



What is this thing called gender?

A method from the Program Y (YOUTH) - Innovative Approaches in Gender-based violence (GBV) Prevention and Healthy Lifestyle Promotion for Young Men and Women

Aleksandar Slijepčević

Name of Activity What is Slijepčević this thing called gender? (Introductory session)	Total time 45 (minimum) to 90 minutes
Overview This activity is conducted in order to understand the differences between sex and gender and reflect on how gender norms influence the lives and relationships of women and men.	Materials/room Flipchart paper, tape, and markers. This could be conducted both indoors and outdoors.
Number of people 15 – 30 participants	Target groups & Age 1. 14 to 19 year olds 2. Teachers, educators, trainers, and pedagogues
Learning outcomes To reflect on one's life and society on how gender norms are created and in which way they are enforcing rigid and stereotypic behavior that leads to inequality and violence. Think constructively about how to challenge the negative impact of gender stereotypes and promote more positive gender roles and relations in our lives and communities.	

PART I: The background to the Method

Educational philosophy:

Program Y is a training manual designed to help build the necessary skills for youngsters, aged between 14 and 19 to develop healthy relationships based on gender equality, to understand their physical, sexual, and emotional development and to address all forms of violence in their everyday lives. It encourages the adoption of relevant attitudes and values and motivates young people to make informed decisions with more self-confidence as they face challenges throughout adolescence. The comprehensive goal of the program is to promote adoption of healthy lifestyles and non-violent behavior among youth by challenging gender stereotypes. This methodology is integrated throughout the activities and contributes to the realization of the comprehensive goal by strengthening the students' knowledge (cognitive development), having them build upon existing life skills and adopt new ones (behavioral development), and changing their values and opinions (affective development).

Expected results and outcomes:

In a wider context, participation in the activities defined by Program Y can help students with the development of the following:

- Identity
- Emotional intelligence
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Negotiation skills
- Life skills, with focus on critical thinking and decision-making
- Capability to resolve problems
- Skills for resolving critical situations
- Pro-social and social competences
- Gender equality attitudes and values
- Healthy lifestyles, particularly in the context of sexual and reproductive
- Tolerant attitudes towards others, including people who are different from themselves

Extent of the manual and approach:

Program Y is not a tool focused exclusively on educating and informing young people. It is also a tested and proven platform that offers concrete directions to teachers, educators, trainers,



and pedagogues on how to offer knowledge and information to help develop life skills known to be key competencies for making healthy and non-violent decisions. Besides instructions for the implementation of each individual session, the manual offers accompanying content that allow students to get all the necessary information for understanding and achieving the defined learning outcomes. Different exercises, discussions, educational games, and workshops provide students with the necessary life skills to help them make informed decisions about their health in future, without perpetuating inequality or resorting to violence.

Thematic area of manual:

This manual consists of four thematic parts that can be applied as one in four years of implementation:

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

- Identity, sense of self, and feelings
- Gender and gender norms

VIOLENCE IS OUT

- From violence to peaceful coexistence
- From violence to respect in intimate relationships, self-control and managing emotions
- Psychoactive substances

SEXUALITY AND PROTECTION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

- Healthy sexuality, adolescent pregnancies, sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Pregnancy, yes or no, sexually transmitted infections and HIV and AIDS

PARENTS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

- Fatherhood and motherhood

Using the Manual:

This manual is intended for use by teachers, professional staff, health workers, and/or other experts, educators, trainers or volunteers that work with or would like to work with young people. Every activity is designed to last between 45 and 90 minutes and can be implemented in different environments such as schools, youth centres, sports clubs, parks and reformatories for juveniles.

Manual Program Y was developed in 2016 by CARE International Balkans and its partners at Young Men Initiative project (YMI) that is being implemented in the Balkan region since 2007.

For more information please visit: www.youngmeninitiative.net

PART II: The Method

Procedure (Execution):

1. Divide a flipchart page into two columns.
2. At the top of the first column write "woman." In the second column write "man."
3. Ask the participants to think of words and phrases associated with the idea of "being a woman". Keep writing these down in the first column as participants say them out loud. The responses can be positive or negative. Elicit both social and biological characteristics from the participants.
4. Repeat the same step for the "man" column.
5. Briefly review the characteristics listed in each column.
6. Exchange the titles of the columns by putting "woman" in the place of "man" and vice versa. Ask the participants if the characteristics mentioned for women could be attributed to men and vice versa.
7. Use the questions below to facilitate a discussion about which characteristics the participants do not think can be attributed to both men and women, and why. As discussed above, it is important

that these sex and gender categories are not presented as rigid or strictly dichotomous.

Suggested questions for Discussion:

1. What does it mean to be a woman?
2. What does it mean to be a man?
3. Do you think men and women are raised in the same way? Why or why not?
4. What characteristics attributed to women and men are valued as positive or negative by our society?
5. What would it be for a woman to assume gender characteristics traditionally associated with men? Would it be hard or easy?
6. How would it be for men to assume gender characteristics traditionally assigned to women? Would it be hard or easy?
7. How do our families and friends influence our ideas of how women and men should look and act?
8. Are boys and girls given the same toys? Why or why not?
9. How do mass media (television, magazines, radio, etc.) influence our ideas of how women and men should look and act?
10. Is there a relationship between gender and power? Explain.
11. How do different expectations of how women and men should look and act affect our daily lives/your relationships with family/your relationships with intimate partners?



12. How can we, in our own lives, challenge some of the negative, or non-equitable, ways that men are expected to act? How can we challenge some of the negative, or non-equitable, ways that women are expected to act in?

13. What did we learn from this activity? Is there anything we can apply to our own lives or relationships?

Conclusion:

Throughout their lives, women and men receive messages from family, media, and society about how they should act and how they should relate to each other. It is important to understand that, although there are differences between men and women, many of these differences are constructed by society and are not part of nature or biological make-up. Even so, these differences can have fundamental impact on women's and men's daily lives and relationships. For example, a man is often expected to be strong and dominant in his relationships with others, including with his intimate partners. At the same time, a woman is often expected to be submissive to a man's authority. Many of these rigid gender stereotypes have consequences for both men and women, as we will be discussing throughout these workshops, with other related activities in the module. As we become more aware of how gender stereotypes can negatively impact our lives and communities, we can think constructively about how to challenge them and promote more positive gender roles and relations in our lives and communities.

Additional instructions/variants of the activity:

To help reinforce the difference between sex and gender, you might want to prepare images of men and women that reflect examples of biological (sex) and social (gender) roles. These might include a woman washing dishes (gender); a woman breastfeeding (sex); and a man fixing a car or hunting (gender).

Tips for facilitators:

Before carrying out this activity, it is important that the facilitator understands the differences between sex and gender.

Sex is biological—that is, we are born with male or female reproductive organs and hormones.

Gender is how we are socialized—that is, how attitudes, behavior, and expectations are formed based on what society associates

with being a woman or being a man. These characteristics can be learned from family members, friends, cultural and religious institutions, and the workplace.

Some participants might confuse gender with sexual orientation. It is important to clarify that gender is a sociocultural construct by which certain attitudes and behaviors are assigned to individuals based on their physical and hormonal attributes. Sexual orientation, on the other hand, is the feeling of being able to relate romantically and sexually towards someone of the opposite sex (heterosexual), the same sex (homosexual), or persons of both sexes (bisexual). Independent of one's sexual orientation, every individual is influenced by social expectations based on their sex.

Suggestions for follow up:

Additional material and information about the program can be found on: <<http://youngmeninitiative.net/en/resources/>>

The same link will lead you to the Program Y manual for free download.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aleksandar Slijepčević is an experienced Project Coordinator with a demonstrated history of working in the civic and social organization industry. Skilled in Peer Education, Team Building, Public Speaking, Training facilitation and Accounting. Strong program and project management professional graduated from Faculty of Economics, University of Banja Luka. Very experienced in gender transformative programs for prevention of violence and gender equality empowerment and is very dedicated on change attitudes and norms of young people regarding healthy life styles, violence and drug abuse.