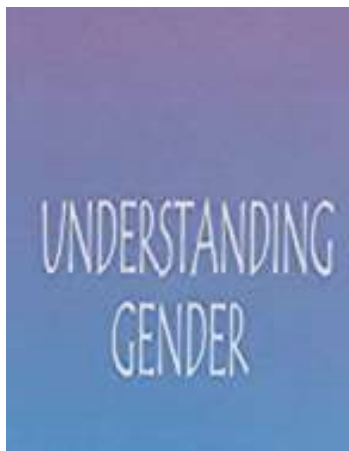




# **GENDER CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS**

## **COMPENDIUM OF GENDER TERMINOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS**

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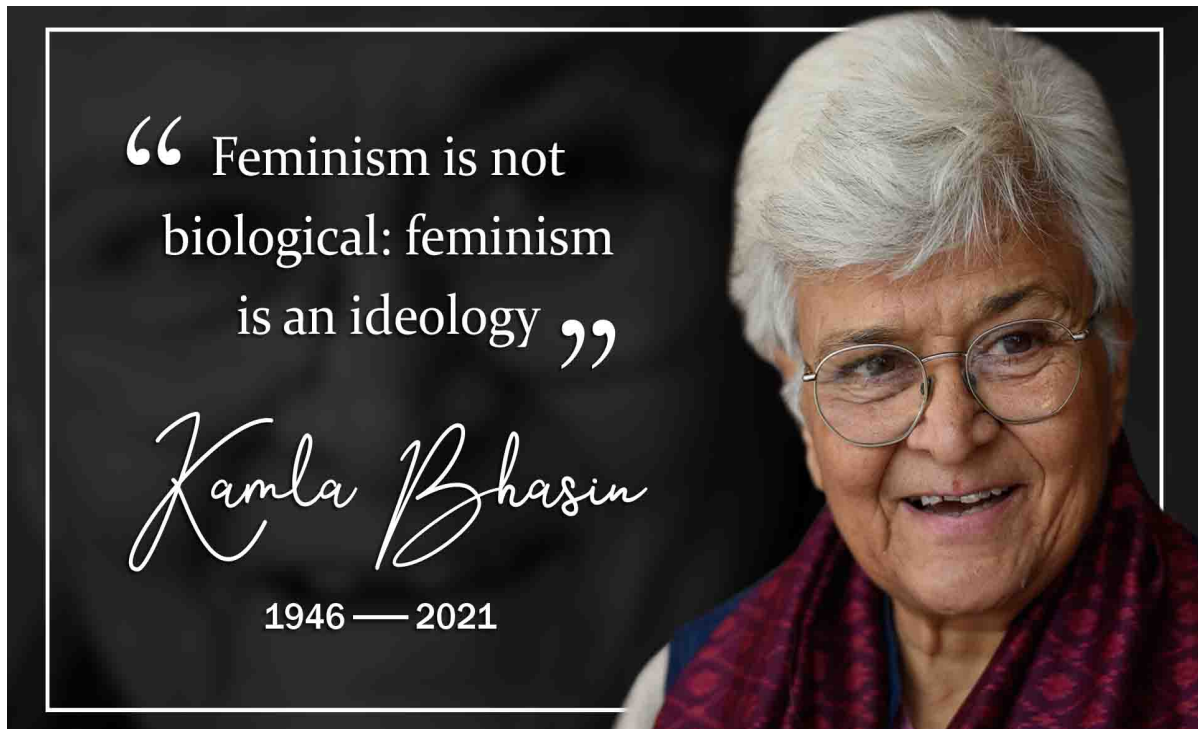


**EQUITY FOUNDATION**

*A Forum for Woman and Child*

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**DEDICATED TO KAMLA BHASIN**



# Introduction

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Gender and sex do not have the same meaning. One is social, and the other is biological. Gender is a spectrum, and there are many terms to describe it. Such language is important for understanding your gender and knowing how to affirm and support others. However, these terms can also be confusing. Read on to learn different terms about gender and sex and what they mean.

Many people use the terms “gender” and “sex” interchangeably. However, gender and sex actually refer to two separate things.

- \* Gender is an identity — your personal sense of who you are. The term can also refer to socially constructed categories that relate to what it means to be a man or a woman.
- \* Sex refers to biological and physiological characteristics. Your genitals, hormones, and chromosomes all relate to your sex.

Although many are taught that there are only two sexes — male and female — that isn’t true. Some people are intersex or have a difference of sexual development (DSD)

Many people grew up with a simplistic idea of gender and sex: that there are two sexes, male and female that “match” with two genders, man and woman.

In reality, neither gender nor sex is binary. The categories used for sex and gender are socially constructed. This doesn’t mean that sex and gender aren’t real, but that the way people conceptualize them isn’t set into the fabric of the universe — it can, and does, change. That’s why it’s important not to make assumptions about someone’s gender based on how they look.

## WHY IT MATTERS

There are so many gender terms out there, many of which overlap. Some also have definitions that shift over time or across different sources of information. Thanks to the internet, we have more access to information, education, and visual representations of diverse genders — but comprehensive and inclusive resources about gender as a concept and this aspect of identity are still lacking.

Here, we attempt to bridge this gap by breaking down what **58** of these terms mean and how to use them. Having language that helps demonstrate the many ways people experience, express, or identify their gender allows us all to more clearly see and understand the entire gender spectrum — including and beyond the traditional binary gender categories of man and woman. Our Resource Center team has collected and compiled these terminologies from different sources.

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## Fundamental concepts:

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### **GENDER AND SEX**

Perhaps the most important distinction to understand is between gender and sex. These two terms are often confused. One example is when documents refer to 'gender-disaggregated statistics', such as for enrolment rates, when it is actually sex-disaggregated (male and female) statistics that are being obtained and analysed.

The term sex is used to describe the biological differences between men and women. Gender is a social construct, determined by social norms, culture, attitudes, values, tradition, beliefs and practices. It refers to roles, responsibilities, identities or other qualities attributed to people because they are men or women. While most people are born male or female (their biological sex), we are taught behaviors and norms that are thought to be typical of, or appropriate to, a particular gender.

### **GENDER**

The term gender refers to the social roles and relations between women and men. This includes the different responsibilities of women and men in a given culture or location. Unlike the sex of men or women, which is biologically determined, the gender roles of women and men are socially constructed and such roles can change over time and vary according to geographic location and social context.

#### **What it is:**

- \* Social meaning given to being a woman or a man
- \* Social characteristics – not biological differences– used to define a woman or a man.

#### **What it does:**

- \* Defines the boundaries of what women and men can and should be and do
- \* Shapes and determines the behaviour, roles, expectations and entitlements of women and men
- \* Provides rules, norms, customs and practices.

### **GENDER ROLES**

The different tasks and responsibilities and expectations that society defines and allocates to men, women, boys and girls. These are not necessarily determined by biological differences and therefore can change with time and in different situations.

### **GENDER ROLE PERCEPTION**

Gender is a dynamic concept. Gender roles for women and men vary greatly from one culture to another; and from one social group to another within the same culture. Race, class, economic circumstances, age — all of these influence what is considered appropriate for women and men.

Furthermore, as culture is dynamic and socio-economic conditions change over time, so gender patterns change with them. Different roles and characteristics are assigned to people not only on the basis of their gender, but of their race, caste, class, ethnic background and age. Our social analysis becomes finer, our social interventions more finely tuned, when we are aware of all the complex ways in which society slots people into different categories and roles, and of the ways these roles can be the basis of both cooperation and conflict. For neither women nor men form a homogeneous group in any society. Women may come into conflict with each other because of racial difference, or women of different nationalities or class groups may find solidarity in their gender identity.

### **GENDER STEREOTYPING**

The assignment of roles, tasks and responsibilities to a particular gender on the basis of preconceived prejudices. For instance the assumption that masons can only be men or that nurses are necessarily women.

### **GENDER EQUALITY**

Gender equality entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

### **GENDER RELATIONS**

A specific sub-set of social relations uniting men and women as social groups in a particular community. Gender relations intersect with all other influences on social relations – age, ethnicity, race, religion – to determine the position and identity of people in a social group. Since gender relations are a social construct, they can be changed.

### **GENDER EFFECT**

A term referring to the understanding that when a society invests in girls, the effects are deep for the girls, multiple for society and a driver of sustainable development.

### **GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT (GAD)**

The GAD approach seeks to address unequal gender relations, which prevent equitable development and which often lock women out of full participation. GAD seeks participation, decision-making and the sharing of benefits for both women and men. The GAD approach is gender-analysis driven. There is a need for women-specific and men-specific interventions at times. These complement gender initiatives.

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

In UNEP, gender mainstreaming involves ensuring that attention to gender equality is a central part of all environmental and sustainable development interventions, including analyses, policy advice, advocacy, legislation, research, and the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects.

Gender mainstreaming has been defined by the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions, in its resolution 1997/2 of 18 July 1997, as: “a strategy for making women’s, as well as men’s, concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

## **GENDER ANALYSIS**

A tool to assist in strengthening development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and to make programmes and projects more efficient and relevant. Ignoring gender issues has resulted in gender blind development strategies that have caused many development programmes and projects to fail in reaching their principal goals and delivering the desired benefits to the target population and have sometimes led to unintended negative impacts.

Within the United Nations system, gender analysis has been established as a basic requirement for the gender mainstreaming strategy. The current situation of rural women and men in relation to different issues and problems and the impact of agricultural and rural development policies, legislation, and projects and programmes on women and men respectively – and on the relations between them – should be analysed before any decisions are made.

- \* Gender analysis should go beyond cataloguing differences to identifying inequalities and assessing relationships between women and men.
- \* Gender analysis helps us to frame questions about women and men's roles and relations in order to avoid making assumptions about who does what, when and why. The aim of such analysis is to formulate development interventions that are better targeted to meet both women's and men's needs and constraints.

## **GENDER-NEUTRAL**

An approach/strategy/framework/programme may be defined as gender-neutral when the human dimension is not relevant, and thus gender is not an implication.

## **GENDER-BLIND**

An approach/strategy/framework/programme may be defined as gender-blind when the gender dimension is not considered, although there is clear scope for such consideration. This is often as a result of lack of training in, knowledge of and sensitization to gender issues, leading to an incomplete picture of the situation being addressed and, consequently, to failure.

## **GENDER NEEDS**

**Practical gender needs :** Needs which are related to satisfying basic and material needs of women and men, girls and boys for their day-to- day survival, and which do not change gender patterns. For instance public provisioning of water inside the home or providing access to crèche facilities at the workplace.

**Strategic gender needs:** Needs that are related to changing the situation of marginalised people, especially women. Strategic needs may include training women to become Mates at MGNREGA worksites or giving registering land in the name of women and men as with joint ‘pattas’ or addressing issues of domestic violence, legal rights, equal wages, and women’s control over resources.

## **GENDER AWARE**

Knowing that there are issues, differences and inequalities between women and men

## **GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR**

The result of how each society divides work among men and women according to what is considered suitable or appropriate to each gender.

## **GENDER EQUITY**

Targeted measures are often needed to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise being equals. These measures (temporary special measures), such as affirmative action, may necessitate different treatment of women and men in order to ensure an equal outcome. Equity leads to equality.

## **GENDER GAP**

A difference between the situations of boys and girls, men and women. This may be in terms of knowledge, attitudes or behaviours. Gender gaps can be attributed to differences in terms of perspectives, economic and social preferences, experiences and autonomy. They are influenced by factors such as age, class and social status, and religion. Gender analysis reveals gender gaps.

## **GENDER IDENTITY**

Refers to the individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex determined at birth or with the social expectations of that sex. Many people face harassment, stigma and exclusion if the expression of their gender identity, for example through dress, speech and mannerisms, is different from what others might expect.

## **GENDER SENSITIVITY**

Gender sensitivity means acknowledging that differences and inequalities between women and men require attention.

## **GENDER RESPONSIVE**

Being gender sensitive and articulating policies and initiatives which address the different needs, aspirations, capacities and contributions of women and men.

## **GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING (GRB) OR GENDER BUDGET ANALYSIS**

Refers to an analysis of the 'impact' of actual government expenditure and revenue on women and girls, as compared to men and boys. It neither requires separate budgets for women, nor does it aim solely to increase spending on women-specific programmes. Instead, it helps governments decide how policies need to be adjusted, and where resources need to be reallocated to address gender inequalities.

## **GENDER NORMATIVE BEHAVIOUR**

Conforming with social standards about what are appropriate feminine and masculine behaviours.

## **GENDER PARITY**

Numerical concept for representation and participation. A necessary, but not sufficient, step on the road to gender equality.

## **TRANSGENDER**

Some people do not want to shape themselves to fit within the gender expectations of their society. Others are born into a body that they do not think is right for them. For example, a transgender person has a gender identity that is different from his or her sex at birth. Transgender people may be male to female (female appearance, also called transgender women) or female to male (male appearance, also called transgender men).

## **GENDER DISCRIMINATION**

This refers to any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of socially and culturally constructed gender roles and norms that prevent a person from enjoying full human rights. This discrimination can take many forms, including stereotyping, stigmatizing and devaluing genders. Where one gender is favored and the other becomes disadvantaged e.g. sex selective abortion. Gender oppression: Where one gender dominates the other unjustly or even cruelly. For instance, domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment. As the worst fall out of disparity and mind blocks in the area of role perception, comes the vice of gender discrimination. The three most prominent facets of sexual discrimination are

- \* Societal Perpetration;
- \* Domestic Violence and
- \* Sexual Harassment at Workplace

There are socially accepted expressions like "boys are boys" and norms supporting dowry, still prevalent in society. They highlight the unfortunate social approval towards sexual discrimination. So far as domestic violence is concerned, even after a decade since the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act was passed in 2005, there is no significant



change in the crime rate against women. As per data published by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), dowry death was 0.3% of the total number of crimes, as defined under Indian Penal Code (IPC), in 2013. The figure remains the same in 2014. In fact, crime against women as percentage of total number of crimes committed in India has increased from 11.7% in 2013 to 11.9% in 2014. However, perhaps the most unreported amongst these crimes are the ones amounting to "sexual harassment at workplace". For one, there was no clear law on the subject before 2013 and for the other, many women used to desist reporting. Even now, it is believed that a good number of them don't report incidents of sexual harassment for reasons ranging from love to terror.

## **GENDER BIAS**

An approach that treats boys and girls differently. For instance differential treatment seeking behavior in case of illness

## **GENDER PARITY INDEX (GPI)**

Gender parity in education is an indicator of the ratio of girls to boys. Gender parity is reached when there is equal representation and participation of male and female learners in education. It is a useful indicator but by itself does not measure gender equality. The gender parity index (GPI) of the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report measures the ratio of female-to-male value of a given indicator.

## **GENDER FOCAL POINT (GFP)**

GFPs are persons who have been designated within an institution or organization to monitor and stimulate greater consideration of gender equality issues in daily operations.

## **GENDER PARITY**

Numerical concept for representation and participation. A necessary, but not sufficient, step on the road to gender equality.

## **GENDER TRAINING**

A facilitated process of developing awareness and technical capacity on gender issues in order to bring about personal or institutional change for gender equality. Gender training is necessary, but not sufficient on its own, to bring about sustainable organizational change. It needs to be a part of a comprehensive corporate culture of learning. Gender training may be the responsibility of the Gender Focal Point and may also use external gender expertise. Gender training should be more experience-based rather than theoretical, although basic concepts need to be learned and internalized.

## **GENDER ASSESSMENT**

Gender Assessment examines how a program or project addresses and responds to gender disparities and inequalities through its objectives, activities, and policies. It responds to two key questions:

- \* How will the different roles and status of women and men within the community, political sphere, workplace, and household affect the work to be undertaken?
- \* How will the anticipated results of the work affect women and men differently? And their relative status?

## **GENDER BALANCE**

This is a human resource issue calling for equal participation of women and men in all areas of work (international and national staff at all levels, including at senior positions) and in programmes that agencies initiate or support (e.g. food distribution programmes). Achieving a balance in staffing patterns and creating a working environment that is conducive to a diverse workforce improves the overall effectiveness of our policies and programmes, and will enhance agencies' capacity to better serve the entire population.

## **GENDER-BASED CONSTRAINTS**

Constraints that women or men face that are a result of their gender. An example of constraints women farmers face might be not having title to their land, male dominated cooperative membership, being more tied to their homes preventing access to extension services. Constraints that are not based on gender are referred to as *general constraints*.

## **GENDER-BASED SEX SELECTION**

"Sex selection can take place before a pregnancy is established, during pregnancy through prenatal sex detection and selective abortion, or following birth through infanticide or child neglect. Sex selection is sometimes used for family balancing purposes but far more typically occurs because of a systematic preference for boys.

## **GENDER BLINDNESS**

The failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of men/boys and women/girls are given to them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts and backgrounds.

## **GENDER HISTORY**

The study of both men and women and their interrelationships in the past

## **GENOCIDE**

The extermination of one person by another, often in the name of progress

## **HETEROSEXUALITY**

The quality or characteristic of being sexually or romantically attracted exclusively to people of the other sex

## **HOMOSEXUALITY**

Sexual desire for others of one's own sex or sexual activity with another of the same sex

## **LESBIAN**

A woman who is a homosexual

## **MONOGAMY**

The custom or condition of being married to only one person at a time

## **MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT (MHM)**

Programming that helps girls and women manage their monthly periods safely and with dignity, focusing on the fact that menstruation is a normal biological process and an important facet of reproductive health. Improving girls' and women's access to knowledge about menstruation and to appropriate and hygienic sanitary facilities and materials in schools and homes. Improving girls' and women's access to knowledge about menstruation and to appropriate and hygienic sanitary facilities and materials in schools and homes. Programmes may include addressing cultural taboos, increasing access to affordable and hygienic sanitary materials, facilitating disposal options, access to safe and private toilets and provision of clean water and soap for personal hygiene.

## **MATRIARCHY**

System in which women rule

## **PATRIARCHY**

Social system in which men hold the greatest power, leadership roles, privilege, moral authority and access to resources and land, including in the family. Most modern societies are patriarchies.

## **POSITIVE PARENTING**

Educating parents on children's rights and development to improve parenting practices, with the goal of ending violence, abuse and exploitation of children. Helping parents improve their skills to manage their children's behavior.

## **WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (WID)**

The WID approach aims to integrate women into the existing development process by targeting them, often in women-specific activities. Women are usually passive recipients in WID projects, which often emphasize making women more efficient producers and increasing their income. A common shortcoming of WID projects is that they do not consider women's

multiple roles, or they miscalculate the elasticity of women's time and labor. Another is that such projects tend to be blind to men's roles and responsibilities in women's (dis)empowerment.

## **EMPOWERMENT**

Empowerment implies people – both women and men – taking control over their lives by setting their own agendas, gaining skills (or having their own skills and knowledge recognized), increasing their self confidence, solving problems, and developing self-reliance. It is both a process and an outcome. Empowerment implies an expansion in women's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.

## **ACCESS**

Access to resources implies that women are able to use and benefit from specific resources (including material, financial, human, social and political ones).

## **CONTROL**

Control over resources implies that women can obtain access to a resource as and can also make decisions about the use of that resource. For example, control over land means that women can access land (use it), can own land (can be the legal title-holders), and can make decisions about whether to sell or rent the land.

## **INTER-SECTIONALITY**

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. The key assertion of inter-sectionality is that the various systems of societal oppression do not act independently of each other. According to this view, gender inequality cannot be seen as separate from other forms of oppression and disadvantage, and its interaction with this is critical to understanding how gender discrimination functions in society.

## **SEX**

The biological differences between men and women

## **SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA**

Data that is collected and presented separately on men and women

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Any form of coercion, bullying, advances, or request for sexual favors that seeks rewards in exchange for sexual favors, or verbal/physical harassment of a sexual nature. It is often a criminal offence, but enforcement is a major challenge.

## **SEXUAL IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

Sexual identity is how individuals identify their own sexuality and is usually based on sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is the term used to describe whether a person feels sexual desire for people of the opposite gender, same gender, or both genders. People who feel sexual desire for members of the other gender are heterosexual. People who feel sexual desire for people of the same gender are homosexual, or gay. Gay women are called lesbians. People who are attracted to both genders are bisexuals.

## **SEXUALITY**

A fundamental aspect of human physiology. It encompasses sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, including gender identities and roles, sexual orientation and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in various forms and manners, including thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles and relationships. Sexuality is not always experienced or expressed openly and in a direct manner. It is influenced by the interaction of physical, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.

## **SEXUALLY DIVERSE**

This is a broad term used to include people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI), or questioning their sexuality.

## **SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

This aims to equip children and young people with the knowledge and skills to make responsible choices about their sexual and social relationships. It may include education about gender roles and relationships.

## **THIRD SEX**

Some individuals do not identify with being either male or female, but rather a blend of both. Others identify as a 'third sex', such as Hijra populations in South Asia or the Fa'afafine of the Pacific. In some countries such as Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan this is a legal identity that can be reflected in their identity cards or other documentation.

## **REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

Reproductive rights include the rights of all individuals and couples to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so. Further, decisions concerning reproduction should be made free from discrimination, coercion and violence. These services are essential for all people, married and unmarried, including adolescents and youth. For people to realize their reproductive rights, they need access to reproductive and sexual health care in the context of primary health care. This should include a range of family planning; obstetrical and gynecological care; prevention, care and treatment of STIs and HIV/AIDs; education and counseling on human sexuality and reproductive health; prevention and surveillance of violence against women and elimination of traditional harmful practices.

## **SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)**

This can be understood as the right for all, whether young or old, women, men or transgender, straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual, HIV positive or negative, to make choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction, providing they respect the rights of others to bodily integrity. This definition also includes the right to access information and services needed to support these choices and optimize health.

## **SON PREFERENCE**

The practice of preferring male offspring over female offspring, most often in poor communities, that view girl children as liabilities and boy children as assets to the family. This can result in families instilling superiority in male children and inferiority in female children, manifesting in such actions as sending boys to school, especially to higher levels, and not girls or household practices where boys are fed better than girls. The extreme manifestation of son preference is female feticide and sex-selected abortions; in some countries, this has resulted in skewed population sex ratios, with attendant problems such as increased trafficking of females and greater prevalence of sex workers.

## **HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA**

Homophobia is fear, discomfort, intolerance, or hatred of homosexuality or sexually diverse people. Transphobia is fear, discomfort, intolerance, or hatred of transgender, transsexuals and others perceived to transgress sexual norms.

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Defined in Article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993). The term refers to “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or in private life”.

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## **Source**

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Gender Terminology, Concepts and Definition- UNESCO

Gender & Biodiversity <https://www.cbd.int/gender/decisions/terminology.shtml>

Gender Analysis Toolkit (<https://jhpiego.org/>)

Glossary of Terms and Concepts- UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia

How Many Genders Are There? <https://www.healthline.com/health/different-genders>

The A-Z of Gender: A Few Definitions. What does it mean? <https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/gender-a-few-definitions/#G>

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