

B

- Identify and list positive aspects of their culture with respect to women.
- Discuss whether these aspects support or promote women's human rights?

One person from the group is to make the presentation of their findings.

ACTIVITY

MATERIALS: Handout

TIME: 20 minutes

AIM: To assist trainees to identify gender and culture issues

Examine the sayings about men and women from different countries around the world.

1. What do the sayings tell us about accepted norms and perceptions regarding men and women in society?

During plenary, the group should discuss the questions:

2. In what way has the media covered issues of culture and tradition in Afghanistan? What has been the impact of this type of coverage?
3. Are culture and tradition static? Can they change and are they changing? Cite some examples.

Handout 2 - Proverbs and Sayings About Women

Proverbs are perceived to embody truth in different communities. They may confirm societal norms and values but may also serve to perpetuate societal stereotypes. Given the powerful status of proverbs, the following proverbs are a severe challenge to women worldwide.

- A woman should be in the house or the grave (Afghanistan)
- Woman, the source of all evil. (Benin, Senegal)
- A good wife, an injured leg and a pair of torn trousers stay at home. (Netherlands/Spain)
- Virtuous is the girl who suffers and dies without a sound. (India)
- A woman can't become a man. (Burkina Faso)
- Manliness gone, one might as well be a woman. (Rundi, Burundi)

- **The hen knows when it's morning, but she looks at the mouth of the cock. (Ashanti, Ghana)**
- **A woman and an invalid man are the same. (Gikuyu, Kenya)**
- **A woman's intelligence is that of a child (Benin, Senegal)**
- **If a man is not obeyed by his wife, he must beat her thwack! (Kiswahili, East Africa)**

Can you think of more proverbs?

Training Option 3 – Gender and ‘Culture’⁵⁷

Objectives: After this session, participants will be able to:

- identify and personally reject negative sayings about women;
- list the important characteristics of self-reliance in women.

Sequencing of activities:

a) The first activity involves presenting some examples of sayings that are derogatory to women.

- Having daughters is like constructing toilets in front of one’s house (Thailand).
- Long hair, short mind (Russia)
- Women are weak furniture (Madagascar)

Duration: Ten minutes

Materials: Transparency 1, below

b) For the second activity ask participants to write down one or two well known sayings from their countries or communities which reflect negative societal attitudes towards women.

Duration: Fifteen minutes

Materials: Notepaper and felt-tip pens

c) The third activity involves collecting all the sayings and passing them around the room. Participants mingle to read them.

Duration: Ten minutes

Materials: Masking tape

d) The fourth activity, in plenary, involves the facilitator who asks participants for their reactions to the sayings from countries not their own.

Duration: Ten minutes

e) For the fifth activity, ask participants to group the sayings into categories which describe:

⁵⁷ Source: *Gender Sensitivity a Training Manual* UNESCO ED-97IWSI47Literacy Section Basic Education Division (1997)

- men's superiority and women's inferiority;
- the value of daughters and sons;
- confining women to domestic work;
- the negation of women.

Duration: Twenty minutes

Materials: Paper and pens. See Transparencies 2, 3 and 4, below, for the sayings

f) For the sixth activity nominate a participant to present the sayings to the plenary. Seek the group's reactions to the sayings

Duration: Fifteen minutes

Materials: Transparencies 2-4

g) For the seventh activity one or two participants are requested to draw a large rubbish bin into which to throw away placards containing derogatory sayings.

Duration: Twenty minutes

TRY TO PLACE NEGATIVE SAYINGS ON AS MANY THROW AWAY PLACARDS AS POSSIBLE.

Alternatively, participants may draw a pile of placards being burnt.

h) The eighth activity is a brainstorming session on the characteristics of the empowered woman. Remind participants that brainstorming requires quick responses which will be listed. No discussions or elaboration will be entertained at this stage. Participants proceed to give their characteristics of the empowered woman. All points should be recorded for classification and synthesis (for examples of classification and synthesis, see Transparency 5-6).

Duration: Twenty minutes

Materials: Pens, Transparency 5, 6

Transparency 1 – Negative Sayings Reflecting The Tradition of Suppressing Women

Men are Superior, Women are Inferior

- Women in the field damage the crop Bangladesh
- It is bad luck to have a daughter Myanmar
- Men are the front legs, women hind legs of elephants Thailand
- A woman has to live nine lives to be born a man Bhutan
- Behind a loser stands a woman Philippines
- Women are incapable. They can't even circle a stove Pakistan
- Women gave life to men. Men sold them in bazaars. Pakistan
- Respect men, degrade women Viet Nam
- Without a man, the family is a house with no roof Viet Nam
- Married daughters are water thrown out of the house India
- Women, drums, illiterates, and animals need beating India

Transparency 2 – Worthless Daughters and Daughters-in-Law

- A boy inherits my name. A girl has no name Papua New Guinea
- Parents of a son in monkhood gain merit Myanmar
- Find me a woman and I'll find you a snake Philippines
- Daughters-in-law feel like ghosts in the house Laos
- Having a baby boy brings more joy than having a horse Bhutan
- Daughters are temporary in the house. Sons are its honour Pakistan
- Daughters grow up for others, and sons for his family China
- A boy inherits my land. A girl becomes another man's wife Papua New Guinea
- A hundred sons are not a burden but one daughter bows our head Pakistan

Transparency 3 – Male Superiority

- Men are rice grains and women are cooked rice Thailand
- Don't trust elephants, cobras, servants and your wife Thailand
- Women are vines—they cling to whatever they reach, are capricious and untrustworthy Thailand
- Sons open the doors of heaven. Daughters open the doors of trouble. Nepal
- A stick controls a wife. Bangladesh
- A daughter who looks like her father is rich but a son who looks like his mother is unhappy Viet Nam
- Three steps out of the house the man is a bachelor Myanmar
- A son is a master, a husband, a god. Myanmar

Transparency 4 – Confining Women to the House

- An ideal woman is a good wife and wise mother Japan
- Women should be barefoot in winter and pregnant in summer USA
- A barren woman is like a stone in a river Philippines
- A man is the master in the house Japan
- A woman's place is in the kitchen Papua New Guinea