Introduction

This module focuses on exploring the multifaceted aspects of gender and equality. Discrimination based on sex is widespread across the world. Around the world, women and girls are denied basic rights in their daily lives often because of their gender. It especially limits the extent to which women can participate in society. Significant barriers to full and equal participation exist in education, employment and political and public decision making.

Worldwide, girls have less access to education than boys; 60% of countries have fewer girls than boys in primary and secondary education. There are often other barriers to the full participation of girls. Girls may be encouraged to study certain subjects (for example the arts and humanities over science and engineering) seen as more fitting to dominant gender stereotypes. It is very likely that this leads to differences in attainment. Sexual bullying and harassment in schools is widespread.

Women are often discriminated against in terms of what jobs they can access, how much they are paid, and whether they are promoted to leadership roles. Women may also experience sexual harassment and bullying in the office or must put up with sexist jokes and attitudes from colleagues. Some women are passed over for promotion or not recruited because of pregnancy or maternity. Family responsibilities are not shared equally between men and women, and as a result, women have more career breaks and work part-time more frequently than men. This can affect their pension rights at retirement. Women are significantly underrepresented in the political process. Despite making up approximately half of the world's population, only 18.4% of national parliamentarians and 17 heads of state or government worldwide are women.

Examples: What does gender inequality look like?

Work: For example, direct discrimination occurs if during interviews, female applicants are asked about their family or pregnancy plans, but males are never asked questions.

Education: In many countries, girls continue to be kept out of school because educating them is seen as an unnecessary expense and they are not considered a legitimate investment.

Livelihoods: Women own just one percent of the world's property and earn only 10 percent of the income, but they are the backbone of rural economies across the developing world. Health: In many countries, gender inequality hinders women and girls from achieving mental, physical, and social health and wellbeing.

Violence: An estimated one in three women worldwide will experience physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime. Male victims of domestic violence are denied access to protection or given different treatment than female victims of domestic violence. Water, sanitation, and hygiene: About 1.3 billion women and girls in the world lack access to a proper toilet.

Why is gender equality important?

The overall objective of gender equality is a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights, and obligations in all spheres of life. Equality between men and women exists when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power and influence; have equal opportunities for financial independence through work or through setting up businesses; enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions, interests and talents; share responsibility for the home and children and are completely free from coercion, intimidation and gender-based violence both at work and at home. Worldwide, nearly 1 in 4 girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are neither employed nor in education or training – compared to 1 in 10 boys.

Gender equality is critical because it will enable women and men to make decisions that impact more positively on their own sexual and reproductive health. Decision-making about such issues as age at marriage, timing of births, use of contraception, and recourse to harmful practices (such as female genital cutting) stands to be improved with the achievement of gender equality.

However, it is important to acknowledge that where gender inequality exists, it is generally women who are excluded or disadvantaged in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources. Therefore, a critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and addressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives. This would enable them to make decisions and take actions to achieve and maintain their own reproductive and sexual health. It means providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes. Implementing new frameworks and policies regarding female equality in the workplace and deaf associations is crucial to ending the gender-based discrimination prevalent in many countries around the world. For example, you can promote deaf girls' access to education, promote the right of deaf women to get an interpreter regarding their pregnancy and birth in your country, employ deaf women in your association, promote gender equality in the board of your association and make gender polices in your association.

Gender-sensitive organisational development

How you as an organisation adapt its statutes and rules of procedure to become more gender sensitive? A gender-sensitive organisational development intends to guide your organisation in including gender as a natural element of your governance and decision-making. You should consider towards genderising some of the most common features of the following documents:

- Statutes
- Rules of procedure
- Policies (eg. gender policy)
- Strategic plans

Please see the [module about statutes](#) for further information how to genderise statutes.

Gender Policy

You can integrate gender perspectives in the work of your organisation. A gender perspective is required to ensure that men's and women's specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities are recognised and addressed. As men and women often play different roles in society, accordingly they may also have different needs. Many organisations, such as Red Cross, Plan International, World Health Organisation, African Union and United Nations Office at Geneva have incorporated a gender policy in their organisation. It is a great idea to incorporate a gender policy in your organization. It means achieving gender equality, promoting gender justice, and paying attention as well as realizing the rights for all.

As a national association of the deaf, you have a responsibility to address the gender policies that are carried out in each member organization. You can, for instance, create a network of deaf women with the aim of developing a work agenda for the defence of the rights of deaf women in your country. You can promote for the inclusion of the gender perspective in the framework of your and the member organisation's work. For example, you can support the member organizations to dominate two deaf women as representatives at your general assembly.

Policies serve to declare certain values and quality standards. The reasons for developing a gender policy include:

- To draw attention to the promotion of equality between men and women
- To recognise the need to redress a current imbalance between men and women within the organisation and its programmes
- To clarify the organisation's comparative advantages regarding the gender dimension
- To define appropriate approaches to working with gender
- To ensure that gender considerations are an integral part of the organisation's work
- To signal ethics and values regarding gender to members, donors, and partners

Even when policies and practices have been conceived as gender neutral, they often have significantly different effects on women and men. A cross-cutting gender policy may help to raise awareness of this issue within the organisation. Please keep in mind that the people intended to promote and implement the gender policy, such as the staff, should be consulted or involved in preparing the text for them to assume ownership and commitment. It is important to ensure that the document is useful to the intended readers, thus adding value to the organisation's work.

When developing a gender policy, please consider the following questions:

- What are the beliefs and values of your organisation on which the policy will be based?
- Does your national association support equal opportunities in all its programmes? (e.g. to participate in meetings, assemblies, activities, workshops, and fieldwork).
- How will you achieve your gender policy goals in practice?
- How will you be able to see that you have reached each policy goal? What are the indicators?
- Who will be involved in monitoring and reviewing the policy? Both genders?
- Who will be responsible for pursuing the various goals and taking the practical steps set out in the application manual?

Case study examples

"The national association of the deaf will ensure that men and women participate equally in its internal decision-making. The gender policy 2008-2011 will be revised and evaluated in 2011, when the findings of the evaluation will feed into the formulation of the gender policy 2011-2014.

The review of the gender policy will be conducted by a team comprising both men and women. The review team will conduct consultations with different groups of people within the organisation, including young volunteers and professional. Reviewing the policy after 1-2 years gives the organisation an opportunity to adjust both its gender goals and methods in response to practical experience"

Before you discuss gender policy, have your audience consider how it feels to be discriminated against and consider how others will feel if they implement policies that do the same to them. Possible discussion questions are:

- What do you think about discrimination and harassment?
- What does discrimination mean to you?
- What does harassment mean to you?
- What kinds of discrimination and harassment are you aware of?
- Do any of your group have any personal experiences of being treated less well or excluded because of who they are?
- Which particular groups of people are more likely to face discrimination and harassment? How could this affect your group?

Women's wings

Alternative way is to establish a women's wing at your organisation. It can be called as women's branch or women's club or women's section as long as it is meant for deaf women to discuss and find solutions for their specific problems. This is important because in many societies Deaf women experience double discrimination: Both as Deaf people and as women. The objective is to improve the status of deaf women and to strengthen their role in organisational work. It is important to note that the idea behind the women's section is not

that deaf women should only concentrate on women's issues and leave all other work to men. On the contrary, women should be encouraged to participate in all fields of activities of the deaf association. Deaf women should participate in training programmes to learn about deaf awareness, leadership and management skills.

Through the activities of the women's section, deaf women can develop themselves and they can be seen as a valuable resource for the organisation. Women's participation in organisational activities will increase equal opportunities for deaf people in society. One of the tasks might be to help women to develop self-employment or cooperative, which will be discussed in more detail under the module Income generation.

Nigerian deaf women (NNAD Women Group) http://nnadeafhq.org/nigeria-deaf-women/

"The NDW is the National Organisation of all Nigerian Deaf girls and women. It seeks the advancement of its members in various aspects of their social, economic, political etc and wellbeing. The NDW is to the deaf girls and women community what NNAD is to the generality of Nigerian deaf, a National and public umbrella and Affiliate of NNAD affording us the privilege to speak with one voice in all matters that concerns our members – mostly the Nigerian deaf girls and women, before the Nigerian Government and other NGOs we related with."

Abuja Association of the Deaf Women's
Wing https://www.facebook.com/pg/mosuratAbdulwasiu/posts/

Gambia Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Female
Wing https://www.gadhoh.com/femalewing.htm

"The Female Wing work for Deaf Women's rights as part of the Gambia Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The work of the Female Wing is concerned with GADHOH's objectives which include:

- We are able to participate fully in family life and are not discriminated against in regards to sexual relationships, marriage and parenthood.
- We are working for the empowerment of Deaf women.
- We are working for the education of pre-school Deaf children.
- Health and hygiene education.
- Nursery education for pre-school Deaf children from 4 – 7 years of age."

Diversity (religion, disabilities, races, sexual orientation, languages, age)

Diversity means participating people from different backgrounds and being equal to everyone, regardless their religion, disability, race, sexual orientation, language, tribe, or age. It is beneficial for a deaf association to include diversity in board member or staff recruitment. Individuals from diverse backgrounds can offer a selection of different talents, skills and experiences that are of benefit to the organization and work performance.

Consider if you are lacking diversity at the employee, management, board, or member level? For example, in some organizations, executive leadership is exactly alike in terms of race, age, gender, geographic or education background. If you have people from the same sources, you will always get the same people. Talk to other associations that have successfully recruited a diverse board and staff. Find out how they get their candidates and what they have done to create a more inclusive national association of the deaf. It is necessary to provide appropriate training, as people need to be trained to understand each other and the deaf community you serve. It is not enough to have people who are different from each other. Be aware of what your organization can do specifically to do more inclusive. Educate and train people to be more aware or their conscious and unconscious biases and assumptions.

You should specifically recognize and prioritize the needs of LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community and other minorities in your organization. Ensure that your organization and its policies, statutes and so on do not discriminate against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Consider whether does your group ever treat people differently, or not include people as much, because of any characteristic, such as gender or race?

Before you discuss diversity, have your audience consider how it feels to be discriminated against and consider how others will feel if they implement policies that do the same to them. Possible discussion questions are:

• What do you think about discrimination and harassment?
• What does discrimination mean to you?
• What does harassment mean to you?
• What kinds of discrimination and harassment are you aware of?
• Do any of your group have any personal experiences of being treated less well or excluded because of who they are?
• Which groups of people are more likely to face discrimination and harassment? How could this affect your group?