple roles but roles of women are not recognized and in effect undervalued. Gender division of labor refers to the socially determined ideas and practices which define what roles and activities are deemed appropriate for women and men. The effects of gender roles and divisions amounts to gender discrimination, the systematic, unfavorable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender, which denies those rights, opportunities or resources.

International human rights instruments serve in promoting women’s human rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 brought into international focus the rights of women as human rights. Such instruments gave rise to the promotion of gender equality. Gender equality denotes women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere. Formal equality does not necessarily demand or ensure equality of outcomes. It does not also recognize that women’s reality and experience may be different from men’s. Gender equity denotes the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources. The goal of gender equity goes beyond equality of opportunity. It requires a more transformative change. Gender-focused development means that female and male infants are given equal opportunities to survive; boys and girls are equally nourished and educated; and women and men have equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from social, economic, and political processes. The Cairo conference on population and development (1994) and Beijing conference on women (1995) laid the foundation for incorporating gender equality and gender equity in development.