



Guide on *Gender-Inclusive Communication*





Towards a new dawn

**Ministry of Women and Child Development
Government of India**

Under the visionary leadership of **Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi**, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) stands at the forefront of driving inclusive development in India. In alignment with the vision of Women-Led Development of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, MWCD actively translates this vision into action by formulating and executing strategic plans, policies, and programs.

Guided by the dynamic leadership of **Hon'ble Minister Ms Smriti Zubin Irani**, MWCD has become a beacon of progress in championing gender equality and empowerment. The **Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication** is a significant milestone in this journey, reflecting MWCD's dedication to creating a society where women, inspired by the Prime Minister's vision, become not only equal partners in the nation's developmental narrative but lead it too.

MWCD's commitment extends beyond conventional responsibilities to encompass innovative programs covering welfare, support services, training for employment, income generation, awareness campaigns, and gender sensitization. The **Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication** is a tangible manifestation of MWCD's commitment to advancing gender equality, aligning seamlessly with the Prime Minister's overarching vision for an inclusive and empowered India.

The tireless efforts of **Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration**, Mussoorie, play a pivotal role in ensuring that gender-inclusive communication becomes an integral part of our everyday administrative outreach to citizens. The training of civil servants in the Academy also focuses on institutionalising a gender-just administrative framework. LBSNAA will aim to incorporate and utilize the insights from the **Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication**.

This collaborative effort ensures that the principles outlined in the guide become a practical and integral component of administrative practices, further reinforcing MWCD's commitment to fostering a gender-inclusive and empowered nation. This comprehensive approach is aligned with the Ministry's vision and commitment towards a more equitable and just society.

Guide on *Gender-Inclusive Communication*



National Gender and Child Centre

Lal Bahadur Shastri
National Academy of Administration
Mussoorie, Uttarakhand



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MESSAGE

स्मृति जूबिन इरानी
Smriti Zubin Irani



सत्यमेव जयते



मंत्री
महिला एवं बाल विकास
अल्पसंख्यक कार्य
भारत सरकार

Minister
Women and Child Development
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Government of India

Today, when the nation is taking giant leaps towards achieving gender mainstreaming, it is encouraging to know that the National Gender and Child Centre (NGCC), Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, is completely aligned with this goal.

At the G20 Ministerial Conference on Women Empowerment in August 2023, the adoption of the "G20 Action Plan on Sustainable Development through Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women" also underscored the commitment towards applying a decisive gender-mainstreaming approach and women-led development. While working towards this aim, it becomes our collective responsibility to work on a holistic strategy where the role of gender-inclusive language in breaking deeply rooted biases is also duly acknowledged and worked upon.

I applaud and congratulate NGCC, LBSNAA, and partners for bringing out this '**Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication.**' As the name suggests, the guide attempts to not only explore the intricacies and nuances of gendered language but also highlights how non-inclusive language can ignore the presence and experiences of diverse identities on the gender spectrum while reinforcing gender stereotypes.

This illustrative guide has used many common scenarios that can be observed around us and may seem innocuous but carry forward biases. It also offers many strategies, including alternative words and phrases, which can be adopted in everyday communication. The guide sets the stage for many more such steps to be undertaken concerning mainstreaming gender-inclusive language around us.

I compliment NGCC, LBSNAA for their dedication to the cause of achieving gender mainstreaming and for their diligent work towards bringing focus on the critical use of gender-inclusive language around us.

(Smriti Zubin Irani)



FOREWORD



Sh. Sriram Taranikanti, IAS
Director,
Lal Bahadur Shastri
National Academy of Administration and
Chairperson, National Gender and Child Centre,
Mussoorie



National Gender and Child Centre (NGCC), LBSNAA, is committed to ensuring gender equality and protecting children's rights by building institutional capacities. The **Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication** is a step forward in furthering the objectives of the Centre in mainstreaming gender not just in policy and programmes but also in our everyday language.

It has been widely recognized that, given the critical role of language in shaping cultural and social attitudes, gender-inclusive language is a powerful way to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias. Guidelines have also been set by the UN for gender-inclusive language among its staff to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias.

This publication should significantly assist in providing a critical understanding of the stereotypes around us and how we can break these stereotypes and create a gender-inclusive environment in our society. At the same time, it is hoped that this will give the required impetus for discussion in the said area and lead to further expansion of the work.

In the progress of the nation in various domains, achieving gender equality is imperative for fostering an inclusive society at par with other essential aspects. A step in this direction is acknowledging the biases in our communication and then ensuring its alignment with gender-inclusive principles. The **Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication** should add to our collective efforts in this direction.

Adopting gender-sensitive language is paramount as it encompasses everyone in society, aiding the creation of a level playing field without biases. Adoption of Gender inclusive communication could, over a period of time, have a visible impact in several areas, including improving the labour-force participation rate.

We sincerely thank the **Hon'ble Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Ms Smriti Zubin Irani**, for sharing her vision and, in particular, emphasizing the need for mainstreaming gender-inclusive language in the larger context of gender-inclusive growth. We also thank her for her continued guidance and encouragement of the work undertaken by the National Gender and Child Centre, LBSNAA.

We also express our gratitude to the contributors and experts for taking their valuable time to attend

multiple workshops and sharing their insightful experiences that helped develop this guide. Our heartfelt appreciation is also to our technical partners for collaborating in this endeavour and for the support that has been given to us in the past. We hope that this partnership will take our long-term engagement ahead.

We have advanced the gender-inclusive agenda in the Academy by organizing sensitization workshops and integrating sessions on gender-inclusive communication into our regular training programs. The guide will seamlessly integrate into our curriculum, serving as a valuable learning resource for the faculty at the Academy.

As the Chairperson of the Centre, I also acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the NGCC team led by Ms Disha Pannu, Executive Director of the Centre. The team has not only conceptualized this guide based on real-life experiences but also ensured that the guide is easy to read and understand, sensitizing stakeholders in addressing the issue of gender-inclusive language.

We are confident that this publication would serve as a valuable guide for various stakeholders, paving the way for introspection and helping us battle gender stereotypes and mindsets around us. We hope the readers will make full use of this resource and wish for many more such substantive initiatives for the NGCC and LBSNAA.



(Sriram Taranikanti)

PREFACE



Ms Susan Jane Ferguson
Country Representative,
UN-Women, New Delhi



I congratulate the National Gender and Child Centre of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration for bringing out a Guide that assists public facing professionals to communicate with sensitivity. Through practical examples and relatable instances, the guide is designed to be accessible for lay persons in catching up with the broadening discourse on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The correlation between language and gender equality is strong. Gender-insensitive language perpetuates stereotypes that men and women must occupy certain roles. Gender equality cannot be achieved without first engendering the language we speak.

Gender-sensitive language can foster a culture of respect and equality by ensuring that everyone—regardless of their gender identity—is seen, heard, and respected. This is not just a matter of semantics; it's a fundamental aspect of human dignity. Language also evolves - much like our understanding of gender itself. We must therefore be open to unlearn and learn simultaneously, be open to new perspectives and willing to adapt our language as our understanding deepens.

We must use language in a way that honours and acknowledges all individuals. Whether in casual conversation, professional discourse, or public communication, our words have the power to include or exclude, to respect or to marginalize.

At UN-Women we are committed to support the Government and the people of India in promoting gender equality in every aspect. Communication is an important instrument in creating an dignified ecosystem where each individual is respected irrespective of their caste, culture, ethnicity or gender identity.

We hope that the readers not only find this Guide handy in their interactions at the workplace but also in their personal capacities. It is through many small steps like this that we will, together achieve the AGENDA2030!

Susan Jane Ferguson

Note from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Ms Disha Pannu
Deputy Director,
Lal Bahadur Shastri
National Academy of Administration and
Executive Director,
National Gender and Child Centre,
Mussoorie



In December 2022, the Cambridge Dictionary revised the definition of "man" and "woman". The updated definitions are Man: An adult who lives and identifies as a male, though they may have been said to have a different sex at birth. Woman: An adult who lives and identifies as a female, though they may have been said to have a different sex at birth. This change in definition comes at a critical juncture, especially since the term 'gender' is changing dimensions to ensure it reflects the entire spectrum of gender identities and is inclusive. This change in definitions often acknowledges the broader societal changes, evolving attitudes and an increased awareness of the importance of language shaping perceptions and behaviours.

Language is seen as a single thread of continuance that binds people together, defines societies and is the link to connect with the future. It also serves as a mirror that reflects a society's values, beliefs and cultural norms. Language can thus be a reflection of society; therefore, it is crucial that our language represent our thoughts and encompass what society stands for. Several inroads have been made at various levels of governance, including global level, to mainstream gender in all spheres, including language.

This Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication is also a step in that direction and has been designed from the perspective of highlighting the stereotypes and biases that exist around us and how we can consciously be mindful to ensure we are gender-neutral and gender-inclusive in our day-to-day communication.

This Guide was envisaged with the vision to inculcate the sensitivity for gender-inclusive language and to raise awareness among all, not just to identify non-inclusive phrases and vocabulary that is currently rampant but also to assist and encourage each other to become gender-sensitive in our communications and consciously use inclusive language. This Guide has resulted from the efforts of various subject and field experts.

On behalf of the team NGCC, LBSNAA, I must sincerely thank the Hon'ble Minister for the Women and Child Development, Ms Smriti Zubin Irani, for her exceptional guidance, positive spirit, and steadfast support across various projects undertaken by NGCC, LBSNAA. Her visionary leadership and dedication to fostering gender-



inclusive communication have played a pivotal role in shaping our initiatives. We deeply appreciate the Hon'ble Minister's ongoing support, which serves as a beacon for the team, inspiring us to achieve beyond the set goals. Her commitment to empowering projects that promote inclusivity has had a profound impact on our work.

We extend our sincere and profound appreciation to Sh. Srinivas R Katikithala, the former Director of the Academy and Chairperson, NGCC, LBSNAA. Under his exceptional leadership, the Centre not only excelled in efficiently enhancing the capacity building of stakeholders but also successfully crafted this comprehensive Guide. Sh. Katikithala's vibrant and inspiring personality has consistently propelled the team to surpass expectations. He stood unwaveringly with the team as a pillar of strength, offering steadfast support to all the Centre's projects. His indefatigable persona is sure to leave a lasting legacy, continuing to inspire and guide the team in the future.

We are grateful to the Director of the Academy, Sh. Sriram Taranikanti, for reposing faith in the team and providing the requisite support and guidance to the Centre's vision. The team is privileged to work under the guidance of a leader who believes in the team's potential and actively supports and nurtures our efforts. His dedication to our shared goals has been a driving force, inspiring us to reach new heights. As we continue our journey towards gender and child-responsive governance, we are grateful for Director Taranikanti's mentorship and the positive impact he has on the collaborative spirit within the Academy.

My note for this Guide would be incomplete without acknowledging the pivotal role played by all the members who were instrumental in developing this Guide, working diligently and vigorously to ensure its relevance to the stakeholders.

The list of experts is extensive, and I must apologise in the beginning, in case I miss out on listing a few names; however, the attempt is to give due acknowledgements to all the members who worked continuously with the NGCC team.

To begin with, I must place on record my heartfelt appreciation for the members of the core group who went beyond their mandate and worked tirelessly on this project.

Leading the charge with her invaluable insights and critical inputs essential for developing this Guide, we owe tremendous gratitude to Ms Santishree Dhulipudi. Her persistence, dedication, and commitment to the cause were the driving force behind inspiring other subject experts, especially the faculty members at JNU University, who were attending the workshops to participate in the process of reviewing and refining the contents of the draft Guide. The ripple effect of her exemplary leadership and unassuming persona has been remarkable, resulting in a comprehensive guide that stands as a testament to collective excellence.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Ms Aditi Choudhary, whose unswerving support and expert guidance have been nothing short of instrumental in the transformative journey of shaping this Guide, starting from its inception. Her mentorship has guided this project through every stage of its development, from a mere concept to its final, immaculate form. Her steadfast commitment to excellence and adept touch has left an indelible mark on this Guide.

We sincerely thank Ms Meenakshi Negi for her resolute dedication and commitment to developing this Guide and her willingness to share her childhood experiences related to gender stereotypes and communication. She remained consistently engaged, participating in in-person and online meetings, where discussions and refinements took place to finalise the Guide.

We express our gratitude to Ms Meenakshi Arora for her earnest efforts and enthusiasm for developing this Guide. Her willingness to share her relevant experiences in dealing with gender-biased communication in the judiciary is greatly appreciated. Her contributions in in-person and online meetings were instrumental in facilitating constructive discussions and refinements, which played a pivotal role in shaping the Guide.

We wholeheartedly express our appreciation to Ms Chhaya Sharma for her undaunted zeal and tenacious commitment to crafting this Guide. Her invaluable real-life experiences from her service in the police, where she addresses issues related to gender stereotypes and communication in the law enforcement context on an everyday basis, offered invaluable insights. Her active participation in in-person and virtual meetings proved instrumental in fostering productive discussions and refining the Guide, playing a central role in its development.

We sincerely thank Ms Roli Singh for her vital contributions, sharing insights from her experience in the health department and her guidance on drafting circulars and orders with a gender-inclusive communication approach. Her expertise in navigating issues related to gender stereotypes and communication within the health department's communication was truly insightful.

We genuinely thank Sh. Preetam Yashwant for his indispensable contributions and guidance in developing this Guide. His insights have played a pivotal role in shaping our understanding of the Ministry's acknowledgement and commitment to addressing the significance of gender-inclusive communication. His profound understanding of the role of gender-inclusive communication as a crucial tool for addressing issues related to gender stereotypes and communication within government departments has been truly enlightening.

We express our heartfelt thanks to Ms Hephshiba for her invaluable support and remarkable contributions to the development of this Guide. Her infectious enthusiasm and commitment have been conspicuous in the core group meetings, where she actively shaped the Guide. Her eagerness to not only contribute to its creation but also assist us in the writing process is greatly appreciated. Her expertise enriched the content of this Guide and deepened our commitment to fostering inclusivity in our communication strategies.

We sincerely offer our deep appreciation to Ms Nisha James for her crucial support in the core group meetings. Her dedication to this cause was evident as she provided inputs and suggestions for developing this Guide, even while in training. Her wealth of experience in law enforcement has significantly enriched the Guide's content.

We are profoundly grateful to Ms Katyayani Sanjay Bhatia for her phenomenal commitment and devotion to the project since inception, both in-person and virtual meetings. As one of the youngest team members, her dedication to offering a fresh perspective, conducting research, and contributing to the drafting and development of the content was instrumental in shaping the Guide.



Last but certainly not least, we express our most profound appreciation to Ms Gargi K. as she has been consistently engaged during the core group meetings, displaying exceptional commitment and offering fresh perspectives related to the judiciary. In the early stages, Ms Gargi K. took on the editing work with precision and skill, setting a high standard for the Guide's quality. Furthermore, her legal acumen has been evident in the valuable international perspectives she brought to the table, enriching the content with a global outlook. We recognise her as an integral part of our collaborative success as her efforts have played a pivotal role in striving for effective change, and her forward-thinking contributions have significantly shaped this Guide.

On behalf of the Centre, I must also express our collective gratitude to every participant of in-person multiple stakeholder workshops. Collaborating with all the members to bring this Guide to fruition has been a remarkable experience. We have learnt a great deal from diverse perspectives and are highly impressed by the zeal and passion with which all members of the validation meeting have connected and contributed. We are already witnessing the impact of this knowledge as it is being applied to bring about positive changes.

We express our profound appreciation to Ms Susan Jane Ferguson, from UN-Women for offering a favourable ecosystem that helped the team throughout this journey, commencing from its inception. We highly value her engaged and priceless contributions during our core group meetings. Her zeal and sagacious demeanour in driving this project have been recognised and deeply cherished, and we are truly grateful for her instrumental role in shaping its success.

Ms Kanta Singh has consistently proven to be a reliable and dedicated team member, always ready to address concerns, resolve issues, and provide essential support. Her behind-the-scene efforts have not gone unnoticed, and her commitment has been a cornerstone of our project's success. Whether addressing minor issues or offering crucial support, she has played a vital role in ensuring the smooth development of this project. The entire UN-Women team has played an essential role in assisting us and ensuring the successful development of this project within the stipulated time frame. Together, Ms Kanta Singh and the UN-Women team have exemplified the spirit of collaboration and dedication, making a lasting impact on the success of this project.

I find it challenging to articulate my thoughts adequately through words; however, understanding the power of words, I must rely on them (as we acknowledge that words/language can effectively impact) and place it on record that the idea behind creating this Guide originated from Sh. Sunil Raman. From his vision and ingenuity, the concept of bringing out a document on gender-sensitive communications sprung forth. The privilege of collaborating with him on this project has been a profound educational journey. We deeply appreciate his tireless efforts and support, setting an example for all. His remarkable ability to offer assistance with a single phone call showcases his commitment and passion for the subject and his professionalism.

We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the entire team at Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, with a special mention of Ms Saachi Bhalla, whose consistent support to the project played a pivotal role in bringing it to a successful conclusion. She was often a silent but invaluable team member and demonstrated her dedication by stepping forward at crucial junctures, offering guidance and support to the entire NGCC, LBSNAA team. Her contributions have been indispensable to our collective achievement.

I want to place on record my heartfelt appreciation and congratulations to Ms Anjali S. Chauhan, Chief Programme Officer, Ms Sangeeta Bisht and Sh. Chandan Singh (team of National Gender and Child Centre), LBSNAA for their exceptional work in conceptualizing and bringing to fruition this visionary project.

Ms Anjali S. Chauhan's dedication is particularly commendable, having provided continuity to the Centre for the past 27 years. Her sincerity and diligent efforts in steering the project forward, coordinating with multiple collaborators, organizing workshops, and collating inputs have been instrumental in shaping this Guide. For nearly three decades, Ms Anjali S Chauhan has been a guiding force, working tirelessly to ensure the success of the Centre. Her ability to navigate and coordinate with various stakeholders showcases her leadership skills and her commitment to fostering collaboration.

I sincerely congratulate Ms Sangeeta Bisht and the NGCC team for their collective efforts in making this project a reality. The success of this initiative is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and teamwork of each member involved.

A list of all the esteemed participants who attended and contributed in the workshops is attached at page number 73.

National Gender and Child Centre, LBSNAA, continues to realise its vision and objectives of mainstreaming gender in our everyday lives, and this initiative has been part of a much larger journey towards gender equality and inclusion. On behalf of NGCC and LBSNAA, we hope that this Guide serves as a ready reckoner to all in guiding them consciously to adopt gender-inclusive language by becoming more sensitive and conscious of the existing biases around us.



(Disha Pannu)



About Us

Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA)



The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie is a premier training institution for the civil services in India. It is headed by a Director (an officer of the level of Secretary to the Government of India) and is an attached office of the Department of Personnel & Training, Government of India.

It conducts a common Foundation Course for entrants to the All India Services; Indian Foreign Service; Group 'A' services of the Union and the Royal Bhutan Service followed by professional training for the regular recruits of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and members of the Royal Bhutan Service. The Academy also conducts in-service and Mid-Career Training Programmes (MCTPs) for members of the IAS and Induction Training Programme for officers promoted to the IAS from State Civil Services. In addition, workshops and seminars on policy and governance-related issues are held from time to time.



National Gender and Child Centre (NGCC)

The National Gender and Child Centre (NGCC) has been running under the aegis of Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie, since 1995. It stands as a bastion for championing gender and child rights within the realm of policy and program formulation and government implementation. National Gender and Child Centre (NGCC) operates as a dynamic capacity-building and resource-building entity driven by a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming and advancing child rights.

Since its inception, the Centre has been an architect of change, dedicating itself to the design and execution of impactful thematic workshops, programs, and training initiatives. NGCC has been organizing the Training of Trainers, targeting educators and policymakers, elevating gender sensitization and fortifying capacities for nuanced gender analysis and strategic planning. Across the spectrum, the Centre has seamlessly woven gender training into the fabric of all courses at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), including induction training and in-service mid-career training programs for IAS officers at every echelon. Moreover, NGCC, LBSNAA, has designed and delivered multifaceted programs catering to All India and Central Services officers, thereby solidifying its legacy of propagating comprehensive and impactful change.

Recently, the Centre designed, developed and delivered a training programme on “Gender Responsive Governance” for Elected Women Representatives (MLAs)”, which has garnered widespread acclaim and appreciation, establishing a dynamic partnership with the National Commission for Women (NCW). Through these workshops, it was attempted to sensitize the women MLAs from 17 states and equip them with invaluable leadership insights for practical application in their respective spheres of influence. The remarkable success of this initiative underscores its profound impact and significance. Concurrently, the Centre developed and designed an online course titled "Child Rights with a Special Focus on the Juvenile Justice Act." This course is accessible through digital platforms such as "iGOT" as part of 'Mission Karmayogi,' to enhance civil servants' capacity and upgrade the post-recruitment training mechanism for officers and employees at all levels.

Advancing with unwavering zeal, the Centre actively engages in prestigious projects with national and international organizations, marking a testament to its commitment to excellence and global impact.

Our Partners



The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is one of the largest and most influential philanthropic organizations in the world. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has been actively engaged in promoting gender equality and empowering women around the world. Recognizing that gender inequality is a significant barrier to achieving sustainable development, the foundation has made it a priority to address gender disparities in various sectors. Their initiatives focus on expanding women's economic opportunities, improving access to healthcare and family planning, and supporting women's leadership and decision-making roles. The foundation invests in programs that aim to enhance women's education, empower female farmers, and advance gender-responsive policies and practices. By advocating for gender equity and supporting organizations working to uplift women and girls, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is committed to creating a more inclusive and equitable world.



UN-Women is the United Nations Organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN-Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN-Women supports United Nations Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN-Women also coordinates and promotes the United Nations system's work in advancing gender equality.

Journey of shaping the GUIDE ON GENDER-INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

At a global and societal level, a critical milestone has been achieved in not only recognizing the importance of gender mainstreaming in all spheres and forms but also making inroads towards it. In this journey towards a gender-sensitive and empowered society, one significant step is gender-inclusive communication. This **Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication** has been the culmination of a journey that started in 2022 with the intention and purpose of generating awareness around the necessity and criticality of gender-inclusive language and the fundamental concept of inclusion.

Language has been a potent force shaping culture and environments, pivotal in fostering diversity, equality, and respect. The genesis of the **Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication** is rooted in a visionary perspective of recognizing and amplifying the usage of language in the transformative journey of integrating and mainstreaming gender considerations at all levels of governance. This Guide has been an evolving document, enhanced by the contributions of subject matter experts across the judiciary, law enforcement services, lawyers, administrators and academicians, and learnings gathered from each phase of its developmental journey. In order to strengthen its correlation with everyday life and the pervasive biases and stereotypes we see around us, the Guide heavily draws on real-life and situational scenarios as examples to bring to light the indispensable need for gender-inclusive language across diverse governance levels for a more inclusive and empowered society.

AN IDEA IS BORN:

The seed was sown in 2022 with a vision to develop a resource for civil and public servants and equip them to engage with duty holders across all tiers of governance effectively. Spearheaded by the National Gender and Child Centre (NGCC), Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie, this initiative was undertaken first within the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration by incorporating sessions on Gender-Inclusive Communication into the flagship courses of the Academy. Following a resounding positive response, the idea of enhancing gender-inclusive communication and fostering an environment that values, empowers, and, most crucially, includes diverse perspectives was undertaken in collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and UN-Women.

MULTI-SECTORAL PERSPECTIVES ARE BUILT

In July 2023; a two-day workshop was conducted at LBSNAA, Mussoorie, with 52 participants, including duty holders from Judicial Academies, Police, Health Systems, Revenue, Railways, and other services across 24 states, speaking 12 languages. The workshop saw discussions centring around (i) the need for highlighting implicit bias in everyday language towards two genders, marginalizing non-binary and LGBTQIA+ community individuals, and (ii) reviewing the multiple underway initiatives at various



governance levels towards gender-inclusive communication. As a result of the two-day deliberations, a guide for all duty holders across all governance levels was identified as the ideal form in which this initiative was taken forward with an outline of the various multi-sectoral perspectives to be imbibed.

IDEATION

The second phase (August-September 2023) saw the formation of a **core group** of subject matter experts and representatives across different governmental organizations to collaboratively put together a detailed structure and format for the Guide. The core group review meetings saw the Guide taking shape with a focus on its quality, relevancy and effectiveness, which was enhanced through pictorial representations, everyday situational examples and bringing out the intricacies and nuances of the multiple layers related to gender-inclusive communication. The Guide continued to evolve as a ready reckoner for all duty holders across various levels and capacities in strengthening the culture of inclusion within their institutions and around them through examples and scenarios.

The feedback and insights obtained during the series of core group meetings with multiple stakeholders were instrumental in making the Guide comprehensive, relevant, user-friendly, and effective in promoting gender-inclusive communication within governmental organizations. The discussions and deliberations sought to encourage the perspective of self-reflection and self-correction at the highest echelons for leaders to set and lead by example and showcase the steps to be taken to make their organizations gender-just.

TAKING SHAPE

As the Guide developed, the focus also centred around discussions on broader stakeholder engagement and systematic integration of the Guide's use into routine communication and training at all governance levels across organizations. One critical stage in this phase was a detailed examination of the current nature of language utilized at different rungs of governance and the degree of percolation and usage of gender-inclusive language. Various Acts, ministerial websites and orders of government bodies were studied to identify and understand areas that fall short of embracing gender-inclusive language. It was unanimously discussed that by grasping the nuances of gender-inclusive language, individuals could spearhead its mainstream adoption within their respective departments since the ultimate objective is to cultivate a workplace that champions gender equity, ensuring that every individual, irrespective of gender, feels valued and included.

With the final core group meeting on 29th September 2023 with duty holders across police, lawyers, judiciary, and civil servants, it was established that the Guide should be nuanced to cater specifically to their unique roles and responsibilities and the examples be made more realistic and relatable to bring out the true sense. The members' collective wisdom was evident as they proffered a plethora of insightful suggestions and illustrative examples, laying a robust foundation upon which the narrative could be sculpted.

FINALIZATION

October 2023, saw a series of reviews, suggestions and reiterations that we now see in the present Guide. The dedication of the core group members, combined with their impeccable insights, contributed immeasurably to the polishing and augmentation of the document's content and quality, ensuring an enriched document. This culmination, however, marked not an endpoint but a beginning, as the draft was presented at the Validation Workshop on October 16 and 17, 2023.

This two-day workshop was organized to finalize the draft guide and saw active responses from distinguished participants, including civil servants, academics, media experts, transgender advocates, trans-man individuals, and other key contributors. To ensure a comprehensive review of the draft guide, the experts were thoughtfully divided into four separate groups and each group engaged in a meticulous examination and in-depth analysis of the draft, leading to extensive discussions and constructive critiques, all with the overarching objective of refining the content.

The commitment demonstrated by the assembled experts was genuinely remarkable. Their dedication culminated in the finalization of the document, marking a significant achievement that represented the culmination of a thorough examination and refinement.

THE WAY FORWARD

The **Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication** is not just a document but a step in the transformative journey towards an inclusive and just space that shapes how we communicate, perceive, and coexist. It recognizes language as a fundamental force and tool for positive cultural change. The Guide strives to cultivate an environment where diverse perspectives are recognized, valued, and empowered; by highlighting and acknowledging these biases, the Guide serves as a catalyst for change.

The successful implementation of the Guide relies on a multi-faceted approach. The next step centres around the widespread dissemination and awareness generation of the Guide through (i) the Development of Training Modules and imparting training through various platforms and forums on the significance and role of gender-inclusive language and (ii) Widespread dissemination and awareness generation of the Guide through partnerships with educational institutions, NGOs, and advocacy groups that can help facilitate and support in spreading the message. We hope that as a reader, you will not only find the Guide useful and relevant but will leverage it as a ready reckoner to be a catalyst for change!



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CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS GENDER-INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION?

This chapter of the Guide deep dives into the concept of gender, the key elements that shape our understanding of it and what makes it distinct from sex and sexual orientation. It also breaks down Gender-Inclusive Communication into its constituents and elaborates on the core values and basic principles associated with it.

Language is fundamental to human interaction. It provides a shared canvas for people from diverse and distant parts of the world to share information and exchange ideas. Language also wields immense power in shaping our thoughts and actions, its potency lying in its ability to mould perceptions and influence attitudes.

Through language, people communicate with one another and build relationships. As we constantly evolve in this changing world, language becomes pivotal in embracing progress and fostering inclusivity, the two crucial pillars for societal advancement. Despite the shared commitment of individuals, society and organizations, the journey towards the coveted goal of an equitable future remains elusive. There are multiple challenges in building an equitable and inclusive society, one of which is non-inclusive communication.

Communication within a society is often influenced by its culture and values, which are a product of the collective beliefs and social conditioning of individuals that constitute the society. However, it is important to critically examine the subconsciously ingrained beliefs that colour the language we use in order to cleanse communication of unquestioned biases, such as those relating to gender.

For government action to fully embody constitutional values of equality and equal opportunity, it is imperative for all, especially officials, to recognise the profound impact their words can have on gender equality. Designed as an aid for this purpose, the Guide serves as a tool kit for gender-inclusive communication.

Gender-inclusive communication is about breaking the barriers of gender stereotypes, cultivating respect, celebrating diversity, while promoting equality and equity amongst all.

Understanding “Gender”

Before we go into the Gender-inclusive communication it is important to first understand Gender. In the common understanding of **gender** the concept is often confused with biological sex, however, it is distinct from it. Sex refers to the anatomical differences in the human body, starting from the differences in genitalia (primary sex characteristics) from infancy to other differences such as facial hair, pubic hair, change of voice, menstruation and development of breasts that appear with the onset of puberty (secondary sex characteristics).

Gender refers to the social and cultural roles, behaviours, expectations and identities associated with

being male, female, a blend of both or neither. It is a complex concept that varies over time and across cultures. It includes a spectrum of identities beyond simply "male" and "female", such as transgender, non-binary, and genderqueer.

Gender plays a significant role in shaping an individual's experiences and, to a great degree, also determines how they are perceived and treated in society. Gender comes with a set of expectations, like how one acts, talks, dresses and interacts with other people, which forms the basis of gender stereotypes that dictate how one must behave in

Gender: It refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, and relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures.¹³

a gender-appropriate manner in society. These expectations can feel restricting for some people, such that they are unable to truly express their felt gender identity, which may not align with their assigned gender identity at birth.

Sex: It refers to the biological characteristics that define humans as female or male.¹¹

Gender Bias: Making decisions based on gender stereotypes causes results favouring one gender over others, leading to outcomes that favour men and/or boys over others.¹²

Further, gender is also sometimes mistaken as sexual orientation. Sexual orientation denotes a person's romantic interests and preferences for sexual relations with others. For instance, one may be sexually attracted to the same sex (homosexuality), to the other sex (heterosexuality) to both (bisexuality) or even to none

(asexuality). However, it must be emphasized that human sexuality is incredibly complex and these examples are, therefore, merely illustrative and not exhaustive.

Appreciating "Inclusivity"

Inclusivity refers to an approach of embracing and valuing diversity by creating an environment where all individuals, regardless of their background, beliefs and identity, are equally included.

Gender inclusivity is about fostering an environment where one acknowledges, respects, appreciates and promotes gender-conscious perspectives while embracing the diverse nature of the gender spectrum.

Gender Identity: It refers to the internal perception of one's gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans, and more.¹⁴*

Decoding "Communication"

Communication is a mode of exchanging ideas through verbal and non-verbal means. While verbal communication may be in oral or written form, non-verbal communication may be through body language, touch, gesture, facial expression and gaze.

Often communication may also be perceived in gendered terms. For instance, men are believed to be more direct, concise and to-the-point, whereas women are thought to be more indirect, over-elaborate and emotional in their expression.

Official communication needs to transcend such gender biases and adopt a way of communicating that recognizes and respects the diversity of human experiences and the enriching abundance of perspectives resulting therefrom.

Core Values of Gender-Inclusive Communication

The following constitute the core values of Gender-Inclusive Communication that ensure the language we use is accommodative of each and every person, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.

- **Acceptance** - Rejection by family, teachers, friends, employers and the community at large, prompted by negative beliefs and prejudiced assumptions, may have a lasting impact on one's overall well-being and sense of self. Such discriminatory treatment may lead to ostracization as well as alienation, social withdrawal, depression, a sense of helplessness and feelings of unworthiness within the individual concerned. At the societal level, such discrimination causes disharmony and conflict. Acceptance lies at the heart of understanding violence, discrimination and the multitude of negative consequences arising from exclusion and unfair treatment. An attitude of acceptance is the much-needed balm that soothes differences and forges an environment of fraternity (Flores, 2019).

Gender Stereotypes: A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men.¹⁶

socio-cultural context and life experiences that would have shaped their persona. Taking such a comprehensive view of an individual's background, helps one to appreciate their unique gender identity as an outcome of a complex interplay of social, cultural, economic and political influences. Such a sensitized understanding of the intricate and varied nature of gender identity promotes a sense of inclusivity and compassion. It also fosters justice in society by encouraging a questioning attitude

towards accepted notions of gender.

- **Respect** - A lack of respect can appear in many forms, such as condescension ("better half"), trivialization ("little lady"), marginalization ("madam sir/lady officer") and erasure ("officers and men"). It may even lead to discrimination, harassment and a lack of equal opportunity. Such disrespectful behaviour can make a person feel devalued and may even lead them to question their self-worth. It further creates communication silos and obstructs effective collaboration. As against this, a respectful environment welcomes diversity, appreciates varied perspectives and values inclusivity. Respect starts with recognizing individual differences and taking into consideration a multiplicity of viewpoints.
- **Equality** - Gender equality means that all genders enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. Besides being a fundamental human right, it is also essential to achieve social harmony. Equality is also the prerequisite for ensuring the optimization of human potential. However, it does not require all genders to be same or to be treated alike. But rather, providing

Patriarchy: Social system in which men hold the greatest power, leadership roles, privilege, moral authority and access to resources and land, including in the family. Most modern societies are patriarchies.¹⁵

Gender Blindness: The failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of men/boys and women/girls are given to them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts and backgrounds. Projects, programmes, policies and attitudes which are gender blind do not take into account these different roles and diverse needs, maintain status quo, and will not help transform the unequal structure of gender relations.¹⁷

avenues for each individual to enjoy the fundamental freedom to pursue authentic self-expression. (<https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Genderglossarytermsandconcepts.pdf>.)¹⁸

- **Sensitivity** - Gender sensitivity is the process by which people are made aware of how, and to what extent, gendered treatment impacts persons of different gender identities. Being gender sensitive requires one to be mindful of the unique circumstances, perspectives and life experiences of each person one comes across and for our interpersonal interaction to be informed by such an understanding. Sensitive behaviour implies refraining from discriminating against others on the basis of sex or gender and treating everyone with equal respect.
- **Diversity** - Gender diversity involves acknowledging and respecting the fact that there are multiple ways of identification that lie outside of the binary of male and female. This divergence from the norm is not an attempt at attention seeking or desiring special treatment but is rather about being one's authentic self. One needs to respect gender diverse individuals and the choices they make about their lives in the face of incalculable prejudice and hate. And beyond that, we need to give them their rightful space in society to represent their particular viewpoint in a safe, inclusive environment. Such a co-mingling of perspectives can spark creativity and innovation, opening up new possibilities for social development.
- **Difference** - The concept of difference refers to the recognition of variations, distinctions and disparities related to gender roles, identities and experiences. It involves an acceptance of the fact that individuals and groups are not homogenous in terms of their gender-related characteristics, experiences and challenges. "Difference" acknowledges that gender is not a fixed or universally uniform concept and that it interacts with other factors such as race, class, sexuality and culture to create diverse and complex experiences for different individuals and communities. Examining how these differences are constructed, experienced and represented can help to challenge and deconstruct traditional binary and hierarchical understandings of gender.

*Gender Expression: The external display of one's gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as gender presentation.*¹⁹

*Gender-Inclusive Language: It is a form of communication that aims to avoid bias towards a particular gender and includes all genders in an equitable manner. It acknowledges and respects the diverse spectrum of gender identities beyond the traditional binary of male and female.*¹⁰

Basic Principles of Gender-Inclusive Communication

Flowing from the core values are the following basic principles that are the hallmarks of gender-inclusive communication, which can help us adopt a gender-inclusive perspective in our official and social interactions:

- **Contextual:** A sound, contextualized understanding of any situation in its particular context is central to gender-inclusive communication. The depth of understanding of thoughts and concepts, the usage of syntax and meanings and the implied connotations need to be contextual and should convey the message holistically. American Philosopher Donald Davidson said that "a sentence (and therefore a word) has meaning only in the context of a (whole) language".

- **Accommodating** : By emphasizing on consideration for an individual's self-respect, self-worth, integrity and empowerment, and with an approach to include all genders rather than marginalize individuals, this principle promotes equality, enables the implementation of positive rights and prevents discrimination based on gender and other ascriptive identity such as caste, class, religion and region. Accommodation requires respect for an individual's dignity and individuality.
- **Broad-Based**: Having a wider perspective and comprehensive understanding are key to effective and equitable communication. Gender-inclusive communication must be comprehensive, well-planned and self-reinforcing across the core values to make it wide-ranging and inclusive.
- **Clarity**: Clear communication helps to avoid any confusion and misunderstanding. Being clear, direct and mindful in both verbal and non-verbal communication makes the intent clear and helps to overcome stereotypes, especially in hierarchical and patriarchal organisational cultures.
- **Trust**: Trust as a key principle of communication means being honest and transparent and building mutual respect and confidence. Trust is the foundational principle for all relationships and enables harmonious interaction amongst all stakeholders.
- **Responsibility**: Communication becomes easier and more meaningful when each individual takes ownership of what and how they are communicating. Responsible communication is dependent on all stakeholders. The understanding that an individual is responsible and accountable for the nature of communication can help reshape one's approach towards communication and also refine it to make the communication non-offensive, non-derogatory and more gender-inclusive.

Gender-Sensitive Language: Realization of gender equality in written and spoken language attained when women and men and those who do not conform to the binary gender system are made visible and addressed in language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity and respect. It is avoiding sex- and gender-based discrimination starts with language, as the systematic use of gender-biased terminology influences attitudes and expectations and could, in the mind of the reader or listener, relegate women to the background or help perpetuate a stereotyped view of women's and men's roles. There are number of different strategies that can be used to express gender relationships with accuracy, such as avoiding, to the greatest possible extent, the use of language that refers explicitly or implicitly to only one gender, and ensuring, through inclusionary alternatives and according to each language's characteristics, the use of gender-sensitive and inclusive language.¹¹¹

CHAPTER 2

WHY IS GENDER-INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION IMPORTANT?

This chapter delves into the importance of gender-inclusive communication in everyday language. Through various situation-based examples, this section highlights the multi-faceted nuances associated with our day-to-day use of language and illustrates the ways in which gender-inclusive language may be leveraged to challenge biases and stereotypes.

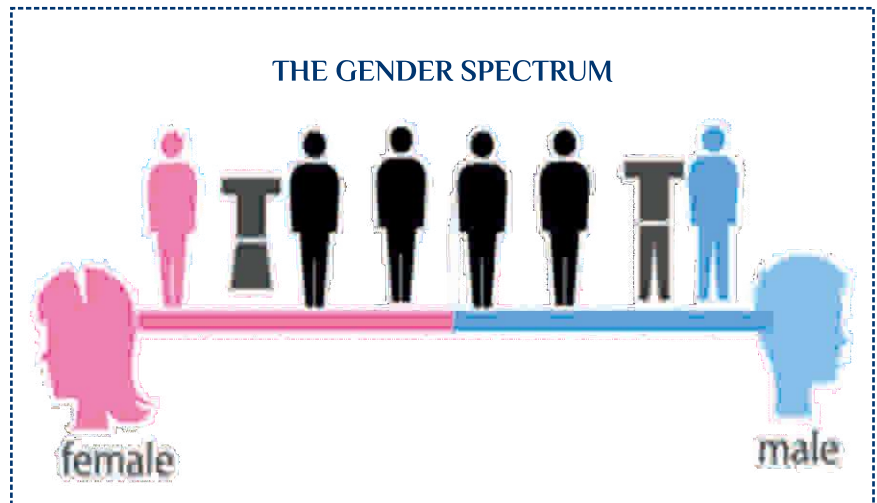
Have you ever been in a conversation where you felt uncomfortable or excluded by the choice of words used? During day-to-day communication in the professional realm and in the personal sphere, we often inadvertently use discriminatory terms to express our thoughts. On the surface, this may appear to be harmless, however, by subtly enforcing gender non-inclusive narratives, gender-biased communication can create a narrative that perpetuates exclusion. And the impact extends beyond semantics; it percolates down to how an individual is perceived by others and how they perceive themselves. Language shapes aspirations, sometimes to the extent of limiting potential, thereby perpetuating a cycle of inter-generational inequity. Conversely, it also serves as a formidable tool that, when wielded consciously, has the potential to undo entrenched stereotypes regarding gender, caste, class and community. Therefore, there is a need to consciously adopt language that is inclusive, participatory and empowering, which reflects natural gender diversity and combats prevailing stereotypes.

Discriminatory language may appear in both formal and informal interactions, through verbal or non-verbal communication, conveying meanings and assumptions that may alienate all but the dominant gender. It is, therefore, important to be mindful of the way one communicates and to make a conscious effort to identify, examine and question these language patterns in order to ensure that we do not unwittingly perpetuate prevalent gender biases, as even today, our language bears marks of historical biases. Common words like “manpower” or “chairman”, for instance, marginalize diverse experiences and contributions of all but the male gender. Such language reaffirms and fortifies gender hierarchies. It is critical to understand that the words we choose may either reinforce existing stereotypes or challenge them. In this direction, the very first step is to acknowledge that gender is not binary but a spectrum encompassing a rich tapestry of identities. This constitutes the foundational principle necessary to create a culture of parity.

In this context, this Guide attempts to give a breakdown of gendered use of language and serve as a primer for gender-inclusive communication as it requires a deliberate effort to become conscious of received biases and correct ourselves to bring about the desired social change to create a gender-just society.

Such language reaffirms and maintains gender hierarchies. Often, linguistic choices, even seemingly innocuous ones, act as silent architects of stereotypes, confining individuals within predetermined societal roles and reinforcing traditional gender norms.

Communication is not just a means of expression but a powerful instrument that either dismantles or fortifies existing gender norms. By subtly enforcing gender non-inclusive narratives, gender-biased communication can create a narrative that leads to exclusion. The impact extends beyond semantic; it percolates down to how an individual perceives themselves and is perceived by others. It also shapes aspirations, sometimes to the extent of limiting



Source : <https://shameproofparenting.com/guest-post-understanding-the-gender-spectrum.>²¹

“Transgender Person” means “a person whose gender does not match with the gender assigned to that person at birth and includes trans-man or trans-woman (whether or not such person has undergone a gender affirmative surgery or hormone therapy or laser therapy or such other medical procedures), person with intersex variations, genderqueer and person having such socio-cultural identities as kinner, hijra, aravani and jogta”. (As defined in Section 2(k) of the The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.²²

potential, thereby perpetuating a cycle of inter-generational inequity. Conversely, it also serves as a formidable tool that, when wielded consciously, has the potential to dismantle stereotypes entrenched in gender, caste, class, and community. Acknowledging that gender is not binary, but a spectrum encompassing a rich tapestry of identities is the foundational principle necessary to create a culture of parity.

However, it is stated that this guide is designed primarily to include the experiences of women; though wherever possible an attempt has been made to address the concern of other genders also.

This Guide employs a multi-pronged approach to help readers adopt gender-inclusive communication:

- Identifying communication (verbal and non-verbal) that perpetuates gender stereotypes and then providing alternatives
- Capturing subtle biases and stereotypes in language through pictorial representation, and suggesting adaptations in different situations
- Examining language used in official communication and emphasizing the need to make it gender-inclusive
- Suggesting practical ways to engage with gender-diverse individuals using communication that is inclusive and respectful

This Guide is a modest step towards encouraging individuals to lead by example and contribute towards creating a space where every voice, regardless of gender, is valued and heard. It reminds us that when used with care and consideration, language possesses the transformative power to unite, inspire, and redefine cultural narratives.

Key Objectives

The primary intent of this Guide is to create awareness and provide practical guidance for readers to adopt gender-inclusive communication. It aspires to shape professional and social environments characterized by gender equity, inclusivity and respect. In striving towards these goals, the Guide sets forth the following key objectives:

- **Upholding the Constitutional Vision** - Article 14 of the Indian Constitution mandates 'Equality before the law' and 'Equal protection of the law' to all individuals. By aligning with existing legal frameworks related to gender equity and non-discrimination, this Guide aims to ensure that governance practices comply with the vision of the Indian Constitution. This objective reinforces the constitutional commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all individuals.
- **Eliminating Gender Bias in Communication and Fostering Inclusivity** - One of the primary objectives of this Guide is to eradicate gender bias from official communication, policies, and practices within the public sector and other workplaces. By promoting gender-inclusive and gender-neutral language, this Guide aims to foster an environment where individuals of all genders feel acknowledged, respected and included.
- **Reforming Professional Practices** - This Guide aims to encourage officials to adopt communication that fosters a gender-inclusive environment, such as using forms of address that respect gender diverse identities. Using gender-inclusive pronouns and avoiding language that perpetuates stereotypes. Through these practices, we can create just and welcoming spaces for everyone.
- **Promoting Cultural Sensitivity** - Socio-cultural conditioning plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of gender. This Guide seeks to foster socio-cultural sensitivity by providing guidelines that acknowledge and respect diverse cultural approaches to gender.
- **Reducing Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination** - Gender stereotypes perpetuated through language may contribute to gender-based violence. This Guide questions and challenges gender stereotypes in language, thus paving the way towards a safe and secure environment for all.
- **Creating Training Material**- This Guide serves as an aid for inclusion of gender-inclusive communication in curriculum development for gender-sensitisation training in all sectors.
- **Facilitating Data Collection and Analysis** - This Guide is crucial in standardizing gender-inclusive terminology for data collection and reporting. This objective ensures that all sectors can collect accurate and comprehensive data on gender-related issues, facilitating evidence-based decision-making and policy evaluation.

Understanding Gender-Inclusive Communication using Situational Examples

Language forms the basis of our communication with those around us on a daily basis. When observed closely, biases and prejudices are heavily laden in everyday communication, reinforcing gender stereotypes and patriarchal notions. In this Guide, common examples have been highlighted in the form of situations to bringout the multi-layered nuances of gender-inclusive communication and why it is essential in our day-to-day language.

SCENARIO: HOUSEHOLD

Arjun, Atish and Shareefa, aged 12, were classmates and neighbours. On a school holiday, Arjun and Atish went to Shareefa's home to call her out to play. Shareefa's uncle, who was visiting them, opened the door at the house and remarked in surprise, "Hello! You boys have come to play with Shareefa? Don't you have other boys to play with?" When the children looked at him puzzled, Shareefa's mother intervened, "Uncle, they've been friends with Shareefa since childhood. Why are you stopping them?" To this, the uncle retorted, "I was only saying that it's not normal. Either something is wrong with Shareefa or something is wrong with these boys," gesturing to one of the boys to imply he was homosexual.

Shareefa's mother firmly rebuked him, saying, "I can't believe what you're saying! How can an educated person talk like this about children? I don't agree with such stereotypical notions at all and I will not have my daughter grow up with these regressive ideas." Hearing the commotion, Shareefa's grandfather walked in, and told Shareefa and her friends, "Always do what makes you feel comfortable. There are no rules for making friends or deciding what you want to be. Don't ever let any preconceived notions of society stop you from living your life." Hearing this, all three children ran out shouting at the top of their voices with the elders laughing, covering their ears.

Even casual comments made at home can leave a lasting impact on the impressionable minds of young children, reiterating and perpetuating gender biases.

SCENARIO: SCHOOL

Aditi, Sonu, Danish and Sandhya - all five-year-olds - were playing on a jungle gym in their school playground, when all of a sudden Sonu came tumbling down to the ground, hitting his head on the concrete base of the swing. He immediately started bawling and crying loudly, his chest heaving and arms flailing wildly, calling for help. Hearing the commotion, his kindergarten teacher Nandini came running to his aid. She lifted him up and dusted his clothes and, with great concern, consoled him, saying, "Sonu, are you not a big boy? You should not be crying like this. Boys don't cry. Be a brave boy now." By this time, the music teacher Kartik arrived at the scene and, overhearing Nandini counselling the little boy, intervened saying, "Nandini, I think we should let the boy cry if he is feeling pain. Crying will not make him any less brave or any less of a boy. These are natural emotions and, in fact, suppressing these emotions is what is unnatural."

Statements like "boys don't cry" reinforce toxic notions of masculinity typical of patriarchy that suppress the expression of natural emotions like sadness by men and legitimize only the expression of negative emotions such as anger, fuelling gender-based violence.

SCENARIO: WORKPLACE

Sachin, an employee at a software company, was taking a stroll in his garden in the morning with his wife Megha, a homemaker, when their daughter Sumedha came running to them, asking in an excited voice, "Papa, can you please take me to the park?" Sachin replied sternly, "Sumedha, why don't you ask Mamma. She is free and can take you to the park. Papa has to go get ready for office." Megha chided him on his remark, saying, "Sachin, that's such a sexist thing to say!" Sachin did not respond to this and walked ahead silently, making amply clear that he did not appreciate the comment.

When he reached office, he got to know that the company was planning to hold a training workshop in Pune for two days. At this, one of the senior colleagues commented, "That's great, some relief from biwi-bachche (wife-kids) for two whole days!" In response, the largely male gathering in the office broke out into laughter. Immediately, Shruti, the company's accountant, stood up to say, "Sir that is really not

appreciated. Please don't make such comments about women." The senior, then, went on the defensive and quipped, "Arrey! What did I say? Why do you people have to overreact to every little thing!" Sachin enthusiastically chimed in, "I fully agree. In the name of feminism, women start commenting on anything and everything." Fouzia, another colleague present in the room, pointedly intervened, "Sir, with all due respect, Shruti is not overreacting. We have normalised gender stereotypes to the point that we don't even see anything wrong with it. How would you feel if your wife spoke about you this way? Not so funny anymore, is it?"

Even silly jokes and side remarks made in office can make a colleague feel slighted and demeaned. There is a need to be self-reflective and mindful of our utterances in the workplace to ensure a comfortable work environment for all employees, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.

SCENARIO : OFFICIAL DOCUMENT

Sudha, previously named Sandeep is a twenty-two-year-old engineer with aspirations to found a start-up. She visited the office of the IT Department to seek a government grant. The clerk at the reception hands out an application form for financial assistance. With great excitement, settling down at a table to fill it in, Sudha was struck by the very first point in the form, which asked the applicant to check the applicable box - Mr. / Ms / Mrs. Sudha is a trans woman and is even considering undergoing gender-affirming surgery. She wondered whether checking the "MS" box would be considered a misrepresentation of facts if the funding was approved before the surgery. She was apprehensive that this might be seen as an attempt the rebate on the interest rate offered to women on false representation. She became anxious, thinking that the government may even prosecute her for fraudulently obtaining official funds on false claims. Having second thoughts, she left the blank form at the table and quietly walked out of the office unseen.

Official documents must be drafted in line with the constitutional mandates of equality and equal opportunity as well as the broad-based values of respect and inclusion of individuals of all genders.

SCENARIO : MEDIA

Baburam Gaekwad, a well-regarded Zilla Panchayat member, was relaxing early morning in his veranda, eagerly thumbing through the local daily paper to see if there was any report on the block-level meeting of his party held yesterday. He was pleased to find a long write-up on page four mentioning his speech during the programme and proudly started reading out the text to his eight-year-old daughter Aakriti. The young one was all ears, proud of her father's achievements. Baburam read out loud, "Block Secretary Shri Baburam Gaekwad made a strong pitch for employment for the local youth, speaking like a true son of the soil." Aakriti knitted her brows in confusion and innocently asked her father, "Baba, if you are son of the soil, what does that make me?" Baburam suddenly realized how he had made a mistake. He smiled and replied, "Aakriti, we are all children of the soil."

Media, both print and visual, has an immense impact on people's understanding of gender. Therefore, there must be a very conscious representation of gender within media to ensure this force is used for the good of achieving a gender-equitable world.

Pictorial Illustrations

We acknowledge that gender stereotypes play a significant role in shaping our communication patterns and behaviours from childhood into adulthood. These stereotypes, rooted in societal attitudes and perceptions, influence how individuals are socialized into distinct gender cultures. These are not theoretical but have real-life consequences. They affect how individuals interact with others in various contexts, including personal relationships, workplaces, and society at large. Gendered communication can impact career opportunities, relationships, and overall well-being.

The illustrations given below provide insights into our daily communication and emphasize the importance of recognizing them to foster inclusivity, enabling everyone to actively participate in society and contribute to the nation's development. While some may view these scenarios as neutral based on their background, for others, they can have adverse effects, placing them in an unacceptable position.

These scenarios are developed based on the real life experiences and observations of the expert group, aiming to provide situation-based examples that highlight instances and suggest alternatives for gender-inclusive communication. While this list is not exhaustive, it serves as a tool for understanding the underlying causes and encourages us to exercise caution when addressing these issues.

By recognizing and understanding these influences, individuals and societies can work towards more inclusive and equitable communication, fostering better understanding and collaboration between genders.

To bring out the stark prejudices and stereotypes existing around us, the following case scenarios have been developed. These situations trace the lives of four friends, **Dhruv, Aisha, Arjun and Drishti**, as they navigate gendered stereotypes and biases during different stages of their life. These examples, demonstrate how one can identify biases effectively, create inclusive atmospheres, break stereotypes and create supportive systems to bring out their unique identities.

CASE - 1

INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

The birth of a child in a household is ideally a moment of celebration, but sometimes it is met with gender laced stereotypes.

This case study looks at two families belonging to upper-middle class - The Sharmas and Mehras. Both these families run successful businesses in Delhi, they are neighbours, close friends and are also about to welcome grandchildren!

The Sharma family already has a 3-year-old granddaughter, **Rashi**, while the Mehras expect their first twin grandchildren. Diwali is approaching, adding to the excitement. However, when the Sharmas





welcome their second granddaughter, **Drishti**, Mrs. Sharma offers traditional and gender-biased advice to her son, suggesting that they should perform a special prayer next time to ensure the birth of a boy in the family and indicating that a third child is now a necessity. The mother of the new-born girl, **Drishti**, however, challenges these gender stereotypes, emphasizing that there should be no distinction between boys and girls and that the family should instead pray for the good health of both grandchildren, also, in a way, politely declaring her decision of not considering the third child.

On the other hand, the Mehra family is elated when they learn about the birth of twin granddaughters – **Pallavi & Aisha**. This celebration surprises their neighbours, to which the eldest member of the Mehra family remarks, “what is essential is that the children are healthy and that the focus should be on raising children with good values” as opposed to their gender.

This case highlights the contrasting views on gender stereotypes and the significance of challenging traditional expectations regarding the gender of a child. It emphasizes the importance of fostering a more equal and inclusive society where children are valued for their potential and character rather than their gender.

CASE - 2

SOCIETAL GENDER NORMS

One of the twin girls born into the Mehra family, **Aisha**, around 12 years old, prefers wearing shirts and pants, keeping her hair short, and not conforming to traditional clothing expectations for girls. However, this choice leads to teasing from her classmates, who use derogatory terms like “Tom-boy” and “ladka” (boy) to mock her. She experiences significant stress because she does not feel comfortable conforming to the traditional expectations of her gender.

Feeling trapped in a girl's body, she confides in her sister, sharing her feelings of discomfort and a desire to have been born as a boy. Her sister plays a supportive and empowering role, giving her the strength to follow her heart and encouraging her to ignore what others say.

This scenario highlights the challenges and emotional turmoil that individuals who do not conform to societal gender norms may face, particularly during adolescence, when peer pressure and teasing can be exceedingly hurtful. It also emphasizes the importance of understanding, acceptance, and support from loved ones in helping individuals express their true selves and navigate their gender identity with confidence and resilience.

CASE - 3

SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS

The friends are now in class 9, and as part of their class exercise, they are asked to share their career goals with the class. Aisha expresses her ambition to become a mechanical engineer. Meanwhile, another classmate shares her dream of becoming a fighter pilot, which is met with praise from the teacher for aspiring to achieve challenging careers. However, when Arjun, reveals his aspiration to become a Classical Dancer, the class responds with laughter and a hurtful comment from a fellow student, "*Wo ladkiyon ka kaam hai, tum kya ladki ho jo Classical Dance Karoge?*" (Classical Dance is meant for girls to follow; are you a girl?)



Dhruv, part of their friend circle, offers Arjun encouraging words. He advises Arjun not to pay heed to the hurtful comments and to stay focused on achieving his dream of becoming a classical dancer. Dhruv tries to make him laugh and mentions in a light-hearted manner that when Arjun wins a Sangeet Natak Akademi Award one day, he should not invite those who mocked him.

The case highlights the challenges and stereotypes that individuals may face when pursuing non-conventional career paths. This is especially true when someone wants to pursue a career which has been gendered by society. It also underscores the importance of supporting one another in pursuing their dreams and ambitions, irrespective of societal expectations and prejudices.

CASE - 4

GENDER EXPRESSION

Dhruv, a 15-year-old, is exploring his personal interests and identity. He becomes fascinated with lipsticks and perfumes, and one day, while in isolation, he tries on red lipstick. However, just as he is admiring his reflection, a knock on the door interrupts him, and Arjun, his friend calls him to join a cricket game.

Conforming to societal expectations, Dhruv hurriedly wipes off the lipstick and goes to play. Unfortunately, he faces teasing and ridicule from his peers who make derogatory comments like she-man, nachaniya suggesting he's not conforming to traditional gender norms. This experience leaves Dhruv in tears, and he runs back to his room.

Arjun, who is a supportive friend, follows Dhruv to the room and inquires about what happened. After some coaxing, Dhruv opens up to Arjun;

Dhruv says - "Can I tell you something?"

Arjun: "Anything"

Dhruv: "I'm not like you. In fact, I'm not like the other boys"

Arjun: "So? Big deal? Chill. You are my friend. That's all that matters."

Dhruv: "Please don't tell anyone. If my father finds out, he will kill me for sure"

Arjun: "Rest assured, your secret is safe with me. Just know that when you do decide to tell, I am with you. You should not be

afraid to express yourself, there is nothing to be ashamed of for expressing what we are."



This scenario highlights the challenges that individuals may face when they don't conform to traditional gender norms and the importance of having understanding and supportive friends like Arjun. It also emphasizes the significance of being true to oneself and not being ashamed of expressing one's true identity and interests. Arjun's response serves as a valuable example of the importance of acceptance and friendship in these situations.

CASE - 5

GENDER INEQUALITY

As time goes by, Aisha goes on to pursuing her graduation in engineering. In college, Aisha joins the women's cricket team and becomes a standout member of the team, renowned for her remarkable batting and fielding skills. In the lead-up to an inter-college match, the team's Captain approaches the College Sports Teacher, seeking new gloves as the existing ones had worn out. However, to their dismay, the teacher hesitates, suggesting they should have the gloves repaired through stitching rather than approving new kits, unlike what the college does for the men's team.

Aisha, who had gone along with the Captain, asks the reason for this evident partiality, to which the teacher replies, 'The sports department allocates less money for women's cricket than men's cricket as they feel it doesn't yield outcomes in terms of popularity



and increasing the reputation of the college! Both the Captain and Aisha feel disappointed and remind the teacher that the women's cricket team won more tournaments than the men's Team in the past two years, and such partiality in allocating resources in college is not something they should be accepting. The teacher feels guilty and assures them he will ask the department for more funds.

This case scenario brings to light the biased allocation of resources that extends to several other spheres. Hence, it becomes imperative to emphasize the fair and reasonable distribution of resources for the betterment of all individuals, transcending gender-based biases and ensuring that merit, rather than gender, should serve as the guiding principle for resource allocation.

CASE - 6

BREAKING STEREOTYPES

Dhruv is also pursuing graduation from a well-known university. He travels to his college every day by bus. One day, while on the bus, he notices the collective gaze of the passengers, all directed towards the conductor, and a low hum of whispers fills the air. Curiosity piqued, Dhruv turns his attention toward the conductor's seat, and his interest meets with a heartening sight – a woman conductor confidently performing her duties. The sight fills him with a great sense of pride, a testament to the progressive strides being made in society. When it is his turn to take the ticket, an old man beside him blurts out, 'Is your family comfortable with you being a conductor and travelling like this every day?'. The conductor replies as to why her family will have any issues. And in what manner the comfort of her family is linked to her performing the job as a conductor. She reminds him that her comfort is more relevant in this case and that she feels very comfortable. The old man then smiles, looking at her confidence.



Dhruv feels inspired by this exchange, realizing the importance of being comfortable and confident about the choices one makes in life.

This scenario sheds light on the societal pressures that stems from deeply ingrained stereotypes and biases, which affect each of us at various points in our lives. It emphasizes the role that we can play as champions of change, particularly when we witness stereotypes and gender biases being perpetuated. The initial step in bringing about meaningful change is the recognition of these stereotypes, followed by a concerted effort to dispel the myths that fuel them. Additionally, it is vital to celebrate the milestones of progress and commend individuals who take the first courageous step in challenging the status quo and carving a distinct space for themselves in the face of adversity.

CASE - 7

GENDER BASED BIASES

Drishti enrolled in Political Science at the same university as Arjun. She is the younger daughter and will be the first graduate in the family.

The college is organizing an educational trip to a nearby gram panchayat for two days. Like every other student, Drishti too is excited to go along with her friends on this trip. Since parents' permission is needed in writing, Drishti asks her

parents for the same, to which her parents reply that she is not allowed to go on trips where she has to stay outside her home. Drishti dejectedly asks them why, as all the other students are going, and she shares that such trips are vital for her to understand the topics better. To this, her parents reply in a conventional manner that girls are not allowed to stay outside the home as it's unsafe for them. Drishti is dejected and tries to reason with her parents. She says, in which case, she should not be allowed to attend college too as travelling alone to college also can be



unsafe, and if parents start restricting the mobility of girls, it would be unjust to girls and their dreams. She, then, lovingly requests them to support her and that they should be rest assured as she will take care of herself. She adds that, "it is the society which needs to change and not the women."

This case scenario shows how age-old mind sets and practices are perpetuated, though often out of concern, which stop women from enjoying their liberty to make decisions and experiencing the usual joys. Instead of society changing their mind sets, undue restrictions are placed on women and girls to protect them from harm. The collective responsibility should be to create a safe and inclusive environment where women can move freely without fear instead of imposing restrictions that limit their experiences.

CASE - 8

INCLUSIVE ATMOSPHERE

It is time for campus placements, and students are filling out job applications. Dhruv was found staring at his form for a while now. Arjun noticed it too. He then asks Dhruv what was troubling him, to which Dhruv replies, 'I am confused about selecting my gender. Should I put Male or Others?'

Arjun calmly asks Dhruv, 'What is stopping you from selecting the right identity?' Dhruv expresses his concern about being labelled and mocked in his first job.

Arjun places a supporting hand on Dhruv's shoulder and says, 'This is not the Dhruv I know. You cannot keep living for others or fear others' judgement; just be yourself and express it to the world.' Empowered by Arjun's encouragement and the safety of their friendship, Dhruv boldly marks 'Other' as his gender on the form. This seemingly ordinary act sows the seed of an enduring friendship, where Dhruv is felt, seen and heard profoundly.



This case highlights the necessity and importance of being an ally, in the larger sense, of supporting and creating an inclusive atmosphere for all those around to be themselves and openly express their thoughts without fear of judgment or bias. Arjun's unconditional support emboldens Dhruv to take a monumental step in declaring the true identity, a significant moment in journey towards embracing authenticity.

CASE - 9

GENDER ROLES

Drishti is in her final semester of college and decides to visit her elder sister, Rashi, who is now married. She visits Rashi's home since they both wanted to talk about things on their mind. While Rashi wanted to discuss her plans to adopt a child, Drishti wanted to discuss her plans to pursue a Masters and eventually a Phd. in Political Science.

During their conversation, Drishti overhears hurtful remarks from Rashi's mother-in-law, who is criticizing Rashi for not being able to conceive even after three years of marriage. She says, "Ek dum apshagun hai, jabse ghar mein aayi hai, kuch kaam hi nahi ban rahe hamare. Upar se humein abhi tak humara vansh aage badhane ke liye beta bhi nahi diya hai." (She is unlucky for the family and has been unable to give an heir to the family.)

Rashi shares the doctor's reports with Drishti, revealing that the doctor has suggested medical tests for her husband, indicating that she doesn't need the treatment, but her husband might. She shares that her husband doesn't believe that he may need any medication at all, and has refused to undergo tests. She, therefore, has begun to consider adopting a child, while her mother-in-law has started convincing her husband to remarry in the hope of getting a grandson.

But despite her troubles, Rashi advises Drishti to pursue her dreams and focus on her career. She emphasizes the importance of waiting for a life partner who respects and values her rather than rushing into marriage for societal expectations. Drishti leaves with a heavy heart but with strong determination that she must pursue her career and that she would look for a life partner who respects her as an equal and believes in gender equality.

This scenario underscores the importance of individual aspirations and personal choices, as well as the need to challenge stereotypes and biases about women's roles and responsibilities in a family. This also stresses the unfair expectations and pressures placed on women in traditional roles. It highlights the need to challenge harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about infertility and the impact it can have on family dynamics. It also highlights the importance of individual agency, independence, and self-respect in life choices, particularly regarding marriage and relationships. Drishti's decision to prioritize her well-being and seek a partner who respects her is a decisive step towards breaking free from traditional gender roles and expectations.

CASE - 10

CHALLENGES FACED IN PROFESSIONAL SPACES

Aisha pursues her dream of becoming an engineer, and soon after her graduation, she starts her first role working for a factory as a Floor manager.

During the initial months, as Aisha would do her rounds, she would often hear workers whispering behind her back that 'A woman cannot survive in this role for more than a month' or 'We won't listen to instructions of a female manager'. All these things made it difficult for her to do her job effectively.

When she saw this hampering her work, she raised these concerns with her manager, but she is indirectly asked to adjust and get used to the 'culture'. This troubled



Aisha but she was determined not to give up and prove herself. She told her manager that she would earn the respect of the workers for her role, irrespective of her gender. From then on, she started changing things one step at a time.

This scenario represents a prevailing challenge faced by countless women in various professional settings. It underscores the imperative need for a robust support system not just at home but also in professional spaces, in the form of voices of support and encouragement who guide, mentor and be the catalyst to the change individuals bring in for the better and make workplaces and environments more inclusive.

CASE - 11

GENDER BIASES

Drishti wants to pursue doctoral studies after her Masters program. When she discusses the same with her parents, her father was surprised and remarked that if she keeps studying like this, nobody would marry her and that she would go past marriageable age. On hearing this, Drishti was furious and concerned. She didn't want to tread the same path her sister Rashi had to. She gently tells her parents that she would rather focus on her studies and pursue her career than getting worried about who would marry her. She told them that she would seek a life partner who values a woman's education and doesn't confine marriage to specific age criteria.

Her father intervened saying, "You have already finished your Masters degree, and now it's time to get married. We both worry about your future." Drishti, with unwavering determination, reassures her father, "Dad, if you truly worry about my future, worry about not getting me married to someone who does not appreciate the person I am and is not supportive of my dreams."



This poignant scenario highlights one of the many deeply ingrained biases that persist within our society, wherein women and girls frequently grapple with societal pressures to conform to traditional expectations regarding marriage. It also highlights how sometimes even parents play a role in perpetuating these prevailing norms consciously or unconsciously. It is of utmost importance for each of us to recognize and acknowledge these biases within our society and to express our opinions without hesitation or fear of judgment. Drishti's remarkable courage in challenging these biases is pivotal as a voice of change.

CASE - 12

SOCIETAL PRACTICES

On a lazy Sunday morning, Arjun and his dad had a conversation about his cousin's marriage over a cup of tea. His dad mentioned, "The girl's side gifted a car to Krishna (the groom), but there was a tense moment during the marriage because the groom's side was not pleased. They had requested an XUV 700, but the bride's side provided a lower-cost car."

His dad fell silent for a moment and then added that they should have respected the bride's family's choice and given them the model that would have made them happy. The bride's family needlessly created a situation where they felt insulted and had to apologize to the groom's father. Everyone was saying that if they had asked for a specific model, they should have provided that car.

When his dad mentioned that the boy's family had expressed their wishes, Arjun immediately responded, "If someone demands something, it cannot be considered a gift; it's considered dowry and is punishable by law. It's not normal, and this practice should stop. We must accept that if it's truly a gift, there should be no room for choice. By suggesting otherwise, you are normalizing this behavior and implicitly accepting that it wasn't dowry."

His dad nodded slowly as realization dawned upon him.

This scenario serves as a stark reminder of how deeply ingrained crimes against women are often masked as traditions and normalized, acceptable practices. In reality, these practices constitute severe social injustices and discrimination against women. It is the collective responsibility of all individuals to conscientiously reject the practice of reinforcing such practices and dismantling these deeply entrenched societal ills.



CASE - 13

GENDER STEREOTYPING

After his studies, Arjun, besides continuing his passion for classical dance and giving performances on stage, went on to become an HR manager in a logistics company and is leading a recruitment drive in the company. As per the management, there is a defined goal of hiring women employees to boost diversity and inclusion in the company. However, mid-way through the interviews, Sameer, a junior colleague, reaches out to Arjun, asking, 'Sir, women employees may not be best suited for the roles as they will not be able to lift heavy packages and become less productive!'



Arjun replies, 'Did you check productivity data? Did you hear any concerns from women employees on package weight?'. Sameer replies, saying he had not checked and neither had he heard such concerns.

Arjun then turns his laptop screen towards him and shows how women's productivity is trending higher than other genders based on data from the last 90 days. He says, "That's the problem, right? Everyone bases their decisions on assumptions about what women can and cannot do. At least they should be given a fair chance." He suggests Sameer resume the interviews after removing all these kinds of biases to make the organization an equitable and inclusive place.

This case scenario highlights how women have always been perceived as the 'weaker sex', and these perceptions continue to percolate even today about whether or not they will be able to do various roles. Several women role models have shattered this glass ceiling to prove that women can achieve amazing feats in every sphere. As a society, the focus must be on dismantling these stereotypes and striving for a society that fosters fairness, equity and inclusion.

CHAPTER 3

GENDER-INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL SPACES

This chapter highlights the impact of discriminatory notions of gender on verbal and non-verbal communication by illustrating the use of gender-biased language in both formal and informal spaces, such as home, community, workplace and government office, as well as the domain of media, in order to bring out how gender-inclusive communication can be integrated into our everyday language.

Gender affects every aspect of an individual's being - be it within the family, in society or at work. Therefore, it is imperative to foreground gender equity in every aspect of our everyday life to achieve the goal of a gender-just world.

AGENDER: *A person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutrois, gender neutral, or genderless.*^{3.1}

VERBAL / ORAL COMMUNICATION

Oral communication plays a crucial role in guiding societal behaviour. In workplace settings, it sets the tone and determines gender-inclusiveness. For

Verbal communication: *It refers to usage of words to exchange information, ideas, thoughts, and feelings with another person.*^{3.2}

instance, to promote a culture of equality and non-discrimination, one must refrain from making remarks about an individual's physical attributes or attire.

In our daily communication, in informal social spaces we need to be conscious about not reinforcing prejudices and gender stereotypes. Let us look at how we can view gender-inclusive communication in different spaces:

- **Home:** Learning starts at home and forms the first imprint on a person's psychology. That is why using gender-inclusive language and behaviour at home is vital to initiate a positive change.
- **Community:** As social beings, our identities and decision-making are significantly influenced by the society and the community we live in. The term "community" in this context encompasses the various social structures, public spaces and institutions that surround us.
- **Workplace:** The workplace includes the workplace in the broadest definition, as defined by "the concept of extended workplace under The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace" (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- **State:** This pertains to the public sector, including public bodies and institutions, policy and program frameworks at different levels of governance.

Gender Pronouns: *Used to describe someone's gender identity, either when they are referring to themselves or when they are being referred to. There are many gender pronouns that people choose to use but common ones are she/her, he/his and they/them.*^{3.3}

HOME

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE	GENDER-INCLUSIVE
<p>(a) Ladki ki tarah mat ro. (<i>Don't cry like girls</i>).</p> <p>Comment: Gender stereotyping which indicates that crying is a sign of weakness and women are 'weaker'.</p>	<p>(a) It's okay for boys to cry and show how they feel.</p>
<p>(b) Beti, ghar ka kaam seekhlo, sasural mein kya karogi (<i>Daughter, learn to do domestic chores, otherwise, what will you do at your in-laws home</i>).</p> <p>Comment: Patriarchal gender role differentiation of labour, which encourages the notion that domestic chores are meant only for Women.</p>	<p>(b) Ladka ladki, dono ko ghar ka kaam sikhna chahiye. (<i>Both girls and boys should be taught to do household tasks/works/chores</i>).</p>
<p>(c) Tumhari Maa ne kuch sikha ke nahi bheja. (<i>Your mother did not teach you anything before sending you here</i>).</p> <p>Comment: This implies that it is the mother's responsibility to teach her children and also re-enforces gender role differentiation within the family.</p>	<p>(c) Mere liye mere dono bachche ek samaan hai. Jitna mein ne ek ki education pe kharcha kiya hai, utna hi dusre ki pe karungi. (<i>Both of my children, son and daughter are equal to me. I shall spend equally on their education</i>).</p>
<p>(d) Paisa kam hain, toh beti ko government school mein bhej denge or bete ko private school mein. Kharcha kam hoga. (<i>Due to the paucity of funds, let us send our daughter to the government school, and son to the private school. The expenses will be lesser</i>).</p> <p>Comment: Patriarchal assumptions that daughters are not part of the natal family, and the sons are the bread earners which leads to the difference in investment.</p>	<p>(d) Mujhe koi sharm nahi admit karne mein ki meri wife family ki primary breadwinner hai (<i>I feel no shame in admitting that my wife is the primary breadwinner of the family</i>).</p>
<p>(e) Mard ko dard nahi hota (<i>Men do not feel pain</i>).</p> <p>Comment: Patriarchal assumption about gender characteristics which discourages men from expressing their emotions.</p>	<p>(e) Ladkiyan kuch bhi kar sakti hain. (<i>Girls can do anything</i>).</p>
<p>(f) Kul ka Deepak toh ladka hi hota hai (<i>Boys take the family lineage forward</i>).</p> <p>Comment: Incorrect belief that the family lineage is determined through the son alone</p>	<p>(f) Ladka aur ladki mein koi farak nahi hota. Parents ke liye dono important hain. (<i>There is no difference between a boy or a girl. Both are important for parents</i>).</p>

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE





GENDER-INCLUSIVE



COMMUNITY

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE	GENDER-INCLUSIVE
<p>(a) Yeh ek phase hai, nikal jayega - <i>While addressing LGBTQIA+.</i> (This is just a phase; it will pass) Comment: This indicates that being non heterosexual person is problematic.</p>	<p>(a) Ladkiyon ko ghar mein rokne ke bajaye, ladkon ko ladkiyon ki respect karna sikhao. (Instead of restricting the mobility of the girls, teach boys to be respectful).</p>
<p>(b) Treatment karwao, yeh mental bimari hai - <i>On being a transgender person.</i> (Get medical treatment; it is a mental illness) Comment: This indicates that not conforming with binary gender identity, i.e. not identifying as a man or a woman, is problematic.</p>	<p>(b) Don't be afraid to express your gender identity.</p>
<p>(c) Chote kapde pahen kar bahar jaogi to ladke to fislenge hi na - <i>To girls.</i> (If you go out in short dresses, it is evident that boys/men will find it difficult to control themselves) Comment: Such stereotypical mind-set put the responsibility for controlling one's behaviour only on the way women dress. This promotes victim-blaming norms.</p>	<p>(c) There is nothing to be ashamed of; it is okay to disclose your sexual orientation.</p>
<p>(d) Der raat tak mat ghooma karo - <i>To girls.</i> (Don't roam around till late night) Comment: This reflects a patriarchal and protectionist attitude to control mobility of women.</p>	<p>(d) Ladki ladka dono samaan hain. Ladkiyan kisi se kam nahi hain. (Boys and girls are equal. Girls are no less than anyone).</p>
<p>(e) Women are born multi-taskers. Comment: This re-enforces the multiple burdens on women, as they are employed professionally while continuing to be primary caregivers and home managers.</p>	<p>(e) Spaces don't belong to any specific gender, be it sports, politics, science, etc.</p>
<p>(f) Women should get married as soon as possible. Comment: This re-enforces the patriarchal norm that marriage should be woman's ultimate goal and they must attain it at the earliest.</p>	



Kya isse hai us type
of dressing mai, apki drishti
badlo. Kapde nahi, soch
badlne zaroori hai!



Don't be afraid
to
express who
you are



WORKPLACE: INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE	GENDER-INCLUSIVE
<p>(a) Finance/Calculations tumhare bas ki baat nahi hai - <i>to the female employee.</i> (Finance/Calculations are beyond your capabilities). Comment: Patriarchal culture of stereotyping skills and abilities based on gender - that males are better equipped with mathematical abilities.</p>	<p>(a) Office mein clean and well maintained toilets bhi hone chahiye. (<i>Office must have clean and well maintained rest rooms for all gender.</i>) Comment: Such comments indicate sensitivity towards all genders and creates inclusive ecosystem.</p>
<p>(b) Saj dhaj ke aa jaati hai; kaam kuch aata nahi hai - <i>for women employees.</i> (She arrives office all decked up; but doesn't know how to do work) Comment: A woman is reduced to her appearance and her success in her career is attributed to her dress.</p>	<p>(b) Job application forms mein, non-binary gender options bhi hone chahiye. (<i>Job application must have non-binary gender options too.</i>) Comment: This helps in creating an inclusive society wherein everyone is given equal opportunity to participate in workforce.</p>
<p>(c) If you do not call a Chhakka a Chhakka then what will you call it? - <i>for LGBTQIA+.</i> Comment: Chhakka and Eunuch are derogatory phrases, used as slurs usually against transgender and queer persons.</p>	<p>(c) Hum iss saal se 30% under-represented cohorts se hiring karenge (<i>This year we will hire 30% people from under represented sections</i>) Comment: Such actions can lead towards more equitable society ensuring diversity and inclusivity at workplaces.</p>
<p>(d) Tum ladka hokar nurse banoge? Isse achcha hoga dukaan sambhalo. - <i>for boys.</i> (Being a boy, would you become a nurse? It would be better if you manage the shop.) Comment: Denotes gender stereotyping of certain professions in a derogatory manner.</p>	<p>(d) Harassment against LGBTQIA+ communities is not tolerated in this workplace. Comment: Such policies/principles can work towards creating safe and respectable workplaces for all genders regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.</p>
<p>(e) Don't give her any important assignment, she will not be able to devote time to it because of her family obligations. - <i>for women employees.</i> Comment: Patriarchal assumption and reinforcement of gendered role differentiation that women will prioritise family obligations over work.</p>	<p>(e) It is incorrect to say that girls only get educated to get a good groom and boys for a good career - <i>marriage is not the be all and end all for girls.</i> Comment: Such statements advocates for progressive perspectives on women education and helps in dismantling gender-based expectations.</p>
<p>(f) She did not get married, there must be definitely something wrong with her. - <i>for young girls/women.</i> Comment: Presupposes that marriage is the be all and end all for women and restricts the choices for women to live life on their own terms.</p>	

WORKPLACE: FORMAL COMMUNICATION

All workplaces must follow an acceptable code of conduct in verbal and non-verbal communication. This involves recognising the problematic communications and behaviours that are regularly used. Although such communications and behaviours may be subconsciously ingrained, there is a need to take cognisance of them to make formal spaces inclusive and acceptable to all genders.

Non-Binary: *Used as an umbrella term, it refers to having a gender identity that is not simply male or female.*^{3,4}

For instance, if we see the real case of Shyam Balasubramanian, who identifies as a trans-man working in a chip-designing company in Chennai, we can see the burdensome challenges that are faced by individuals in the working environment.

“I’ve been teased and bullied through school and college, and for the most part of my professional life,” says Balasubramanian, who has been working for nine years. “All this bullying makes connecting with my peers very tough. Something as simple as gaining knowledge becomes hard because people refuse to talk to me and share information.”

Source: (Ramesh & Sabharwal, 2018)^{3,5}

His experience of discrimination is one of many- despite working in environments that are considered progressive, these environments still lag when it comes to gender-sensitive behaviours and communication.

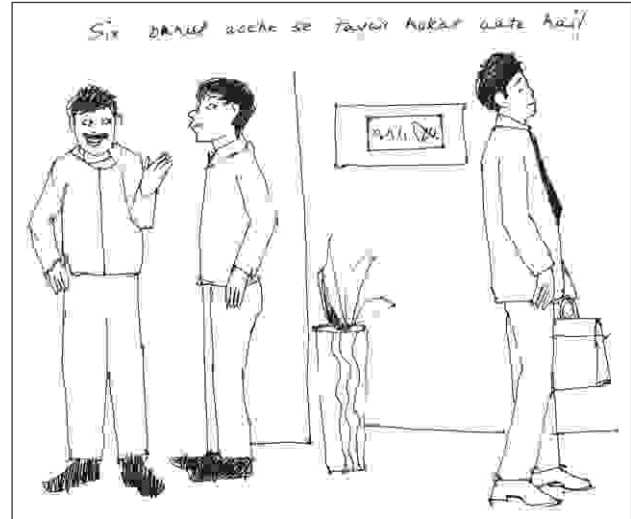
Gender Non-conforming: *It refers to “a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary.” Also, it is “a gender descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender expression or identity (e.g., “masculine woman”).*^{3,6}

The table below discusses a few situations where the language used is gendered, and the same observation is conveyed in two different manners based on gender. This indicates how, just by the use of gendered language, the same situation is communicated in different ways and how it inhibits all genders from participating fully.

Below are few examples where it is not unusual to find different responses for men and women to the same behaviour

Situation	Response towards Working Women	Response towards Working Men	Observations/ Comments
Strict Officer	<i>Madam zyada smart banti hai isliye file par query lagati hai</i> (Madam acts oversmart, hence she puts queries in the file.)	<i>Sir bahut careful and strict hain</i> (Sir is very strict)	The same behavior that is valued in a man, is trivialized and judged negatively in a woman.

Officer with an eye for detail	<i>Madame bahut kichkich karti hai Pareshan bahut karti hai</i> (Madame makes a lot of fuss...she troubles a lot)	<i>Sir bahut dhayan se padhte hai</i> (Sir is very observant)	Meticulousness is praised when it comes to men, whereas the same trait in women is judged negatively.
Official with good dressing sense	<i>Madam ne jitna time tayaar hone main lagaya utna kaam kar leti toh accha hota</i> (It would have been better if Madam had spent as much time on work, as she spends on getting ready)	<i>Sir bahut acche se tayar hokar aate hai</i> (Sir comes very well dressed)	Dressing choices are misconstrued to suggest that well dressed women exhibit non- seriousness in work.
Salutation	1. Madam, Sir 2. Madam Captaan Sir	1. Sir 2. Captaan Sir	The leadership roles are so often related to males that despite women holding the similar position, a need is felt to add 'Sir' to the salutation.
Good Work Performance	<i>Itna late tak office mein rahti hai, zaroor kuch gadbad hoga</i> (She is in office till late, there must be something fishy) <i>Boss ko impress karne ke liye overtime kar rahi hai</i> (She is working overtime to impress the boss)	<i>Sir apne kaam ke liye kitne dedicated hai</i> (Sir is so dedicated towards work)	Males' working overtime is viewed as hard work; but females working overtime is considered pushy and ambitious.
Ambitions and Labels	<i>Yahan itna kaam kar rahi hai, family ka kya hee dhyan rakhti hogi</i> (She is working so much here, how will she be caring for her family) <i>Working mothers ke bacche hamesha bigad jaate hain</i> (Children of working mothers are always spoiled)	<i>Sir apni family ke liye kitne sacrifices karte hai</i> (Sir makes so many sacrifices for his family)	Different labels are accorded to males and females for working hard.
Being Assertive at Workplace	<i>Madam chhoti chhoti baat par bhadhak jaati hai</i> (Madam gets aggressive and angry on small matters) <i>Har waqt chillati hain</i> (She keeps on screaming all the time) <i>Ghar ka gussa office main nikalti hain</i> (She vents out her personal frustration in the office)	<i>Sir gussa karte hain kyunki apne kaam mein bahut particular hain</i> (Sir gets angry because he is so particular about his work)	Same behaviors are viewed differently- aggressive for women and assertive (desirable) for men.



Situation	Response towards LGBTQIA+ individuals'	Response towards other individuals'	Observations/ Comments
For LGBTQIA+	<i>Yeh log office ka mahaul kharaab karte hain</i> (These people spoil the atmosphere of the office)	No such comment	This expresses an unreasonable homophobic attitude.
	“When are you getting married” “Do you have a girlfriend/ boyfriend” (assuming heteronormative)	Such comments will be perceived usual.	This betrays insensitivity regarding the choices of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

LGBTQIA+: It is a “shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer. LGBTQ is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning (sometimes people at a + at the end in an effort to be more inclusive).”^{3.7}

STATE

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE	GENDER-INCLUSIVE
Using the term “he” to include “she” Only 2 genders in application forms (No other category)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always prefer to use gender-neutral language (caregiver/ protector and others). Incorporate genders that are not strictly binary. Reflect on the logic behind obtaining data pertaining to gender or sex. Refrain from mandating honorifics and/or include all-encompassing variations of honorifics (such as Doctor, Mx., and others). Abstain from employing honorific titles that connote the marital status of women. Facilitate individuals in expressing their preferred pronouns.
Requiring father/husband to be named as the guardian of a woman like Daughter Of/ Wife Of (Identity from male family members)	Use gender-inclusive language (parent/guardian etc.).
Legislations and Policies–use of he/she, manpower	Policies must be gender-inclusive; Use gender neutral language like human resources.
Impose uniform/same policies on all genders	Gender-inclusive public spaces are going to be a focus area for the government. Will make special provisions for women, transgender persons.

There is no need to give opportunities to LGBTQIA+ in every sector.	The LGBTQIA+ communities should be given better financial access in the country
There is department for Women and Child development; therefore no need for additional budget in all departments for women.	Gender budget will be introduced in our department from this year onwards.

Gender Dysphoria : A diagnosis used to describe the dissonance between an individual's designated sex and their gender identity and between physical features and their gender identity.^{3.8}

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-verbal communication is used to convey information through means other than words, such as expressions, gestures, posture and body language. Non-verbal communication includes social cues, kinesics, spatial awareness, vocal nuances and touch. Much like spoken language, our non-verbal interactions harbour inherent gender biases.

Consider the situation of a guest arriving at home, where a discreet exchange of looks between the parents and the daughter conveys that she is expected to serve refreshments. This unspoken cue signifies patriarchal gender role differentiation, dictating hospitality to be the sole responsibility of the women in the house. Similarly, in our workplaces, inappropriate non-verbal cues, such as expressions and glances, can negatively impact the work culture for certain employees and reinforce gendered social roles. For instance, usually during functions in office it is mostly women employees who are designated as comperes or ushers to welcome guests with bouquets or to serve food. Such tasks being given routinely to women employees and never to male colleagues in an organisation devalues, marginalizes and objectifies female employees.

Non-verbal communication: It refers to the usage of body language such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and use of objects, whether consciously or subconsciously as a response to an action/person.^{3.9}

The following scenarios highlight the typical ways in which women and LGBTQIA+ employees are sidelined and belittled in the workplace:

- Rolling of eyes when a female or gender non-conforming colleague puts forward their viewpoint. This subtle non-verbal gesture can indicate a lack of acceptance of the colleague as an equal in the workplace.
- Focusing on a female colleague's chest while speaking to them, rather than making eye contact, constitutes sexual harassment at the workplace. It can make the female employee feel objectified and demeaned, which may even affect their ability to function effectively at the workplace.
- Informal gathering of male colleagues within in office to the exclusion of female and LGBTQIA+ employees, making them feel marginalized and disregarded.

Microaggressions: Subtle, often unintentional, discriminatory comments or behaviors that marginalize and undermine individuals based on their LGBTQIA+ identity.^{3.10}

Understanding the impact of media on gender stereotyping

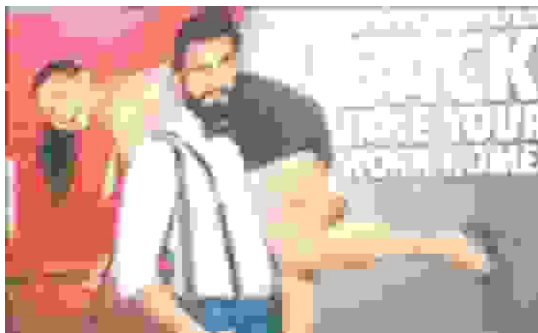
The effectiveness of public advertisements lies in their brevity, repetitiveness and potent visual impact on viewers. The advertised product or message becomes so ingrained through constant repetition that the human psyche becomes accustomed to it. Any deviation from this established pattern faces resistance. Despite the potential disparity between the portrayals in advertisements and reality, the persuasive use of visuals and glamour contributes to their internalisations. In this manner, advertisements not only create but also reinforce stereotypes. For example, some household utility-related advertisements are aimed at the female populace. In contrast, advertisements related to sports, cars, machinery, and adventures are made for men, which again contributes to reinforcing stereotypes.

Gender Stereotyping: “Ascribing certain attributes, characteristics and roles to people based on their gender. Gender stereotypes can be negative (i.e., women are bad drivers, men can’t change diapers) and benign (i.e., women are better caregivers, men are stronger). Gender stereotyping becomes harmful when it limits a person’s life choices, such as training and professional path, and life plans. Compounded gender stereotypes occur when layered with stereotypes about other characteristics of the person, such as disability, ethnicity or social status.”^{3,11}

GENDERED ADVERTISEMENTS ^{3.12}

CASE 1 Objectification of Women

The advertisement introduces a men's deodorant, highlighting its alluring fragrance. However, instead of suggesting that the scent appeals to the wearer, it's portrayed as specifically attracting females. This



Source : (Jack and Jones India apologises for sexist ad featuring Ranveer Singh. Will he apologise?, 2016) ^{3.14}



Source : (Sharma, 2022) ^{3.15}

depiction is so far-fetched that as soon as the deodorant is applied, women are instantly shown being irresistibly drawn to men. This not only sexualizes but also objectifies women. Another advertisement as shown above shows a man taking a woman home (portrayed like an object), with the tag 'take your work home'. This is again an example of sexualisation and objectification of women in the media.

CASE 2 Reiterating Gender Roles



Source : (Sharma, 2022) ^{3.16}

In this newspaper advertisement, a young girl prepared for school is featured. Surprisingly, the accompanying text has nothing to do with her education but rather urges readers to “start saving for her marriage NOW!” The advertisement is from a financial institution encouraging parents to make deposits for their daughter’s future through their services. While the cultural reality



Source : (Somebody Please Marry Me, 2013) ^{3.15}

of parents saving for their daughter's wedding is acknowledged, it reinforces the notion that girls are inherently destined for marriage, potentially overlooking diverse paths that many may choose, such as pursuing a career. A more inclusive approach could have involved highlighting investment in her future, regardless of the direction she may choose, be it a career or marriage.



Source : (India First Life Insurance Co, have launched their ATL campaign titled #Ye Toh Certain Hai.)³¹⁷

CASE 3 Enforcing Gender Roles

This particular newspaper advertisement serves as a stark example of overt gender stereotyping and the unequivocal assignment of gender roles. However, even in current times, advertisements for commonplace products such as tea, coffee, or body lotions often depict females through the lens of gender stereotypes, primarily associating them with domestic responsibilities.



Source : Nutan, M. (2023, January 7). Spread of railways, WWII demands³¹⁸

advertisements aimed at males tend to portray a counter-narrative, often emphasising activities outside the domestic sphere. This prevailing trend underscores the persistence of traditional gender norms in advertising, perpetuating distinct expectations and roles based on gender.

CHAPTER 4

GENDER DIMENSIONS IN STATE COMMUNICATIONS

This chapter discusses gender dimensions in administration and policy-making by examining language used in official documents through the gender lens. It underlines the importance of adopting gender-inclusive communication as a critical step in the journey towards a fair and equitable society with equal opportunities and equal access to resources for all citizens, particularly for marginalized sections.

In accordance with the constitutional mandate for equality and equal opportunity, government policies and official documents must employ gender-inclusive language or gender-neutral language, as per the context. To be gender blind or, worse, gender discriminatory, whether intentionally or otherwise, is unacceptable and inexcusable. Therefore, every policy and document must be examined through the gender lens to ensure no gender or sexual orientation is either at a disadvantage or unduly favoured.

The subsequent section discusses examples of some policies/legislations and shows how the language may unintentionally give the impression of gender exclusion :

Gender-Neutral Language: Gender-neutral language is a generic term covering the use of non-sexist language, inclusive language or gender-fair language. The purpose of gender-neutral language is to avoid word choices which may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm. Using gender-fair and inclusive language also helps reduce gender stereotyping, promotes social change and contributes to achieving gender equality.⁴¹

Examples of Gender Non-Inclusive Language in Policy Drafting

The language used above may lead a prospective female or gender non-conforming applicant to wrongly conclude that the benefit is guaranteed only for male applicants. This would not be in line with the intended meaning as the Act guarantees employment benefit to individuals of all genders.

- Excerpt from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA Act 2005):

The Act **only** uses 'he/his' as a default term. The following is an excerpt from the Act:

"If an applicant for employment under the Scheme is not provided such employment within fifteen days of receipt of his application seeking employment or from the date on which the employment has been sought in the case of an advance application, whichever is later, he shall be entitled to a daily unemployment allowance in accordance with this section."⁴²

Written communication: Written communication is the exchange of information, ideas, or messages through written language. It can be in the form of letters, emails, reports, proposals, books, articles, and so on.⁴³

The language used above may lead a prospective female or gender non-conforming applicant to conclude that benefit is guaranteed only to a male applicant, which is not the lateral meaning as the Act guarantees employment benefit as above to applicants of all genders.

- **Securities and Exchange Board of India (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996**

These regulations refer to all stakeholders as “**he/him.**” The language used in these Regulations may lead to the conclusion that all investors/stakeholders identify as males perpetuating the stereotype that the financial decision-making is performed by individuals who identify as males. This is an undesirable interpretation as all genders are equally competent and able to make financial decisions and the traditional stereotypes must be challenged.^{4.4}

- **Excerpt from the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961.**^{4.6}

This Act is focussed on women, but the Inspector is referred to as “**he/his.**” The following is an excerpt from the Act:

*“The failure to give notice under this section shall not disentitle a woman to maternity benefit or any other amount under this Act if she is otherwise entitled to such benefit or amount and in any such case an Inspector may either of **his** own motion or on an application made to **him** by the woman, order the payment of such benefit or amount within such period as may be specified in the order.”*^{4.7}

The language used in this Act again perpetuates the stereotype that official posts such as Inspector are exclusively held by individuals identifying as males. This also perpetuates the mindset that males are the enforcers of an action and other genders are the beneficiaries (here, women). It is also notable that the Act is exclusionary for transwomen .

- **Draft Model Rules For The Panchayats (Extension Of The Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996**

These Draft Rules refer to women in only of you instances which are given below, but otherwise the default pronoun used is ‘**He**’. Two excerpts from the Rules are reproduced below :

*“A member of Gram Sabha may attend any meeting of Standing Committee. **He** may ask any question on the topic of the discussion with the permission of the chair. But **he** or **she** will not have the right to vote at the time of final decision.”*^{4.8}

Gender Mainstreaming: is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of 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.^{4.5}

Gender Discrimination: Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.^{4.9}



The Gram Sabha may appoint an Assistant-Secretary from its members apart from the Secretary. But the Assistant Secretary will not be entitled to any pay, honorarium etc. He or she will execute his duties honorarily.”^{4.10}

The language used in these Rules may lead to the conclusion that a member of the Gram Sabha is necessarily an individual who identifies as a male. Further, the use of he or she (though not fully gender-inclusive) may create a confusion as to whether an Assistant Secretary of the Gram Sabha can be a male or a female. This may have the unintended consequence of deterring all genders from feeling included as a member of the Gram Sabha.

Sexism: Actions or attitudes that discriminate against people based solely on their gender. Sexism is linked to power in that those with power are typically treated with favour and those without power are typically discriminated against. Sexism is also related to stereotypes since discriminatory actions or attitudes are frequently based on false beliefs or generalisations about gender, and on considering gender as relevant where it is not.^{4.11}

- **The Right To Information Act, 2005.**^{4.12}

This Act refers to women in only of you instances, but otherwise the default pronoun used is “he”. An excerpt from the Act is reproduced below:

“Term of office and conditions of service.—(1) The Chief Information Commissioner shall hold office [for such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government] and shall not be eligible for reappointment: Provided that no Chief Information Commissioner shall hold office as such after he has attained the age of sixty-five years.”^{4.13}

Heteronormativity: It refers to the assumption, in individuals and/ or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities.^{4.14}

The language used in this Act implies, though it is unintentional, that only

a male can hold the post of the Chief Information Commissioner. This may have the unintended consequence of deterring other genders from feeling included in the selection process.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality refers to overlapping social identities and the related systems of oppression, domination and/or discrimination. The idea is that multiple identities intersect to create a whole that is different from the component identities. It was first coined by American civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989.^{4.15}

The persons covered under the Transgender Persons Act, 2019 also include Trans-Men, Trans-Women and Intersex persons. Usually Transgender persons are assumed to Transgender-men which needs to be clarified to include the above also.

CHAPTER 5

GOOD PRACTICES FOR GENDER- INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

This chapter showcases good practices for integrating gender-inclusive communication. It delves into the drafting techniques for making our official communications more gender inclusive, and also provides an exercise to test your understanding of gender-equitable language and a checklist for organisations to ensure their workspaces are accommodating of each and every person, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation.

Publication of the Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes⁵⁷ on 16th August 2023 by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, marks a significant step towards eliminating stereotypes in court rulings and promoting gender-equitable judgments. It also underscores the persistence of misogynistic language within the criminal justice system and its detrimental impact on the fair administration of justice for women and non-binary genders. Official documents also suffer from similar gender biases in equal measure, arising out of the same patriarchal mindset.

To avoid gender-discriminatory phraseology, the guidelines on gender-inclusive language provided by the United Nations offers some helpful suggestions:

- **Using non-discriminatory language:** When referring to or addressing specific individuals, use forms of address and pronouns that are consistent with their gender identity. There should also be consistency in the way all genders are referred to: if one of them is addressed by their name, last name, courtesy title, or profession, the other one should be as well.
- **Make gender visible when it is relevant for communication:** “Pairing” is the use of both feminine and masculine forms (he or she; her or his). It is a strategy that may be used when the author/speaker wants to make both women and men visible explicitly. Example: “Each student needs to write his or her name on the answer sheet.”
- **Do not make gender visible when it is not relevant for communication:** In informal writing, such as emails, plural pronouns may be used as a shortcut to ensure gender-inclusiveness. Such strategies are not recommended in formal writing.

Use the Relative Pronoun One

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE	GENDER-INCLUSIVE
“A staff member in Patna earns less than he would in New Delhi.”	“A staff member in Patna earns less than one in New Delhi.”

Use the Relative Pronoun Who

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE	GENDER-INCLUSIVE
“If a complainant is not satisfied with the board’s decision, he can ask for a rehearing.”	“A complainant who is not satisfied with the board’s decision can ask for a rehearing.”

Omit the Gendered Word

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE	GENDER-INCLUSIVE
“Requests the Protocol Officer to continue his/her efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance.”	“Requests the Protocol Officer to continue efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance.”
“A person must reside continuously in the Territory for 20 years before he may apply for permanent residence.”	“A person must reside continuously in the Territory for 20 years before applying for permanent residence.”

Use the Passive Voice

The passive voice is not an appropriate option for all sentences in English, as employing the passive voice often changes the emphasis of the sentence. However, it does offer an option for avoiding gendered constructions.

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE	GENDER-INCLUSIVE
“The author of a communication must have direct and reliable evidence of the situation he is describing.”	“The author of a communication must have direct and reliable evidence of the situation being described.”

An essential way of infusing gender-inclusive communication is recognising the non-inclusive aspects of communication around us.

5.1 PROMOTION THROUGH VISUAL COMMUNICATION

One of the ways gender-inclusive communication and behaviour can be promoted is through visual. Promoting gender-inclusive communication visually is imperative to highlight issues of inappropriate behaviour and encourage suitable behaviour in formal and informal spaces. One should remember how important the role social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), WhatsApp, etc play in the propagation and dissemination of information.

Breaking Gender stereotypes through Media

It is often said that cinema is a mirror of the society. Much like the prevalence of gender biases and gender stereotypes in society, films and advertisements also continue to portray stories and characters in a patriarchal frame. While the trend still continues, the last few years have witnessed a massive transformation in the kind of cinema that is being produced in India. Storytelling is clearly moving towards being more gender-inclusive, where the film industry is increasingly producing stories challenging the existing gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms.

Regional cinema takes a lead and portrays gender representations that challenge the notions of patriarchy and gender stereotypes. Stories represented on big and small screens can be seen to be more gender-inclusive by focusing on plots where the female protagonists are taking action against the physical and mental harassment she is being subjected to. Post-2000s, films in India are being made where women and other marginalised members of the LGBTQIA+ community have been rendered agency where they are able to take action, make their own decisions, negotiate their sexuality and are able to influence people around them by their actions.

Some of the examples are given below –

English Vinglish (2012)^{5.2} –

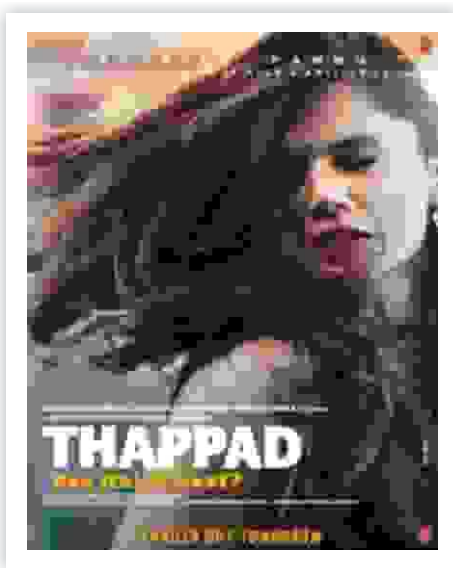
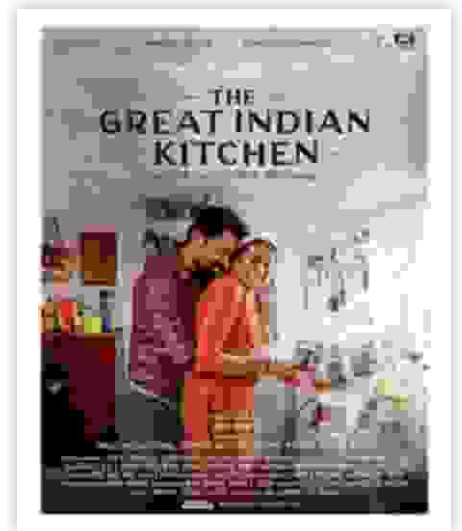
This film centred around an Indian homemaker, portrays how she is subjected to slights by her husband and children daily due to her inability to speak English. As a committed wife and mother, she ignores and seems to be living with such prejudices, though she feels disappointed and hurt sometimes. However, more importantly, the movie



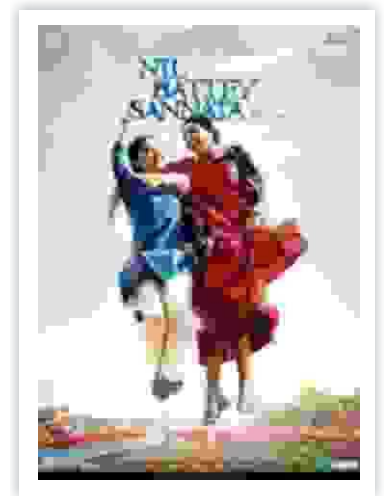
traces her urge to overcome the shame and inferiority entrusted upon her by the family, pushing her to take up the challenge of secretly enrolling in an English language course. The story ends with the protagonist evolving as a confident individual who embraces herself and accepts herself as she is.

The Great Indian Kitchen (2021)^{5.3} - Portrays the challenges and tribulations a housewife faces in a patriarchal family. The film questions the assignment of gender roles within the household space and highlights a woman's mental turmoil in daily life chores. Ranging from suppression of female sexual preferences to the taboo of confinement during the menstrual period, all challenges of the domestic space are reproduced on screen. The film sends out a resounding message that society cannot thrive

by the erasure of female agency and dignity and that females must make a choice to break the chains of patriarchy.



Thappad, (2020)^{5.4} - brings out the message that even one slap constitutes domestic violence and traces the journey of the protagonist in battling patriarchal mindsets and gender stereotypes of domestic violence. The movie also underlines the importance of a support system, especially for women.



Nil Battey Sannata^{5.5} - is a film focussing on a mother-daughter relationship wherein the mother desires a better future for her 15-year-old daughter, which is possible only through education. The movie traces how the mother-daughter gets into a healthy competition that works in the mother's favour as it positively reinforces her child's behaviour in motivating her to improve her results for a better future.

The movie touches upon the stereotype of showcasing a woman, irrespective of class, thinking and dreaming big for a better future for herself and her family.



Njan Marykutty (2018)^{5.6} is a Malayalam movie on the life of a transgender woman named Marykutty and the challenges faced by them in the process of going through a change in their gender. The portrayal got the acclamation from the LGBTQIA+ community.

The Mirror⁵⁷ – This short film advertisement titled “The Mirror” unfolds with a young boy adorning himself in a woman’s scarf and experiencing joy as he observes his reflection in a mirror. In a pivotal moment, the boy is discovered by his mother and grandmother dancing in his chosen attire. The music halts, and a moment of apprehension ensues as the women look at the boy. Soon, the tension dissipates, and the women join him in the dance. This clip starkly contrasts conventional portrayals, delivering a message that is not only gender-inclusive but also educational. By consciously avoiding the reinforcement of stereotypes and biases, the film challenges ingrained values and outdated thought processes. It is a powerful tool in promoting discussions on gender inclusivity and reshaping societal norms.



*Source : Screenshot from the Short advertisement
“The Mirror”.*

5.2 PROMOTING GENDER-INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION IN FORMAL SPACES

Promoting inclusive communication for cultivating a positive work environment

Using language that values and acknowledges individuals' experiences and contributions is crucial in fostering a harmonious workplace. This means recognising their perspectives, achievements, and challenges without downplaying or disregarding them. For instance, instead of referring to a team as "guys," which may exclude or downplay the contributions of female colleagues, use a more inclusive term like "team" or "colleagues" to ensure everyone feels equally recognised (University of Oxford, n.d.).^{5,8}

For transgender people who are transitioning to a new binary gender, it is important to use correct personal pronoun (i.e. he or she) occasionally. We are all human beings and it is possible to commit mistakes inadvertently sometimes. Deliberately, or persistently using the wrong personal pronoun may be interpreted as a form of harassment.

An individual may prefer to use a particular pronoun: this might be 'he', 'she' or 'they' (used to refer to a single person)

For example, Yusuf is non-binary, they have asked their professors at college to use 'they' and 'them'. At first, it is difficult, but people make an effort to use Yusuf's preferred pronouns when they explain how hurtful they find it to be misgendered.

Sexual Orientation: The type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one has the capacity to feel for some others, generally labelled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to. Often confused with sexual preference.^{5,9}

Avoiding Undermining of Women's Experiences and Work

When discussing women's experiences and professional contributions, avoiding language that undermines their capabilities or treats them patronisingly is crucial. It is essential to respect their accomplishments and recognise their expertise. For instance, instead of a senior official asking, "When am I meeting with the new girls who joined today," a more inclusive and respectful approach would be, "When am I meeting with the new trainees who joined today?" This shift eliminates potentially belittling language and ensures the focus is on their professional roles rather than gender.

Avoiding Presumptions in Communication

Effective communication should rest on accurate information rather than preconceived ideas about gender roles. It is crucial to challenge stereotypes and depend on facts to guarantee fair and unbiased representation of individuals, regardless of gender. For instance, in official correspondence, while forwarding a file or making a phone call, people must refrain from attributing the gender of the recipient. For example, before addressing an email with a salutation like "Dear Sir," it is advisable to check the recipient's name or title to ensure accuracy. Alternatively in the absence of information the salutation can include at least both the genders. This prevents assumptions based on gender and promotes a more respectful and inclusive communication style.

Using Neutral Titles and Occupations in the Workplace

It is crucial to thoughtfully select titles and occupational descriptions to steer clear of reinforcing gender stereotypes. Seeking input and permission from individuals regarding the titles and roles assigned to them is essential. Employing neutral and inclusive language contributes to an environment devoid of assumptions, respecting individuals' diverse experiences and identities. For instance, instead of the default usage of gender-specific titles like “salesman” or “saleswoman,” opt for gender-neutral terms like “sales representative” or “sales associate.” This small language change promotes inclusivity and ensures that job titles do not carry implicit biases based on gender. Please refer to the appendix for examples.

Androgynous: It refers to “a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity.”^{5,10}

5.3 DRAFTING TECHNIQUES FOR GENDER-INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

There is a need for gender-inclusive language in the campaigns designed, policies executed and official Government communications. To a large extent, “he/his,” i.e., masculine pronouns, are used as the default pronoun to denote all genders. However, this amounts to overshadowing other gender identities. Refer to Chapter 6, for a glossary of suggested terms, idioms and phrases, adjectives, personal titles and forms of address, pronouns, and rephrasing for gender-inclusive communication/drafting.

A few suggestions are given below:

- **Varied Pronouns:** Use the pronouns “he,” “she,” and “they” as per the context. This practice acknowledges and affirms the existence and contributions of individuals of all gender identities, avoiding reinforcing gender stereotypes. Embrace the singular “they” and its related forms (“them,” “themselves,” and “their”) when referring to indefinite pronouns and singular nouns. This not only simplifies language but also ensures inclusivity by avoiding gender-specific pronouns.
- **Plural Form Usage:** Opt for the plural form when addressing a general audience. By using “they” or “everyone,” we create an inclusive environment that transcends gender distinctions and resonates with a broader audience.
- **Neutral Phrasing:** Employ neutral words or phrases such as “individual,” “person,” and “one”. This choice eliminates gender-specific connotations and ensures that language remains inclusive and respectful.
- **Use of Name of addressee:** Repeat the name of the individual being addressed in the sentence to avoid the need for pronouns altogether. While this might result in slightly longer sentences, it guarantees clarity and leaves no room for gender-specific assumptions.
- The term beneficiary/clients can also be used in official communications/documents.

Implementing these suggestions not only aligns with the principles of equality and respect but also reflects a commitment to acknowledging and valuing individuals regardless of their gender identity. Therefore, adopting gender-inclusive language is a tangible step towards dismantling stereotypes and

creating an environment where everyone feels seen, heard, respected, and included. It is not just about linguistic nuances; it is about cultivating a culture of inclusivity that extends beyond words into actions and attitudes.

The following section enumerates the practical use of pronouns to adopt them effectively in our writings, which would go a long way in addressing gender imbalance:

'They' is being used as a singular term because the terms 'he' or 'she' are used to denote masculine and feminine. However, when a person says that they prefer 'they', the person wishes to use a gender-neutral pronoun to refer to themselves.

For example, when we say someone is a non-binary person, the person is identifying outside the gender binary (binary of man and woman) and may prefer 'they' pronoun. Increasingly, the term 'they' has been used as a singular noun in English and was the word of the year in 2019 by Merriam Webster dictionary. While the term, when used in singular, may be difficult to understand, it is a step both towards inclusivity as well as a step towards making communication more gender inclusive.

Subject	Object	Possessive determiner	Possessive pronoun	Reflexive
They prepared the briefing.	I acknowledged them.	Their briefing was helpful to management	That briefing is theirs	They wrote the briefing themselves [or themselves]. ^{5,11}

EXERCISE I: Test Yourself: Drafting Exercises

STATEMENT/SITUATION	IS CORRECT (Yes/No)	HAS A PROBLEM (Yes/No)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arjun and Stuti decided to rent traditional Indian attire, as each wanted to look his best for the Diwali celebration. Every first-year student joining the engineering program needs to take the mathematics aptitude test before selecting his science electives. A food delivery service provider offers free delivery within a 10-kilometre radius of the store. Our friendly, professional delivery men will deliver your food hot and fresh to your doorstep. Mr Sinha is a gentleman; he allowed his wife to work. I will go to the doctor in the evening. He should be able to give something to improve my health. Mr Patel is a forward-thinking chairman of the Institute. 		

^{5,12} <https://www.noslanguages-ourlanguages.gc.ca/en/writing-tips-plus/writing-to-or-about-non-binary-individuals#courtesy-titles>

EXERCISE II: How gender-inclusive is your institution?

Policy and Commitment	Clear commitment to gender inclusivity.
Training and Awareness	Staff and leadership trained in gender sensitivity. Awareness campaigns on inclusive language. All genders should be provided training opportunities.
Language Guidelines	Guidelines for gender-inclusive language.
Documentation	Updated documents containing inclusive language. Gender-inclusive options in forms.
Marketing and Outreach	Diverse gender representation in materials. Avoidance of stereotypes in imagery and language.
Website and Online Presence	Website audit for inclusive language. Information on gender diversity initiatives.
Facilities and Spaces	Child - care rooms. Designated inclusive spaces.
Events and Programmes	Inclusive events and language. Diverse representation in promotions.
Inclusive Policies	Inclusive policies covering diverse genders. Explicit anti-discrimination policies.
Feedback Mechanism	Established feedback channel. Regular review and response to feedback.
Representation	Diverse gender representation in leadership. Diverse voices in communications.
HR Policies	Cultivation of a diverse, inclusive culture.
Regular Assessments	Regular assessments of communication for inclusivity. Adaptation based on feedback and best practices.

EXERCISE III: Assessing the Workplaces through the Gender Situational Analysis Toolkit ?

National Gender and Child Centre, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), developed the Gender Situational Analysis (GSA) Tool in 2022 to assess how inclusive an organisation/ institution is.

The survey explores the institutionalisation of gender equality and inclusion in organisations across policies, programmes, amenities and budgets.

It aids in getting a granular view of how gender inclusive the environment is.

This Gender Situational Analysis Tool is available at the following link and can be undertaken as a dipstick measure for a more detailed action planning around areas of opportunity and to make the organisation gender inclusive.

The survey link is activated on Survey Monkey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8QD2NLR>



CHAPTER 6

GENDER-INCLUSIVE LEXICON

This chapter of the Guide provides a glossary of gender-inclusive terms, adjectives, pronouns, honorifics, idioms and phrases that recast everyday expressions to subvert gender stereotypes. Use of this glossary would facilitate gender-inclusive communication in the workplace to help create an accommodating work environment for all.

English has very few gender markers: the pronouns and possessives (he, she, her and his); and some nouns and forms of address. Most English nouns do not have grammatical gender forms (teacher, president), whereas a few nouns are specifically masculine or feminine (actor/actress, waiter/waitress). Some nouns that once ended in -man now have neutral equivalents that are used to include both genders as shown below.

Use of this suggestive glossary can encourage gender-inclusive communication in the workplace and has the potential of creating a large impact on society. Usage of these suggestions is expected to facilitate a gender sensitive and inclusive environment. However, the list of terms given below is not exhaustive and an attempt has been made to provide additional words in the right column besides offering alternatives. For eg. the word Child has been added under the preferable gender-inclusive terms, along with boy & girl to indicate that it is not the rejection of words boy & girl but an addition of more gender neutral and inclusive word.

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE TERMS	GENDER-INCLUSIVE TERMS
Actor/Actress	Performer/Artist
Adman	Advertising Executive
Anchor man/Woman Anchor	Commentator/Anchor
Authoress	Author
Boy/Girl	Boy/Girl/Child
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Partner
Husband/Wife	Husband/Wife/Spouse/Partner



Businessman	Businessperson
Cameraman	Camera Operator
Chairman Or Chairwoman	Chairperson
Chairmanship	Chairpersonship/Chair of the committee
Countryman/Woman Compatriot	Fellow Citizen
Craftsman	Artisan
Crewman	Crew Member/Crew Person
Cleaning lady	House Help
Doorman	Door Attendant
Delivery boy	Delivery person
Draftsman	Drafter
Fireman	Firefighter
Foreman	Supervisor
Forefathers	Ancestors
Horseman	Horse Rider
Hostess	Host
Housemaid	Housekeeper
Housewife	Homemaker
Ladies and Gentlemen	Everyone/Participant/Attendees/Colleagues
Landlord/Landlady	Owner
Layman	Layperson
Maiden name	Family Name
Male nurse	Nurse
Mailman/Postman	Postal Worker
Man Up	Toughen up
Man/Woman	Person
Mankind	Humankind/Humanity
Man-Made	Human made
Manned	Crewed
Manpower	Workforce/Workers
Masseuse	Massage therapist
Middleman	Intermediary

Midwife	Midwife/Birthing Specialist
Mother or Father	Mother/Father/Parent
Motherhood/Fatherhood	Parenthood
Newsboy	Newspaper Carrier
Newsman	Reporter
Office boy	Multi-tasking staff (MTS)/Clerk
Patrolman	Police Officer/Patrol Officer
Policeman/Police Woman	Police Officer
Postman	Postal Worker
Prostitute	Sex Worker-check Supreme Court guideline
Repairman	Repairperson/Technician
Salesman/sales woman	Sales Clerk/Salesperson/Sales Representative
Serviceman	Service Member/Technician
Showman	Actor/Performer/Entertainer
Showmanship	Stage presence
Sister/Brother	Sister/Brother/Sibling
Son/Daughter	Son/Daughter/Child
Spokesman	Representative/Spokes Person
Sportsman	Sports Person
Statesman	States Person/Leader
Stewardess /Steward	Flight Attendant
Common Man	Common Person
The man in the street	The Average Person
Trans Sexual	Transgender Person
Transvestite	Cross-dresser
Waiter/Waitress	Server/Table attendant
Watchman	Guard/Security Guard
Woman/Man	Woman/Man/Person
Woman Doctor (for all professions like lawyer, pilot, politician, engineer, etc.)	Refers to professions, such as doctor/ lawyer/pilot/politician/engineer, etc.
Workman/Workwoman	Worker
Young man	Young person/Youth

We often hear the following phrases and idioms in our every day language which are gender non-inclusive and have the potential to strengthen stereotypes. Some gender-inclusive alternatives are given below:

IDIOMS AND PHRASES

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE	GENDER-INCLUSIVE
A man's home is his castle	One's home is one's castle
Every man for himself	Everyone for oneself
Gentleman's agreement	Honourable agreement
To man a project	To hire person for a project; to operate/run a project
no man's land	Neutral zone
Workman's compensation	Worker's compensation
Yes man	Avid follower

Following are few examples of adjectives that are used commonly to indicate some characteristics associated traits like bravery etc. Such words assume interpretation that goes beyond the literal meaning of the word and become gender-biased. Using the neutral words can still give the meaning associated with the words given under gender-inclusive column, without making them gender-biased.

ADJECTIVES

GENDER NON-INCLUSIVE	GENDER-INCLUSIVE
Brotherly	Friendly/cooperatively/comradely
Effeminate	Delicate/soft/gentle
King-size	Gigantic
Ladylike	Courteous/cultured
Like a man	Resolutely/bravely
Maiden voyage	First voyage
Man enough	Strong enough
Man of action	Dynamic person

Manly	Strong/mature
Master	Expert/gifted/accomplished
Spinster/ bachelor	Single person
Old wives' tale	Superstition
Self-made man	Self-made person
Sportsmanlike	Sporting/sporty

Following are few examples of more neutral forms of address:

PERSONAL TITLES AND FORMS OF ADDRESS	
BIASED	NEUTRAL
Mr or Mrs	Mr/Mrs/Ms/Mx (Pronounced "Mix")
Mr and Mrs Arjun; Mr and Mrs Lila	Lila and Arjun; Ms Lila and Mr Arjun
Ms and Mrs	Ms
Dear Sir (By Default)	Dear Sir/Dear Madam/Dear (professional or official title)

REPHRASING	
Note:	In order to make communication inclusive, refrain from using gender specific expressions and use more gender-neutral expressions.
Example of usage:	
Non-Inclusive:	Man's search for knowledge has led him to improve scientific methodology.
Inclusive:	The search for knowledge has led us to improve scientific methodology.



DEMYSTIFYING GENDER STEREOTYPES

Note: The public and private job role are socially and culturally constructed in gender-specific terms, these usages must be made gender-inclusive. Professions and the nature of work should not be gendered at all.

Example of usage:

Non-Inclusive: Arjun and Lila both have full-time jobs; he helps her with cooking.

Inclusive: Arjun and Lila both have full-time jobs; they cook together.

Another example of usage:

Non-Inclusive: A nurse knows that every day she will touch a life or a life will touch hers.

Inclusive: A nurse knows that every day she/he/they will touch a life or a life will touch hers/his/theirs.

GLOSSARY

Following are few terms that are used often in the context of gender these days. It is important to be aware of the meanings of such terms to achieve the goal of gender-inclusive language glossary.

- **AGENDER¹**

A person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutrois, gender neutral, or genderless.

- **ANDROGYNOUS²**

A gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity.

- **BIGENDER³**

A person who fluctuates between traditionally “woman” and “man” gender-based behavior and identities, identifying with both genders (or sometimes a third gender in place of man or woman).

- **CISGENDER⁴**

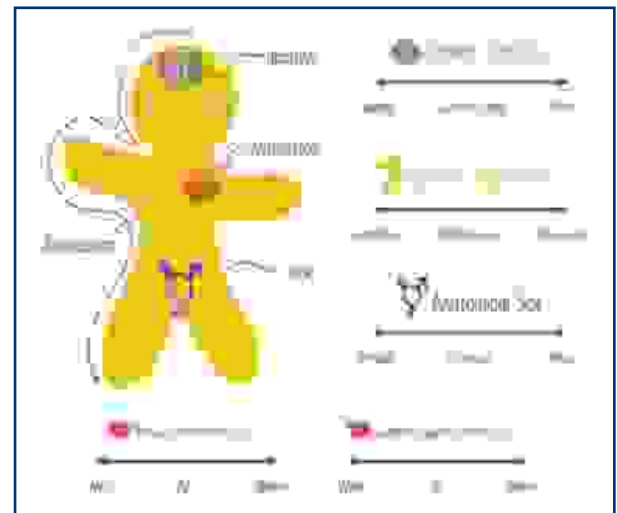
Term used to describe an individual whose assigned biological sex aligns with their expected binary gender identity. Considered to be opposite of “transgender.” Example: A person whose sex assigned at birth is “female” and identifies their gender as girl or woman.

- **COMING OUT⁵**

The process through which a person accepts and shares their gender identity or sexuality with themselves and others. Coming out can be a continual process.

- **DEADNAMING⁶**

To refer to a transgender person by the name they used before transition instead of their affirmed, chosen name.



Source : Killermann, S. (2017), A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook. Austin, TX: Impetus Books.

- **DESIGNATED SEX AT BIRTH⁷**

The sex a person is designated at birth based on their physical characteristics. People may use the acronyms DFAB and DMAB to describe “designated female at birth” and “designated male at birth”.
- **GENDER⁸**

The economic, political, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. The social definitions of what it means to be male or female vary among cultures and change over time. Gender refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, and relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them.
- **GENDER BIAS⁹**

Making decisions based on gender that result in favoring one gender over the other which often results in contexts that are favoring men and/or boys over women and/or girls.
- **GENDER BINARY¹⁰**

The idea that there are only two genders and that every person is one of those two.
- **GENDER BLINDNESS¹¹**

The failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of men/boys and women/girls are given to them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts and backgrounds. Projects, programmes, policies and attitudes which are gender blind do not take into account these different roles and diverse needs, maintain status quo, and will not help transform the unequal structure of gender relations.
- **GENDER DISCRIMINATION¹²**

Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.
- **GENDER DYSPHORIA¹³**

A diagnosis used to describe the dissonance between an individual's designated sex and their gender identity and between physical features and their gender identity.
- **GENDER EXPANSIVE¹⁴**

That which demonstrates a wider and more flexible range of gender identity than the gender binary.
- **GENDER EXPRESSION¹⁵**

The external display of one's gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and

other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as “gender presentation”.

- **GENDER-FLUID¹⁶**
The feeling that one's gender identity is not fixed in time or identity. A gender-fluid person can identify as multiple genders and feel more like one or the other at different points in time; they can also identify as genderqueer.
- **GENDER IDENTITY¹⁷**
It refers to “the internal perception of an one's gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans*, and more”.
- **GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE¹⁸**
Gender inclusive language is a form of communication that aims to avoid bias towards a particular gender and includes all genders in an equitable manner. It acknowledges and respects the diverse spectrum of gender identities beyond the traditional binary of male and female.
- **GENDER LITERACY¹⁹**
Developing strategies and tools to examine societal gender “rules” and think critically about these narratives.
- **GENDER NEUTRAL²⁰**
A term used to describe spaces, language and identities that are not gendered (e.g., a gender-neutral bathroom).
- **GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE²¹**
Gender-neutral language is a generic term covering the use of non-sexist language, inclusive language or gender-fair language. The purpose of gender-neutral language is to avoid word choices which may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm. Using gender-fair and inclusive language also helps reduce gender stereotyping, promotes social change and contributes to achieving gender equality.
- **GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS²²**
Sets of pronouns that do not conform to the male/female binary. Also known as all-gender pronouns. Examples can include ze, hir and hirs or the singular they, among others.
- **GENDER NON-CONFORMING²³**
Expressing or identifying gender in a way outside of or beyond cultural or societal expectations for gender expression. This is an umbrella term encompassing other terms like “genderqueer,” “gender-variant” and “gender-fluid”.
- **GENDER MAINSTREAMING²⁴**
Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated into all policies at all levels and all

stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking. 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 all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of 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.

- **GENDER QUEER²⁵**

A gender identity designation frequently adopted by individuals who don't align with the traditional binary classification of man or woman. It serves as a comprehensive term encompassing various non-conforming or non-binary identities, such as agender, bigender, and genderfluid. This inclusive categorization may involve a combination of traits associated with both man and woman, as seen in bigender or pangender individuals. Additionally, it encompasses those who lack a specific gender affiliation (genderless, agender), those who fluidly shift between genders (genderfluid), individuals identifying as a third gender or other-gendered (e.g., third gender or other-gendered), and those who opt not to label their gender, experiencing a fusion or ambiguity between gender identity and sexual orientation.

- **GENDER PRONOUNS²⁶**

Used to describe someone's gender identity, either when they are referring to themselves or when they are being referred to. There are many gender pronouns that people choose to use but common ones are she/her, he/his and they/them.

- **GENDER ROLE²⁷**

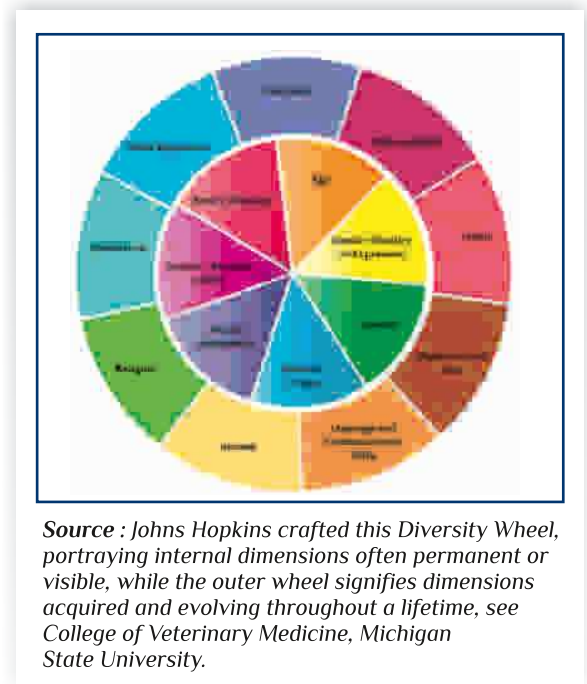
Behaviors and beliefs that a cultural group deems appropriate for people based on their designated sex.

- **GENDER-SENSITIVE LANGUAGE²⁸**

Gender-sensitive language is gender equality made manifest through language. Gender equality in language is attained when women and men – and those who do not conform to the binary gender system – are addressed through language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity and respect.

- **GENDER STEREOTYPES²⁹**

A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their



professional careers and/or make choices about their lives.

- **GENDER STEREOTYPING**³⁰

Ascribing certain attributes, characteristics and roles to people based on their gender. Gender stereotypes can be negative (i.e., women are bad drivers, men can't change diapers) and benign (i.e., women are better caregivers, men are stronger). Gender stereotyping becomes harmful when it limits a person's life choices, such as training and professional path, and life plans. Compounded gender stereotypes occur when layered with stereotypes about other characteristics of the person, such as disability, ethnicity or social status.

- **HETERONORMATIVITY**³¹

The assumption, in individuals and/or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities.

- **INTERSECTIONALITY**³²

Intersectionality pertains to the convergence of various social identities and the associated structures of oppression, dominance, and/or discrimination. This concept suggests that the interaction of multiple identities forms a unique whole that diverges from the individual components. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American civil rights advocate, in 1989, intersectionality highlights the complex interplay of different aspects of identity in shaping one's experiences within societal structures.

- **HORMONE THERAPY**³³

Intentional treatment used to impact development of secondary sex characteristics.

- **INTERSEX**³⁴

Describes an individual born with sex chromosomes, genitalia, or reproductive system not typical for the male or female sex.

- **LGBTQIA+**³⁵

It is shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer. LGBTQIA+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and the "+" symbolizes inclusivity for additional identities and expressions beyond those explicitly listed.

- **MISGENDER**³⁶

Referring to a person using a gender pronoun they do not identify with.

- **MX.**³⁷

A gender-neutral title, pronounced "miks," to replace gendered titles like Ms. and Mr.

- **MULTIGENDER/POLYGENDER**³⁸

Multigender is a descriptor for individuals who encounter more than one gender experience. It serves as a distinct gender identity or functions as an overarching term for other identities falling within this category. Multigender individuals may traverse different genders over time, and some may embody multiple genders simultaneously. The specific genders involved may adhere to or deviate from binary constructs. Notably, some multigender individuals identify as both cisgender and transgender. In the case of polygender individuals, the choice to undergo physical, legal, or social



transitions varies based on their personal perception of their relationship with gender and the cultural context in which they exist. While multigender individuals are generally situated within the non-binary and transgender spheres, they may or may not explicitly identify with these labels.

- **NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**³⁹

Nonverbal communication refers to the ways in which beings convey information about their emotions, needs, intentions, attitudes, and thoughts without the use of verbal language. Nonverbal cues serve important functions in human social life, including expressing emotions; conveying interpersonal attitudes such as friendliness, insult, or dominance; regulating affect; regulating turn taking between people in conversation; and facilitating one's own speech production.

- **NON-BINARY**⁴⁰

A person who does not exclusively identify as one of the two genders on the gender binary, male or female.

- **Outing**⁴¹

Revealing someone's gender identity or sexual orientation without their permission.

- **Passing**⁴²

A transgender person's ability to be perceived as the gender with which they identify.

- **Pronouns**⁴³

The terms a person has decided align best with their gender identity and expression of self; you should use a person's pronouns when referring to them.

- **Patriarchy**⁴⁴

Patriarchy, traditionally defined, refers to a system of social relations in which there is gender inequality between socially defined men and women. This system of inequitable social relations is embedded in the political, social, cultural, and economic institutions of a society as well as in, and through, private domestic relations. In these systems of gender inequality, women find themselves disadvantaged in various ways within social relations and organization. In patriarchal societies, women are collectively excluded from political, social, and economic positions of power; women find themselves paid less well for work of equal value; and women are more likely to experience poverty and unequal access to resources, goods, and services.

- **Queer**⁴⁵

The term is “used as an umbrella term to describe individuals who don't identify as straight. Also used to describe people who have a non-normative gender identity, or as a political affiliation. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, it is not embraced or used by all members of the LGBTQ community. The term “queer” can often be used interchangeably with LGBTQ (e.g., “queer folks instead of “LGBTQ folks”).

- **Third-Gender**⁴⁶

Third-Gender, a person who does not identify with either man or woman, but identifies with another gender. Tisgender category is used by societies that recognize three or more genders, both contemporary and historic, and is also a conceptual term meaning different things to different people who use it, as a way to move beyond the gender binary.

- **Transgender**⁴⁷

A term encompassing individuals whose assigned sex at birth and gender identity do not align in the expected manner, such as someone assigned male at birth who does not identify as a man, transgender is often perceived as a comprehensive descriptor. It serves as a counterpart to "cisgender," capturing those whose gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth. For many individuals, a more precise description of their identity includes "transgender and..." (e.g., transgender and third-gender), utilizing the term as an inclusive label that brings together a diverse array of gender identities.

- **TRANSITION**⁴⁸

The process of a trans person coming out, which can be marked by changes in appearance, body, behaviors and how a person refers to themselves. A transition can be over a set amount of time or a continual process.

- **TRANSPHOBIA**⁴⁹

The apprehension, prejudice, or animosity directed towards trans* individuals, the trans* community, or gender ambiguity is termed transphobia. This phenomenon is observable not only within the queer community but also in broader society. The adjective "transphobic" is employed to characterize individuals displaying elements of this spectrum of negative attitudes, thoughts, and intentions towards trans* people. Transphobia often manifests in violent and fatal ways, with trans* individuals facing a significantly higher risk of being victims of violent crimes and homicide compared to their cisgender counterparts, including those who identify as LGBTQIA+.

- **TWO SPIRIT**⁵⁰

It is an umbrella term traditionally (and exclusively) used by Native American people to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders.

- **SEX**⁵¹

Sex refers to the biological characteristics that define humans as female or male.

- **SEXISM**⁵²

Sexism is linked to power in that those with power are typically treated with favour and those without power are typically discriminated against. Sexism is also related to stereotypes since discriminatory actions or attitudes are frequently based on false beliefs or generalisations about gender, and on considering gender as relevant where it is not.

- **SEXUAL ORIENTATION**⁵³

The type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one has the capacity to feel for some others, generally labelled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to. Often confused with sexual preference.

- **VERBAL COMMUNICATION**⁵⁴

It refers to usage of words to exchange information, ideas, thoughts, and feelings with another person.

- **WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**⁵⁵

Written communication is the exchange of information, ideas, or messages through written language. It can be in the form of letters, emails, reports, proposals, books, articles, and so on.

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