

TOOL B1: GENDER AND ME

AIM

By the end of the session, participants will have:

- ▶ Shared and reflected on important influences that have shaped our understandings and experiences of masculinity and femininity growing up.
- ▶ Agreed on a common understanding of the terms “masculinity” and “masculinities”.

STEP-BY-STEP

1. Introduce the activity by presenting its learning aims. Explain the importance of developing an understanding of gender from our own lives (as well as from research and theories).
2. Ask participants to work on their own and to each take a large piece of paper and marker pen, and get comfortable. Have each participant draw a path/road/river on their paper - this is their Gender Journey. Mark one end ‘birth’ and the other end ‘now’.
3. Ask each participant to identify three moments/ experiences in their lives which were significant for them in forming their sense of what it means to be a boy/man or girl/woman in their family, community and society. Mark these moments on the ‘gender journey’ and, for each moment, write or draw answers to these questions:
 - ▶ *In this experience, what did you learn about the meaning of being a boy/man or girl/woman? Where was the learning coming from? Who was teaching you about gender?*
 - ▶ *What did you learn about gender differences between boys/men and girls/women (in terms of roles, responsibilities, opportunities, rights)? How did this feel at the time?*
 - ▶ *What did you learn about gender inequalities between boys/men and girls/women (in terms of opportunities, rights, access to resources, levels of power)? How did this feel at the time?*
 - ▶ *Looking back, what do you feel now about your Gender Journey and what you learned about gender growing up?*
4. When participants are done writing/drawing, ask them to find a partner with whom they are comfortable with and to share with each other their gender journeys.
5. After a few minutes in these pairs, bring everyone back together. Invite 2-3 volunteers to present their Gender Journeys to the whole group.
6. Lead a general discussion on what these Gender Journeys tell us about what we have learned about masculinity and femininity growing up and how this gender socialization has affected our lives. Use the following questions to prompt discussion:

Time: 60 mins

Materials:

- ▶ Flipchart paper and pens
- ▶ Handout B1: The Meaning of Masculinities

Training Tips:

- ✓ This activity focuses on making gender issues personal for men, by helping them think and talk about how and what they learned about gender growing up. Personalizing gender issues in this way is an important first step in any process of trying to change gender inequalities. As the facilitator, you can help participants to personalize the issues by sharing stories from your own life about how you came to learn about gender and this has affected you.

This activity focuses on gender socialization. You can help participants to understand the concept of gender socialization by highlighting the messages about gender that young people get from different cultural sources (proverbs, religious teachings, media images and so on.)

- ▶ *How have ideas about and expectations of masculinity that you learned growing up benefited you as a man?*
 - ▶ *Have these same ideas and expectations of masculinity harmed or limited you in any ways? How?*
 - ▶ *How have ideas about and expectations of femininity harmed or limited the lives of women that you know?*
 - ▶ *How do these ideas about masculinity and femininity affect women's participation in political life, and your party in particular?*
7. Use the key points in the Handout B1: The Meaning of Masculinities to sum up this discussion of gender socialization, the meanings of masculinity and femininity, and their impacts on the lives of women and men.
 8. End the session by emphasizing that as gender is learned, it can be changed.

B1: NOTES FOR THE FACILITATOR

- ▶ **Emphasize that gender socialization is an issue for men:** This activity emphasizes that gender is an issue for everyone, because everyone learns about gender differences and inequalities growing up. The activity seeks to personalize issues of gender inequalities for participants, by helping them to reflect on their own experiences of learning about gender (gender socialization). Personalizing the discussion of gender is especially important for working with men, because men often think that gender is a “women’s issue” and nothing to do with them. But men’s lives are deeply affected by what they learn about masculinity and femininity growing up. Emphasize that gender socialization is complex: Personalizing the discussion of gender helps to reveal the complexities of gender socialization. The ideas and expectations of masculinity and femininity that we learn growing up can vary, depending on economic circumstances, religious teachings, educational level, political conditions (such as, levels of conflict and insecurity) and so on. Because ideas about gender can vary and are changeable, it makes sense to think in terms of a range of masculinities and femininities.
- ▶ **Use participants’ stories to highlight the different ways in which people react to what they hear about ideas and expectations of masculinity and femininity:** Gender socialization varies not just because ideas and expectations of masculinity and femininity that we learn growing up can vary, but also because young people vary in their responses to what they learn. We know this from our own lives. Some people conform to what they learned about masculinity and femininity when they were growing up, while other people choose not to conform. A key point for participants to learn from this activity is that gender socialization is not just about the messages that people learn about gender, but also how they respond to, accept or reject those messages.

► **Use the sharing of personal stories to help build trust within the group:** Beginning the workshop with personal stories helps participants get to know each other better. In this way, the activity seeks to foster a greater sense of openness and trust among participants. Such personal stories help participants to see what they have in common and also the particularities of their own lived experiences. Help participants see the value of sharing personal stories: Some participants may be reluctant to talk about their lives. They may have learned about masculinity through a traumatic experience of male violence, for example. When introducing the activity, remind participants of the importance of taking care of themselves, and suggest that they choose moments/experiences in their Gender Journey that they will feel comfortable discussing with another participant. Participants who hold senior positions in the party/organization may be reluctant to share personal stories with more junior staff because they fear it may affect their authority. Remind everyone of the value of sharing of experiences in order to draw on the collective wisdom of the group to address the problems faced by the party/organization.