

“WHAT WILL WE DO FOR ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY”

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Introduction: Gender equality is a concept debated a lot from the perspectives of the different political actors and exponents of the broad range of the feminism, at the institutional and non-institutional level, within the framework of different national and international organisations. In shortly, the concept has been approached from different angles which showed the specificity of the national policies of implementation. Anyway, before going to discussion about of the ‘ensuring gender equality’ we should know that about of the simple concept or meaning of Gender, Equality, and Gender Equality. So, about these matter are clearly explained as follows -

Concept of Gender: Generally, gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. Gender is defined as distinct from sex in that it refers to the social and cultural constructs which, while based on the biological sex of a person, defines his or her roles in society. Gender refers to the qualitative and interdependent character of women’s and men’s positions in society. Gender relations are constructed in terms of the relations of power and dominance that structures the life chances of women and men. These gender divisions are not fixed biology, but constitute an aspect of the wider social division of labour and this, in turn, is rooted in the conditions of production and reproduction and reinforced by the cultural, religious and ideological systems prevailing in a society. Thus gender-based violence is taken to mean the violence which is inflicted on a person because of their biological sex. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age.

World Health Organisations defines gender equity as “fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men”

Concept of Equality: Equality’ is a loaded and ‘highly contested’ concept. The terms “equality” is “equal,” and “equally” signify a qualitative relationship. ‘Equality’ or ‘equal’ signifies correspondence between groups of different objects, persons, processes or circumstances that have the same qualities in at least one respect, but not all respects, i.e., regarding one specific feature, with differences in other features. ‘Equality’ needs to thus be distinguished from ‘identity’ - this concept signifying that one and the same object corresponds to itself in all its features: an object that can be referred to through various individual terms, proper names, or descriptions. For the same reason, it needs to be distinguished from ‘similarity’ - the concept of merely approximate correspondence. Thus, to say e.g. that men are equal is not to say that they are identical. Equality implies similarity rather than ‘sameness.’

As a descriptive concept, equality is, by definition, an adjectival relation between entities that are identical in some specific respect. No two entities can be identical in all respects, for then they would not be two entities but the same entity. The equality may be one of quantity or quality. Equality may be predicated of things, persons, or social entities such as institutions, groups, and so on. Equality is also a normative concept. As a normative concept, equality is the notion that there is some special respect in which all human beings are in fact equal (descriptive) but that this factual equality requires that we treat them in a special way. Special treatment may mean ensuring identical treatment, or it may mean differential treatment to restore them to or to aid them in reaching or realizing the specific factual state.

According to Dworkin, “Equality’ is a contested concept “People who praise it or disparage it disagree about what they are praising or disparaging”.

Concept of Gender Equality: Gender equality is a concept which explains and evaluates the patriarchal domination and oppression of the society. Gender equality is the measurable equal representation of women and men. Gender equality does not imply that women and men are the same, but that they have equal value and should be accorded equal treatment.

The United Nations regards gender equality as a human right. It points out that empowering women is also an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty.

Thus, the concept of gender equality may be taken to primarily refer to the full equality of men and women to enjoy the complete range of political, economic, civil, social and cultural rights, with no one being denied access to these rights, or deprived of them, because of their sex. Gender Equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for the creation of sustainable and peaceful societies.

To achieve such equality in a meaningful and real sense, equality under the law is simply not sufficient, though vitally necessary. The historically inferior position of women, the all-too-often unfavourable cultural and traditional context and the social roles must be taken into account: “Formal or de jure equality, which involves simply “adding women” to the existing paradigms is an inadequate response to women’s inequality. Realizing women’s substantive or de facto equality involves addressing the institutionalized nature of women’s disadvantage and changing the cultural, traditional and religious beliefs that typecast women as inferior to men. It also means recognizing that notions of masculinity and femininity are interdependent.” Although not explicitly using the term gender, the concept is clear in the phrase “notions of masculinity and femininity”, and the message seems to be that as development practitioners, we should recognise the “gendered” stereotypes which prevent achievement of full equality between the sexes, and attempt to redress them.

Thus gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.

Ensuring Gender Equality: The promotion of gender equality is central the mandate. Ensuring women’s and men’s equal participation in governance processes, and their equal benefits from services, are preconditions for the achievement of inclusive and effective democratic governance. So, what will we do for ensuring gender equality? About this matter I expressed as follows clearly-

1) Sustainable development pathways: One of the most important areas of ensuring gender equality is sustainable development pathways. The sustainable development pathways

area of work provides an opportunity to address inequalities and reshape policies to empower women and girls in all their diversity, so that they can become catalytic agents of change and equal partners with men in the quest to promote growth that is inclusive, just, equitable and sustainable. With women's engagement, success in eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns and sustainable management of natural resources can be achieved.

2) ***Inclusive and effective democratic governance systems***: Another one is inclusive and effective democratic governance systems. Ensuring women's and men's equal participation in governance processes, and their equal benefits from services, are preconditions for the achievement of inclusive and effective democratic governance. The democratic governance works provides an opportunity to advance women's legal rights and empowerment, strengthen their access to justice, ensure gender responsive and equitable service delivery, and promote their equal participation in decision making.

3) ***Resilience building***: Gender equality and women's empowerment are integral to building individual, institutional and societal resilience. Systemic inequalities overall, and especially those between women and men in the economic, social and political spheres, exacerbate the impact of economic, disaster and climate-related and political shocks and impede sustainable development and durable peace. Women need to be engaged at all stages of formal and informal peace processes and their priorities must inform the agenda for conflict prevention, early recovery from crises, durable peace, resilience and sustainable development.

4) ***Substantive Equality***: Achievement of substantive equality requires the recognition of 'the ways in which women are different from men, in terms of their biological capacities and in terms of the socially constructed disadvantages women face relative to men. This in turn depends on two further processes, indicators of which can tell us *how* equality of outcome has been achieved. These processes refer to the *quality of experience* of education, in terms of entering education, participating in it and benefiting from it.

5) ***Equality of Treatment***: For gender equality to be meaningful, mechanisms for ensuring equality of treatment as well as equality of opportunity for men and women are important. These in turn rest on a commitment to non-discrimination, to ensure the erasure of social norms that construct women and men as unequal in value in terms of their contributions

and entitlements, and to ensure that all social actors are committed to eliminating stereotypes and attitudes that reinforce and perpetuate inequalities in the distribution of resources between women and men.

6) **Formal Equality**: ‘Formal’ equality can also be understood as equality that is ‘premised on the notion of the ‘sameness’ of men and women, where the male actor is held to be the norm.

7) **Gender Equality**: Gender ideologies become the basis of social norms, practices and rules; these processes in turn inform masculine and feminine identities. Masked as ‘culture’, these identities and ideologies become stubbornly defended as traditional and immutable. Further, these gender ideologies are encrypted in institutions that govern daily life, and thus translate into deeper structural inequalities that are not likely to be removed unless there are clear efforts to rethink and rewrite the basic rules that underpin institutional functioning.

Conclusion: From the foregoing discussion now I would like to conclude that the construction of gender identities operates in different ways in different contexts, giving rise to inequalities between women and men in gaining access to, participating in and benefiting from various resources. Prevailing norms about what women and men do, and how their activities and roles are to be valued determine the opportunities to which they have access. Thus households may discriminate, as they often do, against girls in favour of boys in access to education. These are clearly relative phenomenon, as boys are also likely to be excluded from school in contexts of poverty and/or conflict, but where children are sent to school, boys are often advantaged over girls in access to schooling.

Constraints arise out of what women or men do which serve to curtail or restrict their freedom to access opportunities. This means that even if opportunities are presented to women, the nature of their reproductive responsibilities/burdens, which are often time-intensive and home-based, can often prevent women from gaining equal access to opportunities that may in theory be available to them.

At last we can say that the pervasiveness of social norms that curtail freedoms for women and are based on undervaluation or devaluation of what women do, can lead women themselves to internalise negative self-perceptions and doubt their own abilities. Thus women often exclude themselves from opportunities that may be on offer, and active encouragement may be necessary

to support women to challenge internalised social norms that may informally be placing barriers on their participation.

Thus an important dimension of educational equality requires focusing on rights through education, recognising that gender equality within education is shaped by, and in turn shapes, rights and gender equality in other dimensions of life. This involves asking to what extent education strengthens gender equality outside the sphere of education. Gender equality or rights within education thus refers to the right of men and women to non-discrimination in educational opportunities in each of the aspects outlined above. This further suggests that educational institutions should function in ways that do not impose or perpetuate gender stereotypes that exert psychological influence and/or promote institutional barriers to the range of possibilities that boys and girls, men and women, can enjoy in relation to the education on offer. This therefore relates to equality of treatment, which in turn is reflected in equality of outcome. Thus both process and outcome indicators can add up to provide a useful picture of gender equality within education. At last, can say that gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development. Education should make people ask themselves to re-examine and analyse those aspects of 'tradition' and 'culture' which have led to unequal power relationships and to arrive at interpretations of tradition and culture which would strengthen and empower the community and serve the civil society. It is not only for women, but also for men, that the quality of life is improved by gender equality.

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