



# Introduction

The Gender Sensitive Communication guide is a must-have tool to engage all levels of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office and projects in Lebanon<sup>1</sup> to have a transformative approach to gender equality and women empowerment, mainly in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Staff members in all units must be attentive to their language and vocabulary, given that the use of specific words can enforce or subvert gender inequalities. Nowadays, language plays a key role in understanding behavior and lines of thinking, in a world where gender inequality could be reflected in our daily work, actions, and communication. Gender sensitivity is about recognizing that our language choices have consequences on relating effectively to others. Therefore, to reinforce that women and men should be treated equally, then it is primordial to create awareness on how to reflect that belief in our communication use.

The Gender Communication guidebook will, therefore, help the Country Office staff members avoiding stereotypes and common mistakes when talking about gender in all audio-visual and written communication, whether in articles, media, field visits, reports, and emails. As such, this guideline will benefit all staff members and will promote gender awareness, which requires critical thinking, sensitivity, and receptiveness.

Likewise, this manual will not only contribute in promoting communication with respect to human dignity and social responsibility, but will also encourage the use of a neutral language through a balanced presence of both women and men in communication. It will finally identify methods and implement actions with respect to procedures and tools to ensure a gender sensitive and equal communication. Consequently, guidance will be highlighted to eliminate bias from communication and to guarantee an enabling environment for all. The objectives of this manual include therefore a better understanding of the power of images and words, understanding ways of communication and language that impact gender inequality, and finally providing guidance and tips for inclusive written as well as audio-visual communication

By clearly defining the objectives of this guidebook, staff members will be able to strengthen and maintain a gender-sensitive language throughout UNDP Lebanon's internal and external communication.

## Goals of the Gender Sensitive Communication Guidebook

The overarching objective of the guidebook is to further promote gender equality and put it at the center of UNDP Lebanon's work, in a transformative way. This objective will be reached through a set of three-fold specific objectives:

- 1- Raise awareness on the power of words to be used in communications;
- 2- Support in selecting language and methods that can promote gender equality in communications; and
- 3- Provide guidance for inclusive language for written and audiovisual communications.

## The Six Principles of Gender Responsive Communication

Bias free-language is important because language reflects on the attitude in communication. Words and audiovisual selection have also a critical role in achieving greater gender equality. Therefore, messages should be carefully examined based on the six following principles:

- 1- Ensure that women and men are represented
- 2- Challenge gender stereotype
- 3- Avoid exclusionary forms
- 4- Use equal forms of address
- 5- Create a gender balance
- 6- Promote gender equity through titles

### 1-Ensure that women and men are represented

This principle goes beyond focusing solely on women. Contrary to the common belief, gender does not only pertain to women. As such, gender equality is both a woman and a man's issue and it has been ever since reflected in the unequal roles and powers that our societies have attributed to women and men. In fact, both genders have equal responsibilities in eliminating gender inequalities and harmful gender stereotypes, especially in thematic areas. This principle aims to represent both genders equally in all internal and external message formulation,

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<sup>1</sup> The guidebook is based on global UNDP Communication Tools, Gender Guidelines, and Gender Equality Strategy, as well as best practices used in other UNDP Country Offices. The guidebook has been adapted to the specificities of the Lebanese context.

corporate media, and corporate representation. In this sense, panels and moderation of official meetings, conferences, and workshops should be gender balanced.

Taking into consideration the needs, exposure, and experiences of both women and men it is a must to tackle inequalities, as well as to promote women’s empowerment. This means that it is preferable to examine the situation of men and women by analyzing their lives and acknowledging the patterns of discrimination.

Moreover, narrating a gender equality story is correlated to explaining what women and men can accomplish. Thus, it should generally include personal powerful stories, explore the context, and relate to gender inequalities in the society. It should reflect the needs and point of views of women and men, and use data to reinforce the arguments of the story, which should show how interventions impact or reduce gender inequalities. Finally, every story must include recommendations for an efficient future action.

## 2-Challenge Gender Stereotype:

Ensuring fair visibility for men and women is an important means that would eliminate the use of inaccurate representations and stereotypes. It also means that special attention should be provided not to attribute and limit certain vocations or roles as only specific to women or men. By doing so, socially constructed gender roles would be avoided, and equal visibility through diversity of experience specific to each gender would be promoted.

Additionally, one of the ways of ensuring fair visibility for men and women is by seeking to include different perspectives of women and men who face gender stereotypes and expected gender functions. Viewpoints from both genders in the same field of expertise and in leadership roles should also be reflected. A good picture of such practice is the below:



Avoiding the use of assumptions about women and men is also a way to ensure fair visibility.

Other useful examples:

Gender Biased Language	Gender Responsive Language
Karim and Leila have full-time jobs; he helps her with the housework	Karim and Leila have full-time jobs, they share the housework
Doctors usually have little time for their wives and children	Doctors usually have little time for their families

## 3-Avoid Exclusionary Forms

Exclusionary forms consist in using “he or she” when referring to women or men. By using “they”, gendered pronouns can be avoided. It is therefore important to select words carefully to avoid assumptions about values, functions, roles, and capacities. As such, it is always better not to confuse the audience by using “she” or “he”. As such, it is recommended to use one pronoun or a plural pronoun “they” as already mentioned or even eliminate the use of pronouns by rephrasing the sentence to read in passive form.

Few common mistakes are illustrated in the below table:

Gender Biased Language	Gender Responsive Language
Each employee will perform better if he tracks his time allocation by a task	Employees will do better if they track time allocation by a task Each employee will perform better if she/he tracks her/his time allocation by a task You will perform better if you track time allocation by task
The Senior Manager will address the situation when he deems that it has become an urgent matter	The situation will be addressed by the Senior Manager when it becomes urgent
Can I have the contact with your assistant? I need to confirm the meeting with her	Can I have the contact with your assistant to confirm my attendance?
Everyone must do his part	Everyone must do their part
Dear mothers, please ensure that your children are included in the seasonal influenza vaccine process	Dear parents/families, please ensure that your children are included in the seasonal influenza vaccine process

#### 4-Use equal forms of address:

The fourth principle is about not reinforcing gender stereotypes. For example, women are usually addressed by their marital status, wife of, daughter of, or even sister of. However, this old practice is now inappropriate because it creates an imbalance, therefore it is more suitable to use the universal adopted form which is "Ms." In other words, it is significant to respect and be aware of what an individual prefers to be addressed since it is a matter of being mindful and respectful of the choice of each person.

We also need to avoid using stereotypes related to traits, behaviors, activities, and appearances of women and men.

Stereotypes to avoid:

Gender Biased Language	Gender Responsive Language
Miss, Mrs.	Ms.
Men and Ladies	Men and Women / Women and Men
Male and Female	Men and Women / Women and Men
Man and Wife	Husband and wife /Wife and husband
Mr. Khalil Assaad and his wife Maya	Mr. and Ms. Assaad/ Ms. and Mr. Assaad
Mrs. Khalil Assaad	Maya Assaad or Ms. Maya Assaad

Moreover, stereotypes can also tackle emotional and behavioral representations such as describing men as aggressive and women as emotional. As such stereotypes should be avoided even if they have a positive connotation:

Women are more sensitive and emotional and therefore they can contribute more to peacebuilding
Women are more transparent and less corrupt
Men are more competitive while women are more cooperative

Be positive that even the smallest things can contribute to changing perceptions about gender stereotypes and roles.

The same applies to visual communication. Stereotypes are for instance reflected in the colors selected while communicating. Blue is selected for men while pink is for women. However, a simple modification of using more gender-neutral colors like greens, yellow or orange can make a change. It is often the case that when a publication addresses women specific topics, the graphics and layout would be in pink or purple.

## 5- Create a gender balance:

For gender fairness and visibility, it is important to be careful of the use of generic terms. Generics are nouns and pronouns used for both women and men. For instance, with terms such as “Manpower”, “Mankind” or “Motherland”. These words can give the impression that one gender is superior to the other. It is hence better to avoid these generics to create a balanced and inclusive gender language. Accordingly, a neutral language is recommended.

Below are some gender stereotypes:

Gender Biased Language	Gender Responsive Language
Motherland	Homeland
Mother tongue	First Language
Mankind	Humanity, human beings, people
Manpower	Workforce, labor force, workers
Man days	Human Resources’ Time
Man-made	Of human origin, human-induced
Gentleman’s Agreement	Honorable agreement, unwritten agreement
Forefathers	Ancestors

## 6-Promote Gender Equity through titles:

Titles and occupations may reflect inequitable assumptions about women and men. Gender-sensitive language should be used for more inclusive and equitable representations of both genders. For instance, some suffixes can reinforce the notion that women are subordinate or leading different jobs than men. As such, some words and suffixes should be avoided to perceive men and women equally.

Gender Biased Language	Gender Responsive Language
Salesman/ Saleswoman	Sales person / sales clerk / sales representative
Career woman	Professional / Business Person
Male nurse	Nurse
Chairman	Chairperson
Policeman	Police Officer
Cameraman	Camera Operator/Photographer/Videographer

## Principles of Written and Audio-Visual Communication

First, it is important to properly plan when preparing press releases, stories, reports and publications. These materials should highlight examples of both women and men to break down gender inequalities and stereotypes. A gender component should be mainstreamed in all materials, especially in reports. Whenever possible, data should be disaggregated by gender.

In written communication, terms should be selected carefully and in a sensitive way. For example, women who face gender-based violence should not be addressed as victims but as survivors. As such and for more accurate stories, it is important to emphasize on the capacities of these women and be cautious not to invade the privacy of the person. Moreover, it is crucial to focus on the quantitative aspect; men and women should be represented and interviewed in equivalent numbers.

In audiovisual communication, stereotypes should be challenged with images, since women and men must be represented and portrayed equally. This could be done by breaking with notions of traditional gender functions and characteristics. For instance, in an article on a project that aims at building the capacities of municipal police, a photo can be added which includes women police officers. Or again, in a documentary on the opening of a local clinic, a men nurse could be interviewed.

To sum up, it is important to ensure equal coverage of men and women by equal representation of interests, capacities, characteristics, and vulnerabilities.

# DOS & DON'T

Words and images can be interpreted differently; some words could be considered biased and discriminatory. As such, language could itself be discriminatory and charged with stereotype. Therefore, it is crucial to select carefully the suitable communication language that can lead to gender equality, as well as diminish gender stereotypes.

Word usage frequently reflects the unconscious thinking, behavior, and values of a person. Therefore, it represents the external image of any organization.

As such, communication materials must exclude discriminatory words to promote gender equality.

## DOS

## DON'T

- Consider gender in multiple contexts
- Focus on gender as the study of both women and men
- Perceive gender from the perception of one's actions
- Understand that gender practices result in empowerment
- Take into account double standards

- Consider gender as a sexual identity only
- Assume that gender pertains to the differences between men and women
- Assume that gender is only about identity
- Gender identity has oppressive effects
- Assume that women are the only subject to gender discrimination

Moreover, you can find some guidelines for a more responsive-gender language:

- Alumni
- Corporate Wife
- Front man
- Hostess
- Housewife
- Self-made man
- Fraternal
- Frenchmen
- Like a man
- Man enough
- Man of action
- Manly
- Manpower
- Master plan
- King-size
- Kingmaker
- Rise of men

- Graduates
- Corporate Spouse
- Front, a Figure head
- Host
- Homemaker
- Entrepreneur
- Warm, intimate
- The French
- Bravely
- Strong enough
- Dynamo
- Strong, Mature
- Human Resources
- A comprehensive plan, vision
- Jumbo, gigantic
- The power behind the throne
- Rise of civilization