

## **Gender Equity: The Path towards Gender Equality**

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### **Introduction**

Ever since the concept of development emerged in the national and international arena, it has been reconceptualized from one-dimensional definition to multi dimensional definition that incorporate different values like empowerment, equality, equity etc. Among many of its indicators, gender development is regarded as one of the most important indicators of development. The thrust of gender development lies on to mainstream gender and to achieve gender equity and equality. Though most of the discussions on gender have their essence on gender equality and the areas where gender inequality exists. Nevertheless, equity on the other hand is an essential instrument to bringing equality between men and women. Therefore any action or discussion on gender development needs to incorporate the concept of gender equity for reducing the gender inequality.

### **Objective of the study**

The central concern of this paper is to know the basic and salient features of gender and to understand the relationship between gender equity and gender equality. Also to understand some factors and forces that constrain women to achieve equality, we analyze some aspects in terms of equity issue. Again to support and strengthen the journey towards equality, some equity strategies are recommended for implementation in different areas of gender development.

### **Methodology**

The work is done entirely on the basis of secondary sources that include review of books, journals, periodicals, research reports, internet browsing and other secondary materials. The methodology is purely descriptive and exploratory in nature.

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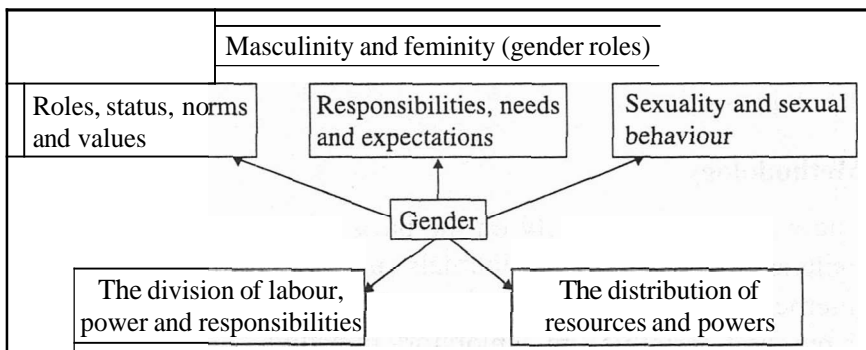
## Gender and Gender equity: A conceptual discussion

Gender refers to those rules, norms, customs and practices by which biologically associated differences between the male and female of the human species are translated into socially constructed differences between men and women, boys and girls which give them unequal value, opportunities and life chances.

It is an analytical tool which helps us to understand and explain the behaviour, roles of men and women (activities / responsibilities), social construction of sex roles based on own economics, culture, politics and religion; relationships based on power and conflict; access to ownership of tangible and intangible resources and how we see/ perceive ourselves. These characteristics can however, be presented in the form of a brief summary that will constitute the definition- Gender:

- is the social construction of the biological differences between men and women;
- is not sex, gender is not women;
- is learned, socially determined behaviour;
- is a focus on the unequal relation between men and women (Gender, Equity and Health, [www. Paho.org](http://www.Paho.org))

**Figure 1.1: The different gender roles**



Source: (Gender, Equity and Health, by Pan American Health Organization, [www. Paho.org](http://www.Paho.org))

There are two types of gender needs, the strategic gender need and practical gender need,

**1. Practical gender needs:** practical gender needs are the needs arising from the actual conditions women experience because of roles assigned to them in society. These needs are often related to women's role as mothers, homemakers and providers of basic needs and are concerned with inadequacies in living and working conditions such as food, shelter, income, water provisions, health care and employment. For women in the lower socio economic strata, these needs are often linked to survival strategies (Moser, 1993).

**2. Strategic gender needs:** strategic gender needs are the needs identified to overcome the subordinate position of women to men in society and relate to empowerment of women. They vary according to the particular social, political and economic context in which they are formulated. Usually they concern equality issues such as enabling women to have equal access to job opportunities and training, equal pay for equal work, right to land and other capital assets, prevention of sexual harassment at work, domestic violence and freedom of choice for child bearing (Moser, 1993).

The fulfillment of these two sets of needs required gender mainstreaming -: "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels."

It is 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 societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

For gender mainstreaming, we need to understand two interrelated concept like gender equality and equity. Since we seriously need to

consider the equity issue to achieve equal outcome of any action, whatever they might be. Despite a much greater level of overall awareness on gender issues, and despite the solid body of research and analysis that now exists, policy and programmes continue to show very limited and compartmentalised concerns with gender equity.

Though provisions of equal rights and opportunities are made for both men and women, but still in terms development indicators, women are lagging behind the man. Inequality between men and women exist to a high level. At this point the question of gender equity arises. That actually takes in to account the underlying and latent factors that restrain women and men from being equal and hinder the process and equal outcome of treatment. Equity actually are the strategies that works towards removing such hurdles and allow both men and women to availing the equal opportunity and rights that ultimately leads to gender equality. Equity in particular considers the cultural social, political and economical dimensions of problems that women's encounter in their lives and works and take measures to support women to overcome the barriers to their equality and development.

Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. But an important distinction need to be between equity and equality, since most of the time equality is emphasized for mainstreaming gender. Equality stress on treating people the same. However treating people the same does not accommodate significant differences which may affect the outcome of equal treatments.

Theoretically, girls in schools have the same access to courses and school programme. However some courses seen to be masculine or predominantly filled with boys and male instructors, the environment is not conducive to girls feeling comfortable, encouraged , having instructions which reflects their experiences or point of view, getting the level of attention and access to equipment which they need(Chambers,1996). Same can be said in case of boys where the courses are more feminine in nature or predominantly filled with girls and female instructors.

Equity then would recognize differences and accommodate it in order to prevent the continuation of inequitable status quo, e.g. Girls still predominating in office procedures and boys in Automotive, with corresponding discrepancies in relative pay (Chambers, 1996). Gender equity is the equally fair treatment of women and men. It entails set of actions, attitudes and assumptions that provide opportunities and create expectations about individuals. Gender equity strategies eventually attain gender equality. Equity is the means and equality is the result (www.cpu.unc.edu/measure/publication/pdf).

**Figure 1.2 : the relationship between gender equity and equality**

Gender equity	→ Gender equality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify different needs of men and women</li> <li>• Identify gender hurdles of women to access equal opportunity</li> <li>• Fair treatment for both sexes in process and outcomes</li>   <li>• Design and implement gender sensitive policies and programme</li> <li>• Entail equal opportunities and equal constraints.</li>   <li>• Incorporating different strategies to bring equal outcome</li> <li>• Promote and implement quota for women and girls</li> </ul>	Area of concern	Indicators
	Social resources	Access to health and education
	Employment and income	Distribution of paid and unpaid labour Wage differentials for men and women Division of formal and informal labour by gender
	Political power	Decision making power Proportion of women in high managerial position
	Autonomy of the body	Legal protection against gender based violence Control of sexuality and over reproduction
	Material resources	Access to land, houses and credits.

Source: (Adopted and developed from the work of Wieringa 1999, Bailyn, 2003. Chambers, 1996, and Hirpa 2005.)

In fact, equity emphasizes fairness in process and outcome, and does not presume a hypothetical ideal and undifferentiated individual where as equality does not recognize the very different conditions under which people attempt to live and work in society, the prejudices, the failures to take in to account the obstacles which other faces, the subtle and gross ways in which people are rendered invisible, silent or outsiders (Chambers, 1996).

So what do we mean by gender equity? There are number of meaning first of which is the meaning embedded in the legal structure, which equates equity with equality: equal pay equal access to opportunity to enter an occupation and to advance in it and freedom from harassment.

All of this is important and lack of this equality is demonstrated in the different aspects of social life. Women continue to remain low in number in the organizations, academy and decision making position where men outnumbered women in almost all cases. Also there are instances of discrimination against men on the basis of race, caste and ethnicity which does result in unequal treatment towards men. . But equality is still not the same as equity and this definition ignores important aspects of equity. Equating equity with equality assumes the workplace is completely separate from the rest of the life and this ignores the fact that people have lives outside the world. By being gender neutral, this first definition ignores the different life experience of men and women and makes the current male model of the ideal organizational and social nonnative. It assumes that women can follow this model as easily as men, and, if they do it will be seen as successful and as central as their male counterparts (Bailyn 2003: 139). Gender-neutral policies are not specifically aimed at either men or women and are assumed to affect both sexes equally. However, they may actually be gender-blind.

The second definition goes beyond equal opportunities and based on the realization that equal opportunity even if it exists is not equitable if constraints are very unequal. The argument is based on fairness rather than equality, especially not equality limited only to the workplace. (Involves equality for men in family involvements)

Equity will not be possible if there exists one group of people (people with different other responsibilities like child bearing, care, supervision, household maintenance etc) who are systematically unable to meet the requirements of the ideal student /employee/worker/ who gives full priority and all the time and energy to the work or study.

Thus only providing equal rights and opportunities and allowing women to meet the criteria for success or avail the opportunities on term that have been defined by men and men version of standard does not necessarily guarantee equity. Therefore an equitable situation should entail equal opportunities and equal constraints (cited in Bailyn, 2003:139-141). The wider factors that would increase the likelihood of achieving its gender equity goal include a legislative structure that promotes women's rights as human rights, a political environment that encourages an increase of women in decision-making positions and the support of international agencies. A supportive relationship with civil society is critical as the pressure of civil society gives legitimacy to gender equity goals within government as well as the political clout needed to follow them through.

### **The current scenario of gender inequity**

Gender equity is an essential building block in sustainable development. Indeed, none of the three "pillars" i.e. environmental protection, economic well being and social equity of sustainable development can be achieved without solving the prevailing gender inequity. Throughout the world women continue to face inequality in all spheres of life. Global statistics place women behind men in relation to health, education, political participation, legal rights, and equal pay for equal work amongst many other aspects of life. Gender inequity remains pervasive in all countries of the world. This is both to the public concern but also tied to individual behavior (Agenda 21; Chapter 24.2.C cited in Gender Equity Briefing Paper, Earth Summit 2002:1).

Therefore any discussion on gender equity primarily focuses on the women since women comprise the largest group that experience

prejudice and discrimination. Where as equity for men in a man dominated world need to be analyzed and understand the relative economic and social identity of men in the social hierarchy along with the discrimination based on race, ethnicity or political opinion. But women are also subject to such discrimination added with the sexual orientation. Generally the obstacles to women's full participation in economic, social, political and public life can be grouped in to three categories,

1. Constitutional factors, including legal and administrative areas;
2. cultural , social psychological and behavioral factors;
3. Economic factors including access to and ownership of resources (Gender Equity briefing Paper, Earth Summit 2002:2).

As we see barriers of the first category particularly require government action, such as reviewing and changing policies and practices that discriminate against women as well as developing legislation and setting up institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and girls. Here changes need to be brought in the regulative pillar where equity strategies need be incorporate in the broader educational, health, employment policies that specifically recognize and incorporated the different set of problems face by the women and girls to avail the equal opportunity.

Obstacles of the second category are more complex. They require fundamental changes in values, institutions and individual behavior. Such changes can be initiated both by the government and non government through legislation educational curricula, public campaigns but also require concerted efforts of all other stake holders (Gender Equity Briefing Paper, Earth Summit 2002:2)

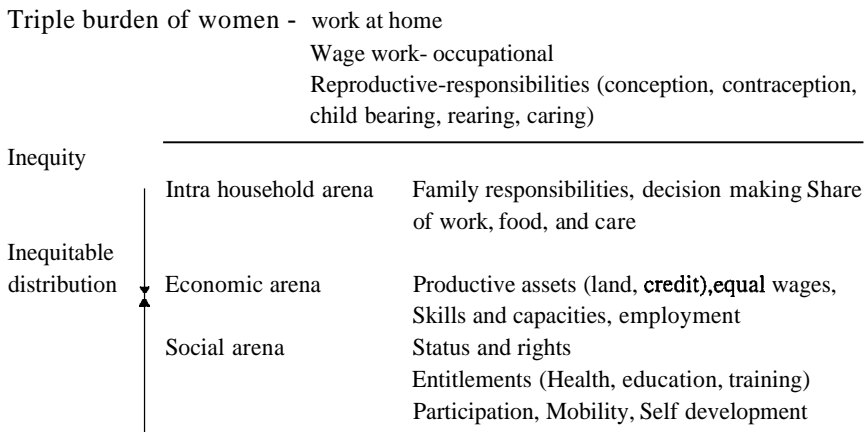
Economic barriers can be viewed as a result of the constitutional and social bamers. A concerted effort by all stakeholders is necessary to change political and market economics.



The obstacles to such equality are great and numerous. The biggest ones lie in social inertia. It is so implanted in the consciousness of majority, unfortunately women's too, that it blocks all the efforts that can make them equal members of society in all spheres (Robinson, 2000).

In the following section we will present the existing inequality between men and women that will be followed by equity analysis in poverty, education, and health and employment sector. Also equity is defined in terms education, health and employment where some equity strategies are mentioned to be incorporated in the policy and program design and implementation. We feel that if equity and equality can be ensured in all these four areas, equality in other aspects such as human rights, participation and governance would be easier to achieve.

**Figure 1.3 Gender inequity dependent on the socio economic realities**



Source : Adopted and developed from the work of Shiva ,2000 and Jahan ,1995

**Gender equity and Poverty**

Of the world 1.3 billion people living in abject poverty, it is estimated that nearly 70% are women. Extreme poverty, often associated with gender discrimination is also causally linked to the deaths of millions of women and girls every year. UNDP estimates on the basis of calculations of the value of women's unpaid and underpaid work, that woman contribute \$11 trillion a

year from non-financial activities that go unreflected by economic accounting. Women have less access to credit, particularly in developing countries. Most banks in developing countries that borrowers be wage earners or property owners who can provide acceptable collateral in such countries are men. (World Bank, 2001, Mahtab 2004)

Women are more threatened by poverty than men because more households are headed by women without partner. Women who work in formal employment face greater discriminatory practices in the work place: they earn less, work in the lowest paid jobs, receive fewer benefits and make up the majority of the employees in the informal sector. In most countries women work approximately twice the unpaid time men do. The number of poverty stricken women in rural areas doubled in the last 20 years.

This form of inequality only exists due to the absence of equity in treatment. Equity as we mentioned earlier is the means and equality is the result. Without equitable access to income such tremendous amount of disparity can not be removed.

Women make essential contributions to economic development, household income and otherwise in the world of work. Research findings show that independent income of women not only improves gender relations but also ensure the survival in case of male migration or widowhood. But too often women go under recognized, under paid, face poor conditions and face limited opportunities for improvement. They are also shouldering the double burden. A study of household division of labour in Bangladeshi villages found on average women worked almost 12 hours a day, as compared to 8-10 hours for men in the same villages. In most of the developing countries women are engaged in household works which are unrecognized and unpaid. Women remain invisible workforce in global production chains where they dominate as house workers and temporary labour. Up to 90% of house workers are women (FAO 2001, cited in Gender Equity Briefing Paper, Earth Summit 2002).

Women are typically denied basic working rights such as including minimum wages regular work. It has been found out that though

number of women labour are increasing in the different sectors like food processing, jute and leather industries, garments, papers and publications, chemical and petroleum and other , but inequality exists in terms of wage. Here men and women are not believed to be alike; rather women are treated as weak and inferior to men. In garments sector, men receive 41% more wages than women for 12 hour of work. Finding also shows that women earn 44% of their male counterpart's wages. Due to the lack of working opportunity, women are compelled to give their labour at a cheap rate compare to men. Also failure in many countries to determine the minimum wage rate contributes to this situation (Prothorn Alo, 1st May, 2005). Although overt discrimination is illegal in many countries, employers segregate jobs or offer less training to women workers. Employers often perceive the returns to investing in women workers as lower than those of men, mainly because of women's primary role in child bearing (World bank,1995).

Again women's lack of access to credit and right over land further aggravate their situation. Collateral requirements, high transaction cost, limited mobility and education, and other social and cultural barriers (World Bank, 1995).The religious law in many countries restricted women's equal right to inheritance of property. In a way, host of economical, social, cultural and religious norms and practices constraint women to avail the equal opportunity to eliminate their poverty and subordinate status.

In this regard it is necessary to mention the two most important internal factors of such inequality. They are,

1. The 'marketisation' bias that reflects the widespread failure of policy makers to give value to any form activity that does not command a price in the market place. There is clearly a gender subtext to this since it renders invisible the unpaid work, both productive and reproductive, that is primarily the responsibility of women- particularly women from poor households in poor countries. The marketisation of public services places many of them out of the reach of such households, intensifying work loads for women who have to

combine increased responsibility of social reproduction with extensive hours of work in productive activity.

The 'male breadwinner' bias is seen when policy makers design the policies and programmes to promote and protect the livelihood on the assumption that it is male household heads whose earnings provide for cash needs of a set of dependent family members. This led to the exclusion of women from a range of economic entitlements, including those intended to provide safety nets in times of crisis despite the fact that they play a key role in household livelihoods and coping strategies (Mainstreaming gender in the policy process, [http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-42969-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-42969-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html))

Therefore Gender equity in poverty reduction means an equal chance for females and males, with open option to jobs and income without expectations based on gender. It also requires institutionalization of opportunity and provisions for both genders to equal wage, credit, training and basic employment rights.

In this context, the government, private and voluntary sector need to make necessary changes in the existing law, policies and programmes taking into consideration the actual work load of women - reproductive and productive with elimination of the marketisation and male-breadwinner biases.

**Therefore, equity strategies in poverty elimination would be,**

1. understanding the unique nature of women's workload
2. ensuring home workers entitlement to basic employment rights
3. provisions for both unpaid and underpaid work
4. establishing adequate education and training for women and men to aid employment opportunity
5. increasing number of qualified women in growing sectors such as information and technology by investing in accessible education and training for women

6. increasing women's access to credit
7. establishing minimum labour standard for women and wage rates
8. Implementation of the ILO conventions relating to family and maternity rights.
9. Institutionalization of both formal and informal modes of education across all age of group.
10. Elimination of the market and male biases.

### **Gender equity and Education**

World wide literacy is increasing but in all regions illiteracy remains higher for women than for men. Of the world's nearly one billion illiterate adults, two thirds are women. Approximately, 60% girls of the 130 million children remain without access to primary education and over two thirds of the worlds 960 million adult are women. Women are lagging behind men in all stages of education (World Bank, 1991, Mahatab, 2004) .

The above data indicates that inequality exists 'between male and female, between boy and girl, though both sexes have equal rights and access to opportunities but still women are lagging behind men. The reason for such is due to the lack of equity; failure to incorporate the understanding of the different set of needs and priorities of male and female and social construction of the gender role. Without incorporating proper strategies and indicators to ensure equitable treatment in the policy and programme and implementation level, such inequality would continue to exist. Such factors as economic constraints, preference accorded to boy child, the distance to school, early marriage, and teenage pregnancy constitute major obstacles and need to be addressed.

Research and findings in this particular area indicated that housework , sibling care, farm work and earning income as predominant reasons why girls do not attend school or would drop out from school in highly significant rates compared to boys.

It confirms that constraining gender socialization and rigid ideas of gender.roles in the household division of labour combined with

parental perceptions of benefits on girl's education and socio-economic and geographic disadvantages result to mark gender imbalances and inequality in the education outcomes that, significantly favour male more than females (Velasco Esther, 2002).

Other related reasons are, inaccessible distance of the school from home, security risks on girls while traveling, late entry of girls in school, early marriage, lack of interest and illness in the family where girls are the chosen one for taking care. Poverty seems to be rationale for adhering to gender traditions and restricting access of girls to school by letting them stay at home, and also a compelling reason to marry them off at early age and allowing them to leave home and travel far away to earn income for the family (Velasco Esther, 2002).

At the schooling system adequate facilities, quality of interaction between teacher and students/girls and among student themselves and quality of teaching and relevance curriculum are important factors for girls to access and avail the opportunity.

To ensure gender equity ,the first changes have to bring at the family and social level. The lesser status assigned to women and girls in most societies and the resulting negative psychological effects hamper their pursuit of studies, work and social position. The traditional male bias attitude of the family and society need to change and incorporate the specific need and potentials of the female members. Though these practices are institutionalized in the normative and cognitive level over the years, it would take a long term effort to bring balance in the system of judging male and female. Both girl and boy child should be treated as individual who has different set of needs and capabilities. Parents and family member need to support a girl to avail the opportunities to get the education and explore her potentials.

In addition to this, the analysis of necessary data reveals that educational subsidies per capita are higher for males than for females. The difference is partly a result of the bias in allocation of

subsidies towards higher level of education where female enrollment is lowest.

At the same time some strategies need to adopt by the government and other stakeholders to bring equity in the education sector with special focus on girls and women. Specific measures such as promotion of a broader implementation of relevant normative instruments and the development of appropriate gender sensitive teacher training, curricula and teaching material are required. Need to increase the recruitment of more female teachers which has direct bearing on female access to education and career development.

Therefore gender equity in education means an equal chance at learning for females and males, with open option to learn subjects and prepare for future education, jobs and careers without expectations based on gender. Equal encouragement for both genders to develop, achieve and learn is essential to equitable treatment of female and male students (Michigan Gender Equity Team, <http://www.mi-gender-equity.com>). Gender equity acknowledges the barriers girls face and work to foster their healthy development and achievement. Therefore any program of gender equity in education should aim to:

- Help girls to resist stereo-types and view themselves as complex individuals with an emerging vision;
- Encourage girls in their ability to think critically;
- Enhance girls' sense of entitlement to voice their thoughts, feelings, and experiences and in turn to be heard and
- Promote girls' exploration of a wide range of choices about who they are and the person they want to become.

**To achieve gender equality the following equity strategies are required,**

1. development of an employment and recruitment policy and set quota by reserving a number of places for female candidates from especially rural, remote and indigenous areas

2. training programme relevant and suitable for minority language groups
3. providing housing and financial incentives for female teachers to be deployed in rural and remote areas
4. develop school measures to address the combined socio-economic , cultural and geographic disadvantages of girls equal rights to education
5. launch campaign targeting schools, parents and communities on the importance and benefits of girls education
6. develop measures to address to constraints of poor, indigenou and disabled male and female to progress to primary level.
7. promotion of the girl's self esteem becomes the part of education for girls and boys as healthy feeling of self worth

### **Gender equity and Health**

Health and well being elude majority of women. In many parts of the world women receive less attention and health care than men do and particularly girls often receive less support than boys. As a result of this gender bias the mortality rates of female often exceed those of males. Death is caused by malnutrition through food preferences being given to male. Nearly 600,000 women die every year from complications with pregnancy or delivery, the vast majority in the developing world .nearly 100000 maternal deaths is the result of 20 million unsafe abortions that occur every year. 80 million pregnancies are unplanned or unwanted. (Gender Equity Briefing Paper, Earth Summit 2002, Mahtab 2004)

Unequal health outcomes reflect the fact that health services are imbalanced. Certain health needs are gender specific and are often linked to reproduction in the case of women. Maternal mortality rate is one of the examples. Another is access to contraceptives failure in which penalizes women more than man. Lack of access to contraceptives can mean that abortion is used as a form of birth control (World Bank 1995: 12).

Other stems from the kind of job man or women do. For example men develop certain kind of ill health due to their responsibility in



some cultures as main providers. For women particular categories of health hazards have been documented for work on labour intensive assembly lines, for example or prostitution. In addition certain health needs may be shared by women and men but take on a gender dimension as a result of greater inequalities in access and provision. While the poor and disadvantaged enjoy less access to health care, women are at a greater disadvantage because their well being is culturally discounted within family, since men make the key decisions about health consultations and expenditure or women's mobility in the public domain is restricted (<http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev>). Women also suffer from imposed disadvantages in access if their constraints are not taken in to account, if the behavior of providers discriminates against them or if the gender of providers is a constraint.

Moreover women in developing countries and poor communities are often the 'last to receive necessary care and attention. In terms of reproductive health, social attitudes and behaviour have increased the risk of infections and death. Women are typically infected by their partner and someone they know and in many parts of the worlds it remains unacceptable for women to say NO to sex. Also transmission of sexually transmitted diseases can be are greater in women, e.g. the risk of infection from HIV is twice as high in women than men. Social stigma of rape, physical violence and sex trafficking all put women at further risk (Gender Equity Briefing Paper 2002:8).

Therefore gender equity in health, means, women and men have equal opportunities to enjoy good health without becoming ill or dying through causes that are unjust and avoidable with differential distribution and access to resources (technological/financial/human) according to need. Where women and men, contribute according to their economic capacity and ensure just distribution of responsibilities and power and placing value on non-remunerated health work (Gender, Equity and Health, [www. Paho.org](http://www.Paho.org)).

**Gender equity strategies in health**

- Develop indicator for analysis , monitoring and evaluation
- Data disaggregated by sex and analysis from a gender perspective
- Disseminates information on gender and health
- Train health workers to employ a gender perspective
- Increase women participation along with men in:
  - Defining health priorities
  - Planning solutions, policies and programs
  - Demanding accountability
- Availability of services to adolescents, single women , widows and homosexual
- Use of gender sensitive protocols for counseling
- Availability of full range of services whatever the sex of the provider
- Percent of female health providers
- Equal treatment and care for both male and female

**Gender equity and self development:**

Women earn less for comparable work, are often barred from certain forms of lucrative employment and perform much of their work in the unpaid private sectors, including rural sectors. They have no choice but to accept poorly paid undervalued work in often dangerous working conditions and with no job security. Majority of the women earn on average about three fourths of the pay of males for the same work, outside the agricultural sector in both developed and developing countries. UNDP estimates on the basis of calculation of the value of women's unpaid and under paid work that women contributes to \$11 trillion a year from non-financial activities that go unreflected by economic accounting ( World Bank, 2001, Mahtab 2004 )

Many governments claim that there is no gender discrimination in public services and indeed in the public sector is the largest

employer of women. However most women work in clerical jobs and few enter middle and top management positions. Promotion in the public service depends mainly on seniority, to the detriment of workers with family responsibilities who need career breaks. Besides certain jobs require extensive traveling and time that sometime become problematic for women with children to take care. This inhibits her to perform according to the organizational male version of standard performance.

Again, all too often women are denied positions of responsibility in the private sector. Also the job nature and demand of the work sometime discourages and inhibits many women to take the jobs or move upward since organizational performances are based on efficiency of the employee in the work place only. The performance criterion does not consider the carer role of the women.

According to a report, in Bangladesh the number of women in government jobs is far fewer than men. There are even fewer in the higher administrative jobs. The report indicates that among 49 government secretaries there is only one woman, in the post of additional secretaries 54 are men and only one women, in the post of joint secretaries there are only 5 women among 275 officers and 7 women among 659 deputy secretaries (The Daily Star, May 25th 2005).

This indicates the inequality of women representation in the decision making arena. Why such level of inequality between men and women exist after having the provisions of equal employment, opportunity and salary? The answer is the inequities.

Though organizational rules and regulations are considered as gender neutral and ensure equality of pay and other benefits, this gender neutral devices and equality does not accept the worker whose identity and commitments are legitimately anchored in the both occupational and private world. It does not acknowledge that women encounter constraints that are different from those of the male colleagues.

In this regard Valian argues for a cognitive explanation of continuing inequity. She posits the existence of gender schemas, by which she means the implicit, non-conscious beliefs about sex differences that of all us, men and women alike share. These schemas affect our expectations of men and women and our evaluation of performance. The most important consequences for professional work, is men are consistently overrated while women are underrated (Valian, 1998:2). Thus professional women are at a slight disadvantage in every interaction and these disadvantages cumulate over time to be big differences.

Thus the organizations anchored in assumptions about competences and success that have led to practices and norms constructed around life and experiences of men and around a vision of masculinity as the normal and universal requirement of organization life. All these assumptions and the practices associate disadvantage women most.

It has been therefore argued that most of the organizational rules are gendered in the sense that favour men's experience **and** thus contribute to the inequities.

Therefore, gender equity in organizational context means integration, rather than separation, of the public sphere of economic work and private sphere of family, community and other personal involvement. On the societal level, on the level of cultural norms, it would mean full legitimating of private sphere: activities there would be seen equally as important and would be equally as much valued as occupational activities. And on the part of the individual, it would mean equal commitment to each sphere by both sexes. It also requires equalizing the value placed on economic and non economic activity (Bailyn, 2003:139-142).

To address gender equity in organizational context we will have to adopt the following strategies:

- I. To preserve quota to increase percentage of managerial positions held by women

2. supervision procedures need to be developed considering the different set of work load and responsibilities of male and female
3. Explicit organizational policy statement that prohibits gender discrimination in
4. Hiring, promotion and retention policies, salaries and benefits
5. Elimination of overt gender bias in organizations standards and guidelines
6. Existence of written policies and guidelines to prohibit sexual harassment
7. Equal distribution of opportunities for training and career development between men and women.
8. Establish the mechanisms and procedure that no male or female employee disadvantaged by family responsibilities.
9. Encourage women's entry in public and private sector by the provisions of quota and other facilities like timing and institutionalizing of female version of performance.
10. Establishing appropriate regulatory framework that encourages the establishment of facilities e.g., day care facilities and private nursery schools for children of working women in both the formal and informal sectors.

## **Conclusion**

Through out the discussion we have tried to show how equity can lead to equality in some instances and what strategies need to incorporate in the gender equality plan of action. Though our discussion of gender equity we focus only on poverty, education, health and self development aspects of human life, but there are

many more areas where inequality between men and women prevails only because of continuation of equity. Such areas are human rights, governance, political participation etc. We limit our discussion on poverty, health, education and self development issues of women, since equality in these areas will naturally bring equality in other areas of women development such as political participation, decision making, governance and human rights. Since all these aspects are very much interlinked and intertwined in the funnel of gender development .Therefore it could be said that,

- Gender equity is a social justice and human right issue leading to end poverty and hunger
- Achieving gender equity requires the recognition that every policy, program and project affects women and men differently
- Gender equity issues need to be brought up at the diagnostic stage; otherwise it is very unlikely that they will appear in the 'action' or 'monitoring' stages.
- Gender equity requires women to transform from passive to active agents.

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