

SOCIAL ISSUES TEACHING KITS

GENDER



Africa
Educational
Trust

50 Years Creating Opportunities
Through Education

Written by Yambio AET Team:

BAKER SMITH

GRACE KARASI

SAMUEL TWIKIRIZE

TOROYO JOHN BAPTIST

Illustrations by:

JAMES MUGO

JOSEPH BARASA

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SUB-TOPIC 1: SEX AND GENDER

'Sex' refers to biological and physiological differences between men and women, and girls and boys. For example females become pregnant and can breast-feed children; most men are taller and have bigger bones than women. Gender is more than the biological differences between men and women. Gender refers to the beliefs, expectations, customs and practices that define what it means to be 'masculine' or 'feminine' within a society. Gender means the behaviours, attributes, roles and responsibilities that a certain society considers to be appropriate for men and women.

Gender expectations are constructed by society and are learned by as people they grow up. Characteristics of 'sex' do not vary greatly between different societies, but aspects of gender may vary substantially. In most societies, there are differences in the responsibilities, opportunities, activities, control over resources, and decision making powers between men and women. Gender expectations often differ from one tribe, culture and religion to another. They are influenced by traditions, customs, education, environment and daily life practices, and they change over time. Therefore, sex is what you are biologically; whilst gender is what you become socially.



SUB-TOPIC 2: TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES IN SOUTH SUDAN

In South Sudan, traditionally the role of girls is to help their mothers with kitchen work like cooking food. Boys are sent from one place to another to collect and bring what is needed, for example to run to buy salt from market, buy soda for visitors, chase and catch chicken to be slaughtered.

The role of a man as a husband is to provide basic home needs like shelter, food, clothes and medical care. It is the role of males to provide security and protection for their homes. At night when there is a likely attack upon a home, the males defend the family while the females support the males to strengthen them to defeat the enemy.

Meanwhile, wives support the husband by taking care of the home and cooking food. They ensure that children are washed, fed and are in good health. Women also contribute to what the husband brings home, by using their own money and harvest from the garden. Women also are expected to put into proper use the proceeds the husband brings home.

As far as the behaviours expected of both men and women are concerned, respect and discipline are important; neither should behave badly in ways such as fighting, abusing others, or drinking alcohol excessively. Instead they should respect themselves and others. In a family, both men and women should conduct themselves in such a way that their children are able to learn from their examples and are able to grow up to become responsible, well disciplined adults.

Discussion

- What are your own responsibilities as a boy / girl?
- How do they differ from those of your brothers / sisters?

SUB-TOPIC 3: GENDER DISCRIMINATION, EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Although men and women are physically different, it is the way that society views the differences that leads to inequality between them. This is *gender discrimination*. It can happen to both men and women. It often results in females having different opportunities to males for education, employment and political involvement.

Gender equality means that men and women should be treated in the same way and should be equally considered by society. They should both be able to equally contribute to and benefit from opportunities within society.

However, as men and women have different life experiences, treating them equally or the same will not always produce fair results. *Gender equity* is the process of being fair to both men and women by taking into consideration differences in the lives of men and women, and recognizing that different approaches may be necessary to produce fair outcomes. This could include equal treatment, or treatment that is different, but which is equivalent in terms of rights and opportunities.

Gender equity 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. When males and females are treated fairly, society as a whole becomes better educated, healthier, with stronger economies and less corruption.

Discussion

- Can you think of any examples of gender discrimination in your own society / community / school / family?
- Can you think of some ways that societies / communities / schools / families could treat men and women more equitably?

Dialogue between Taban, Abau, Mariko and Mariam

Abau asks: Taban: What is gender?

Taban says: Well, my teacher told me that gender refers to the differences between things that society considers to be male roles and female roles. For example, women are in charge of raising children.

Mariko replies: Well, gender is about which social roles are considered to be male and which are considered to be female. And also, how the roles are learnt and practiced. These are different from one tribe to another, from one culture to another, and from one religion to another. Gender is often influenced by our traditions, customs, and educational background.

Mariam says: In many cases girls are taught their roles from their mothers, elder sisters, aunts or other female members of their families. Likewise, boys are often taught by their fathers, uncles, elder brothers or other male members of their societies.

Abau comments: That is right Mariam. Yes in simple words, gender is about the roles that men and boys, girls and women learn and do in society, as male and females. It is connected to social or cultural differences between the women and men, girls and boys.

Mariam replies: Yes, it is so, and in addition, gender is also concerned with the expected behaviours for men or boys, and for women or girls. In many homes men and boys are expected to behave in a certain way, and do duties that are expected of them. And women and girls are also supposed to behave in a particular way and do things which define them as women and girls, this is what gender is.

Mariam says: It is often taken to be the responsibility of women to do such domestic activities like cooking, washing clothes, cleaning home compound, fetching water even collecting fire wood, taking care of children, entertaining visitors, and many other responsibilities.

Taban says I agree, and on the other hand, men are expected to do heavy work such as building houses, chopping wood for building or cooking, going hunting. After doing such work, men would relax.

Mariko replies: Well, it was understood that, at beer drinking places or ceremonies women were always left behind and not much recognized. They were not supposed to sit with men while drinking and share ideas freely. Women sat down behind and spoke in low voices, and then traditional beer could be served to them.

Taban: In the past, women have often been considered to be the weaker members of society, with men considered to be superior. Today, this is changing and they are more often considered as equals.

Abau concludes: That is true, but today things are changing, the world is now moving towards gender equality and equity, meaning that the gap between males and females is now reducing.

SUB-TOPIC 4: GENDER AND EDUCATION

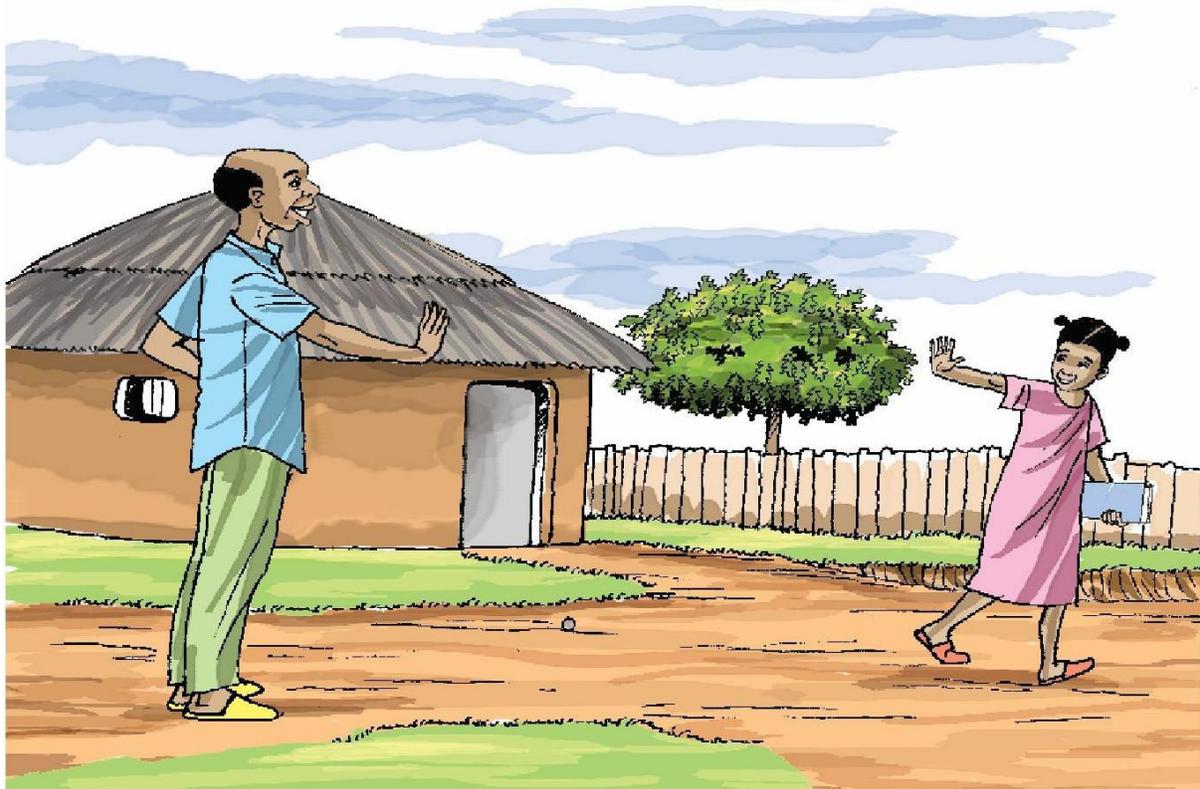
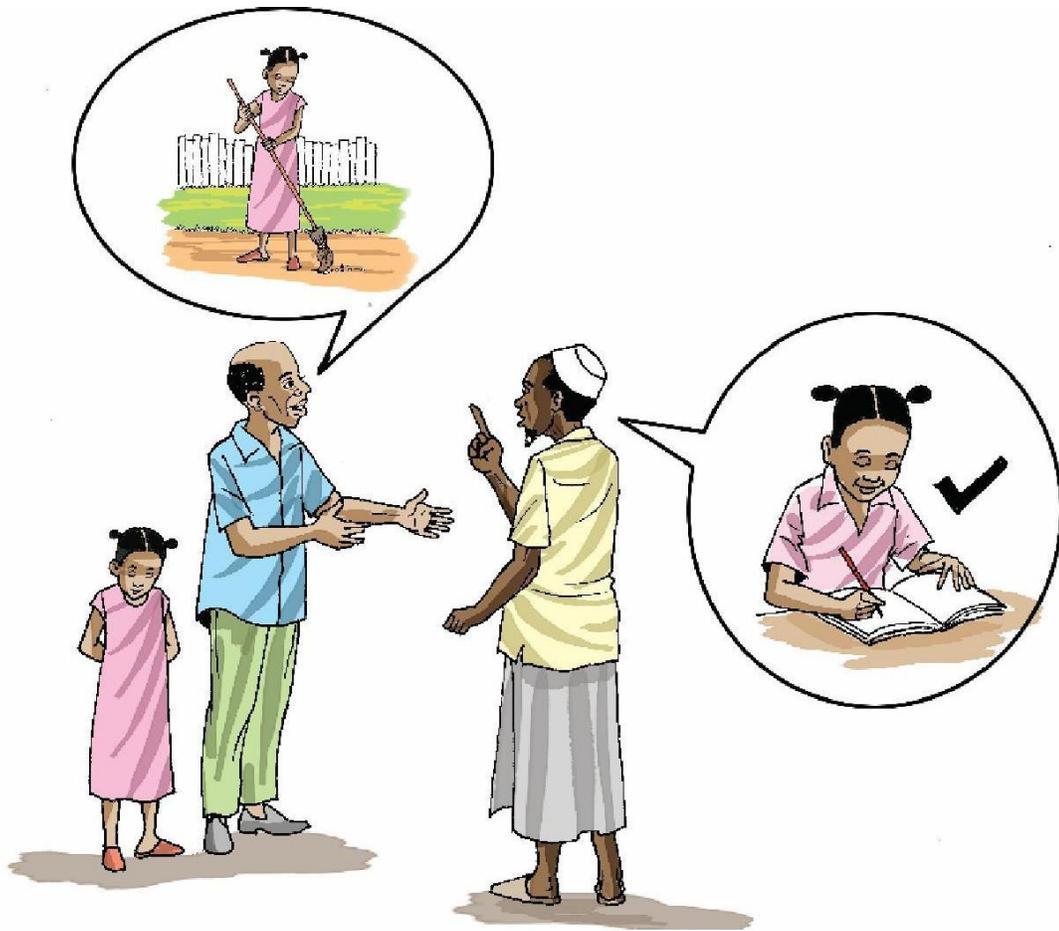
Education is the key to success. It gives both males and females better knowledge and skills, opens up opportunities for employment; and improves thinking and reasoning. In some societies, especially in rural areas, both boys and girls are supposed to work and support their families instead of going to school.

In other societies, it is just girls who are viewed as just domestic helpers, whilst boys are sent to school. The role of girls is often to support the family through cooking, childcare, cleaning, water and wood gathering, until they themselves marry and become mothers.

When girls and women do not have equal access to education and training the result is low literacy levels, and poorly paid, low-status jobs. In the world there are more than 110 million children not going to school, and two-thirds of these children are girls. There are 876 million illiterate adults in the world, and 75 per cent of these are women.

In some societies in South Sudan, people prefer to educate boys rather than girls. Some families believe that spending their resources on girl's education is a waste of money and time. Girls are prepared for marriage rather than for future development, while boys are given the chance to go to school. This is because when girls get married their parents expect to receive a bride price, such as cows.

In South Sudan, it is estimated that almost half of all girls miss out on primary education (UNICEF figures, 2009). Girls only make up one third of pupils in primary schools, and it is estimated that only 1 in every 100 girls completes all 8 years of primary school, compared to about 4 in every 100 boys. However, in some societies things are changing now, and more girls are being sent to school than in the past.



Why is it important to educate girls as well as boys?

Educating girls and women as well as boys and men has many positive results. Education empowers women, meaning that they can improve both their own and their family's well-being. Women are more likely to know about and use services, such as health services, benefiting themselves and their families. Educated women are more likely to take advantage of new opportunities, such as employment or training.

Each year of education that a girl or woman has reduces the chance that her children will die when they are very young. Being better educated means that the mother is more aware of nutrition and health needs of herself and the baby; she is able to read instructions on medicines, and is more able to earn money to support her child. Education of girls also means that when they grow up and have children, they are more likely to make sure that their own children also go to school and become educated, as they will realise the value of education. So improving educational opportunities for girls helps development and rebuilding of the country.

All children should have the chance to go to school, whether they are girls or boys. Educated people become better citizens, workers and parents. But no one should deny the importance of girls' education. Education provides them with a good chance of developing a healthier and happier life. Society as a whole benefits from an educated woman with the skills, knowledge and attitudes.



SUB-TOPIC 5: GENDER AND THE FAMILY IN SOUTH SUDAN

Traditionally in many societies in South Sudan it has always been men who made decisions about marriage. Men are often able to marry the woman of their choice, as long as they can afford the bride price, whilst women have little or no choice in the matter. Men have powers to use their family resources to marry more wives. In South Sudan, people often say that that the place of a woman is the kitchen, but that men are not limited, they can choose to go anywhere they wish.

Whilst traditional gender roles are still true of many societies in South Sudan today, some things are changing. Some women are involved in choosing who they marry. Many women are very educated, well trained, and have jobs outside of the home.

Girls often have many responsibilities in the household, rather than going to school. Or a girl who does go to school may find she has no time to read her books after school because she has many tasks to do in the home. When household tasks are shared more evenly between men and women, boys and girls, it becomes more likely that a girl can go to school and can keep up with her studies.



SUB-TOPIC 6: GENDER AND WORK



Women are often disadvantaged in the workplace, with poorer salaries and poorer conditions of work. There are many jobs that men and women can do equally well, but even when they do the same job, women are usually paid less. The United Nations said that 'Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours, and produce half of the world's food, yet earn only ten per cent of the world's income, and own less than one per cent of the world's property'.

Women are more likely than men to be unemployed. They are often expected to marry early, and care for children, the sick and the elderly. Or it is sometimes thought that allowing young women to work threatens culturally accepted gender roles, or that it might be unsafe for girls in the workplace or when travelling to work.

In South Sudan there are fewer educated and trained women than men, which can keep women out of employment, as they may lack the appropriate skills. It is important that girls be allowed to stay in school, as the higher a woman's education, the higher the chance she will be able to find a job.

To help get more women into employment in South Sudan, 25% of job opportunities are being given to females to compete for amongst themselves, which is 'affirmative action'. Gender norms often dictate that men and women should be employed in different types of job. Employers sometimes state whether they want a man or a woman for a role. Sometimes women and men choose jobs that are expected of them by society, but often these choices are influenced by the education and opportunities a person has had. So if a woman has little education, she will probably have few job opportunities.

However, a woman's work is critical to the survival of her family. Women are more likely than men to spend their earnings on food, education and healthcare for their families. When women have fair access into employment, they become empowered. There are many jobs that men and women can do equally well. Both men and women can now be found working in offices, in government ministries, as teachers, as engineers and in many other positions that were traditionally just given to men.

In most countries in the world, there are fewer women than men in politics. Currently, women hold less than 14% of the world's parliamentary places. However it has been recommended that *at least* 30% of places be reserved for women. When women are included in decision making at government level, there is better support for laws representing the rights and needs of women, children and families. When women are more represented in the government of their country, there is also less corruption.



One evening, three people, a gender officer, a lawyer and a chief, meet to discuss issues regarding gender and work in modern society

Chief: When it comes to gender and work, how can we make sure that things are fairer for women and men in our communities?

Gender Officer: Well, work should be shared equally without saying one is a man or a woman. All people can do any piece of work which she or he is capable of doing. So some men can do work which might seem to be for women, such as hair dressing, cooking, serving in hotels, baby sitting etc. On the other hand some women can also do duties which appear to be for men such as building houses, driving cars, repairing cars, handling leadership, being commanders or soldiers in the army, administrators in offices, or police women. Please Mr. Lawyer, what do you think about this?

Lawyer: In our modern society, people should not be undervalued or seen as less important because of their sex. Men and women should have fair access to education and training so that they have fair opportunities for employment. They should also receive fair pay for their work and their contribution should be valued.

Gender Officer: Yes, there should be gender equity, where roles are shared in society and males and females take full participation in daily activities. For example, men in some societies look after cows while women cultivate the garden in order to produce crops for food. Therefore when doing work both husbands and wives, men and women, boys and girls should share work equally depending on individual ability to do the best. Chief, what do you think?

Chief: Well, looking at gender equity, suppose a man and a woman are officially employed, when they return home, each of them as to do their duties as a husband and a wife. This should involve sharing responsibilities and resources in the home, so that each has fair opportunities and a balanced workload.



SUB-TOPIC 7: GENDER AND LAW

When a new family is formed, they often have properties that they own, for example a family house, garden, chickens, cows and other resources. Property ownership refers to whom the property belongs. Property and land is registered in the name of the head of household, which is usually the man in South Sudan. Ownership and control over property provides security, so women may experience more poverty and insecurity.

Women often look after chickens and cultivate and harvest crops for home use, but sometimes men take the cash from the sale of chickens and crops, and use it for personal satisfaction, for example alcohol, leaving the women poor at home.

In South Sudan, if the husband of a woman dies, the woman will not normally inherit the house or the land, instead it will be passed to her son (if he is old enough), or to her husband's brother. The woman will then be reliant on the brother or son.

In many countries it has been seen that having secure property rights improves the welfare of women and their families. The benefits include having the right to use the land for crops, and having a secure place to live. Giving women property rights therefore can lead to the better health and economic situation of women and families.

Discussion

- Do women in your community have the opportunity to own properties and land?
- Can you think of examples of how having secure property rights might improve the health and economic situation for women and families?

SUB-TOPIC 8: GENDER AND HEALTH

The health of both men and women can be affected by gender roles. In South Sudan it is considered to be the role of females to collect water and firewood, which can have negative effects on their health, as they often have to walk very far and carry heavy loads. Women are usually expected to cook for their families, which can also affect their health, by damaging their lungs and eyes through exposure to smoke everyday.

Women are often the victims of violence from men, which is known as gender based violence. This can lead to ill health or even death. At least 1 in every 3 women is the victim of some kind of violence from men. Female education can reduce the levels of violence against women, as they become more empowered.

People who stay in school are more likely to be aware of the risk of diseases such as HIV and AIDS, and are therefore more able to protect themselves. The HIV infection rate is growing fastest among teenage girls and young women, so it is very important for girls to receive education so that they are better able to protect themselves. When girls receive more years of education, they are more likely to get married and have children later. Girls who leave school and marry early may have problems when they become pregnant and give birth, because their bodies may not be mature. There is more risk of the mother or baby being hurt or even dying.

The health of men can also suffer from gender roles. Pressure may be put upon men to be tough, and be the supporter of the family, meaning that they may engage in work which presents a risk of injury, strain, or even death, for example, building houses or driving cars. Men are also expected to go to war, or to defend their families against attack, which can result in injuries or even death. There is also a stereotype of men that they are expected to have more partners, which can be risky for the man's health, as well as that of his wife, as there is a higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases.

GLOSSARY

Aspects	Parts of something, eg. Of a situation, problem, subject
Attributes	A quality or characteristic that someone or something has
Biological	Connected with the natural processes of living things
Constructed	Something that has been built or put together from different parts to form something whole
Corruption	Dishonestly using position or power to your advantage, especially for money
Critical	Of the greatest importance to the way things might happen
Customs	Ways of behaving or beliefs which have been established for a long time
Dictate	To influence something or make it necessary
Discipline	The ability to control yourself or other people, even in difficult situations
Discrimination	To treat a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their skin colour, religion, sex
Distress	A feeling of extreme worry, sadness or pain
Economies	The systems of trade, industry and money in a society
Employment	When someone is paid to work for a company, organization or individual
Environment	The air, water and land in or on which people, animals and plants live
Equality	The right of different groups of people to have a similar social position and receive the same treatment
Equity	Process of being fair to different groups
Excessively	An amount which is more than acceptable, expected or reasonable
Expectations	The events that you think will happen in the future
Exposure	When someone experiences something or is affected by it because they are in a particular situation or place
Feminine	Acting, or having qualities which are traditionally considered to be suitable for a woman
Fulfil	To do something that is expected, hoped for or promised or to cause it to happen
Generation	All the people of about the same age within a society or within a particular family
Literacy	The ability to read and write
Low-status	A low amount of respect, admiration and importance given to a person, organization or object

Masculine	Having characteristics that are traditionally thought to be typical of or suitable for men
Mature	To become completely grown physically
Norms	An accepted standard or a way of behaving or doing things that most people agree with
Nutrition	The substances that you take into your body as food and the way that they influence your health
Participation	To take part in or become involved in an activity
Physiological	The way in which the bodies of animals and plants work
Politics	The activities of the government, members of law-making organizations or people who try to influence the way a country is governed
Prescribed	To tell someone what they must have or do; to give something as a rule
Resources	A useful or valuable possession or quality of a country, organization or person
Respective	Relating or belonging to individual people or things
Security	To be protected from danger or risk
Socially	Within a large group of people who live together in an organized way, or a society
Society	A large group of people who live together in an organized way making decisions about how to do things and sharing the work that needs to be done.
Specific	Relating to one thing and not others
Stereotype	A fixed idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong
Substantial	Large in size, value or importance
Take advantage	To use the good things in a situation
Unemployed	To be without a paid job
Victim	Someone or something which has been hurt, damaged or killed or has suffered, either because of the actions of someone or something else, or because of illness or chance

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