



Gender Roles and Relations

Training Option 1 – Gender Roles, Relations and Life Choices²²

Learner Objectives	By the end of the session, participants will be able to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the roles, activities, and tasks of men and women in their communities 2. Discuss the effect of these different roles, activities, and tasks on relationships between men and women and the life choices of men and women
Time	3 hours
Session Overview	A. The 24-Hour Day1 hour B. Gender Roles and Power Relationships2 hours
Materials	Newsprint Flipchart Sheets of paper Markers, pens, and pencils
Handouts	4A Gender Roles 4B Gender Roles and Relationships Matrix
Special Preparation	Write the matrix in Handout 4B on a flipchart.

PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

In this session participants examine gender roles and responsibilities—the activities assigned to women and men on the basis of perceived gender differences. The gender division of labor and the implications of this division for both men and women are explored in the context of power and life choices. Participants develop strategies for achieving equitable gender relationships. Women’s triple roles—reproductive, productive, and community—are explored.

A. The 24-Hour Day (1 hour)

- Step 1** Divide participants into four groups. Assign each group one of the following categories of worker:
- a. male farm worker
 - b. female farm worker
 - c. male top executive
 - d. female top executive

²² Source: CEDPA Gender and Development Training Manual

Introduce Task #1:

TASK #1

1. Draw a large circle and divide it into sections, as though you were slicing a cake or pie. In each section show the amount of time spent doing a particular activity in a typical 24-hour period by the assigned category of person. The size of each section will depend on the amount of time spent on that activity. Show everything that the person does in a day.

2. Prepare to share this information.

Time: 15 minutes

Step 2

Reconvene the large group. Post the diagrams and lead a discussion based on the following questions:

- What was your first feeling when you saw your completed chart?
- Which of the activities are considered work?
- How do you define work?
- What differences do you notice in the way in which men and women spend their day? Their spare time?
- What are some of the consequences of these differences for women? What are the health implications? Implications regarding income?
- What are some of the consequences of these differences for men?
- What are some of the consequences of these differences for society?

Step 3

Distribute Handout 4A, Gender Roles, and ask for a volunteer to read it aloud. Summarize the key lessons learned from the activity.

A key lesson is 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. Refer to women's triple roles: reproductive, productive, and community.

B. Gender Roles and Power Relationships (2 hours)

Step 1

Divide participants into single-sex groups. Distribute Handout 4B,

Gender Roles and Relationships Matrix. Give the women's matrix to the women's group(s), and the men's matrix to the men's group(s). Allow the groups about 30 minutes to complete the matrix.

Step 2 Allow each group to present its findings. After the presentations, lead a discussion using the following questions:

- What differences in men's and women's roles did you observe?
- What did you notice about relationships of men and women in terms of power?
- What is the impact of these roles and relationships on life choices?

Step 3 Ask participants to return to their groups to complete the following task:

TASK #2

1. Identify specific items you have listed on your matrix under the headings "Roles" and "Relationships" which you believe need to be changed in order to achieve equity in gender relationships.

2. Identify strategies for implementing these changes.

Time: 20 minutes

Step 4 Allow each group to present its findings. Ask each person to identify one change they would like to make in their own life, and make note of it. Explain that this is a topic they will return to later in the workshop.

Handout 4A-1 – Gender Roles

The biological differences between men and women do not normally change; people are either male or female. However, the characteristics they are perceived to have, and the roles and responsibilities assigned to them, differ among societies, cultures, and historical periods. For instance, your grandmothers or mothers may not have been able to do what women can do today.

Gender roles are the activities ascribed to men and women on the basis of perceived differences. "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, instead of ability and skills.

Men's Roles

Today, in the world's more industrialized countries there are few lines of demarcation between men's and women's occupations. However, in many less industrialized societies men have more visible and recognized roles than women, largely because

men are paid for their productive work and women are not. In these societies, men's roles usually involve jobs which are assessed and counted in national censuses and accounting systems. Men do not usually perform domestic or household tasks. If they have community management roles, such as being a shura member, these tend to involve political organization and leadership. Women handle community organization and hands-on activities.

Women's Triple Roles

Women's roles in most societies fall into three categories: productive (relating to production of goods for consumption or income through work in or outside the home), reproductive (relating to domestic or household tasks associated with creating and sustaining children and family), and community management (relating to tasks and responsibilities carried out for the benefit of the community). Women must balance the demands of these three different roles and 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. This is even reflected in their names: "mother of so and so". 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 invisible. Male community members may say for instance that women are not involved in agriculture, horticulture or livestock rearing.

Handout 4A-2 – Gender Roles

In many societies, women also carry out productive activities such as maintaining small-holder agricultural plots in farming systems, tending kitchen gardens, (*kheshawe*) weeding, picking fruit and so on. These tasks are often not considered work and are often unpaid. Women may also perform many roles which attract wages in both the formal and informal economic sectors such as being a doctor or teacher, tailoring, hairdressing or working in handicrafts. But women's economically productive roles, in contrast to men's, are often undervalued or given relatively little recognition.

Gender roles and responsibilities vary among cultures and can change over time. For example, in India, unskilled labor is considered "women's work" while in Africa it is "men's work." In Afghanistan, *gharibkari* is done by men and women but differs in nature. It is considered shameful if a woman is a *gharibkar*. In some parts of Afghanistan it is shameful for a woman to plough a field or harvest wheat but in some parts of Kunar, Laghman and Nuristan women do this work. In Europe and the United States, the contribution men make to domestic activities is becoming increasingly important and visible. In Afghanistan educated urban men will help their wives with domestic chores if she is sick or heavily pregnant.