Session 1:
GENDER AND SEX

WABA Self-study Session 1 module 1

Glossary of the words used in this session

Hierarchy: Any system of persons ranked one above another.

Patriarchal: Characteristics of an entity, family, society, tribe or community controlled by men.

Discrimination: Treatment or consideration of , or making distinction in favour or against a person, based on a group, class, colour, faith or category to which that person belongs rather than on individual merit.

Gender Role: A set of social and behavioral norms that are generally considered appropriate for either a man or a woman in a social or interpersonal relationship.

Community: A social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common Characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society , within which it exists.
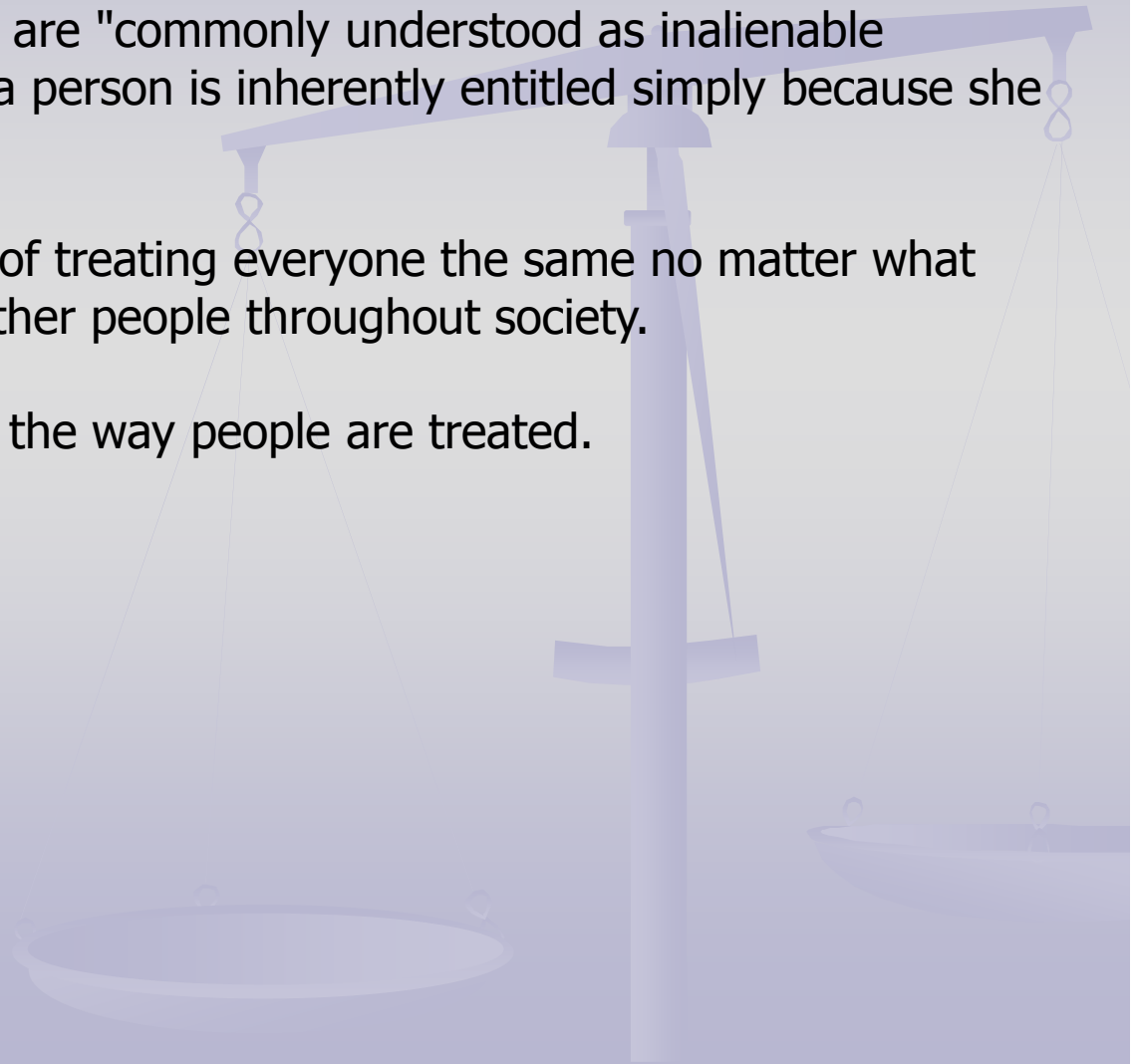
Glossary of the words used in this session : contd.

Social Norms: are group-held beliefs about how members of a community should behave in a given context.

Human Rights: Human rights are "commonly understood as inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being.

Equality: Equality is the idea of treating everyone the same no matter what differences they have from other people throughout society.

Equity : Fairness or justice in the way people are treated.

Glossary of the words used in this session : contd.

Power: Power is the ability to influence the behaviour of people.

Class: A set, collection, group, or configuration containing members regarded as having certain attributes or traits in common; a kind or category.

Caste: A caste is a system of social stratification and social restrictions in which social classes are defined by endogamous and hereditary groups.

Institutionalise: The term "institutionalisation" is widely used in social theory to refer to the process of embedding something (for example a concept, a social role, a particular value or mode of behaviour)within a social system, or society as a whole.

Gender Constructs: It focusses on how the meaning of Gender is created/developed in a society.

Glossary of the words used in this session : contd.

Stereotype: A simplified and standardized conception or image invested with
special meaning and held in common by members of <u>a</u> group.

Rights: Rights are legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement.

Dignity: Dignity is also known as respect. It is everyone's right to have dignity.

Entitlement: An entitlement is a guarantee of access to something, such as to welfare benefits, based on established rights or by legislation. A "right" is itself an entitlement.
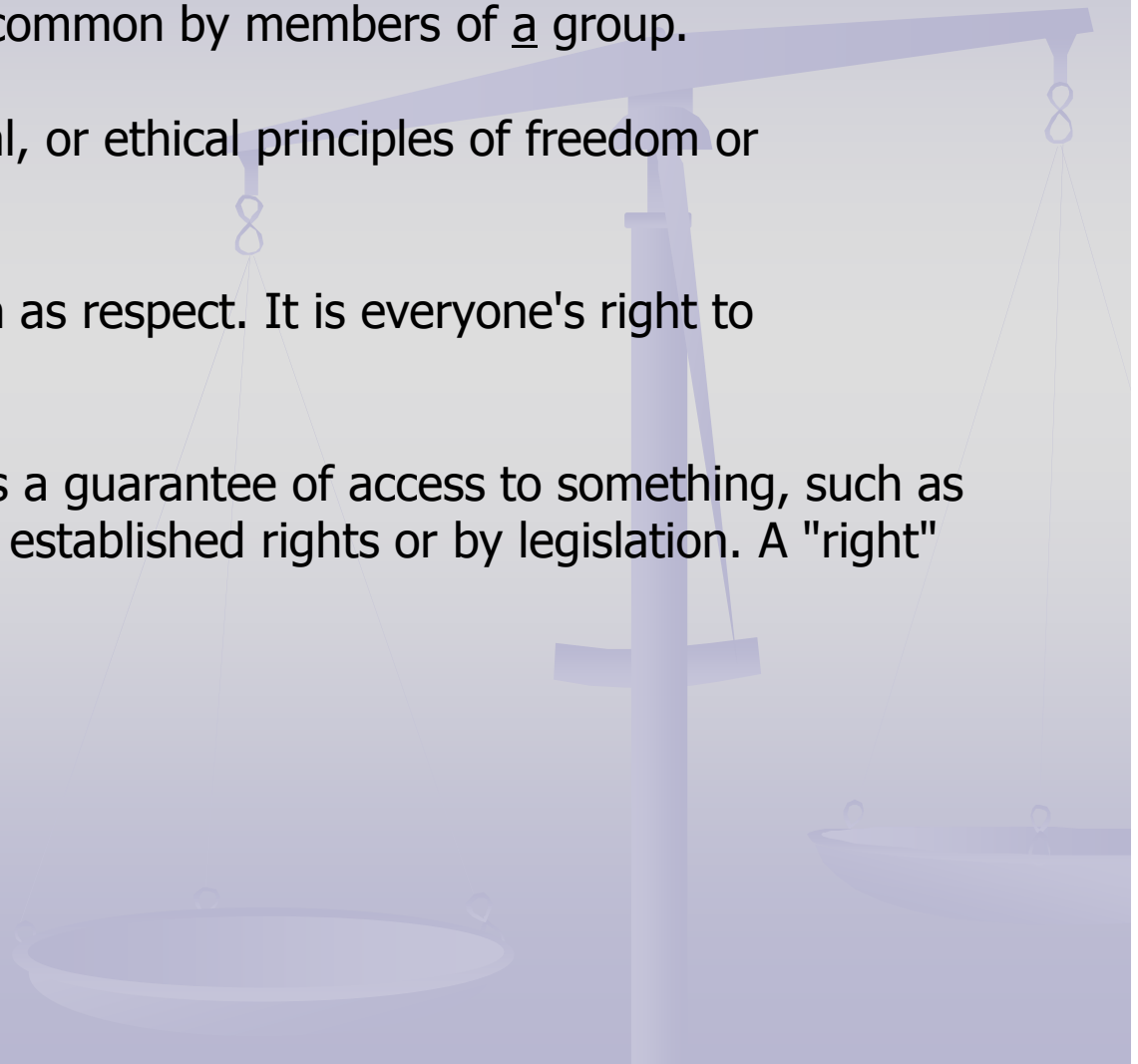
GENDER AND SEX

GENDER

■ Gender is a socially constructed classification of masculine and feminine qualities, roles, behaviors & responsibilities.

■ These roles, which are learned or enforced, change over time and vary widely within and between cultures.

■ It is man made!

SEX

■ Sex is defined by biological distinction between males & females.

■ Differentiated by genitalia and reproductive organs(e.g. female body has vagina, breasts; while a male body is characterised by penis, testicles).

■ It is natural!

❖ *However, a small amount of people are born naturally biologically intersexed*

Further Explanation

- The other differences between boys and girls such as their clothes, behaviour, education, the attitude of society towards them, are all social and cultural differences, and not biological.

- Thus these differences need not be the same in every family, community, country or in the world at large. Such social and cultural definitions are known as gender.

❑ For example, it is society that makes rules such as;

-A girl must stay in the house, while a boy can go out , or

-A girl will be given less food to eat and less time to play than a boy

- A boy will be given better education so he can look after the family business or get a good job

-The girl's education is often neglected so she can help her mother in household chores and childcare.

- These gender differences are not biological.

- Nature produces males and females and society turns them into men and women, feminine and masculine. It is gender which creates inequalities between girls and boys, women and men.

- It is society that decides that man is superior and woman is inferior, that the wages paid for men's work are higher than for women's work, that man is powerful and woman is weak.
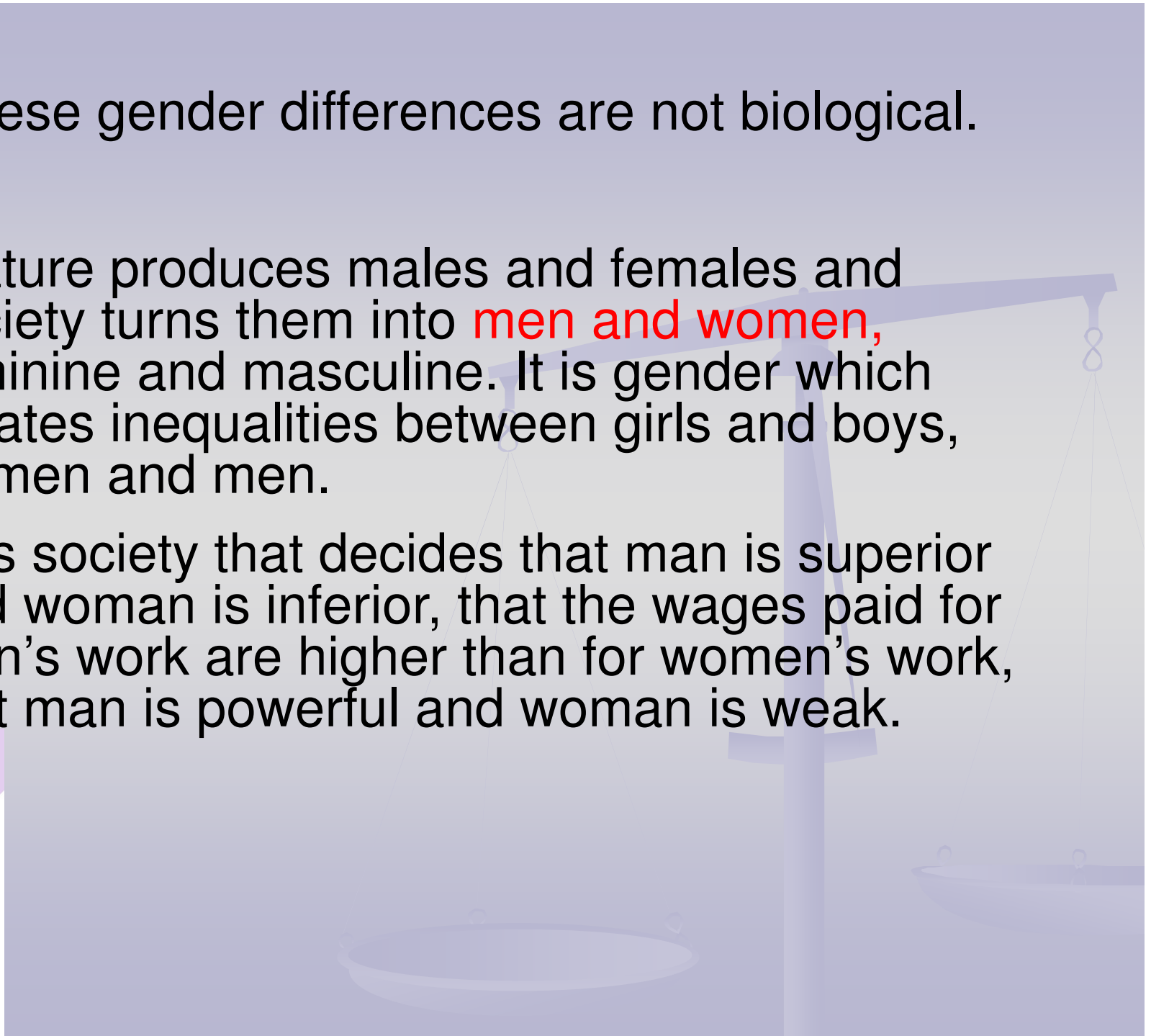
❑ Inequalities and hierarchies are created by society - which means by all of us

❑ The differences of class, caste, race and gender are constructed by society, not by nature or God.

- Most of the societies have evolved to be patriarchal in nature, which means that certain men are favoured, resulting in male domination. Gender thus becomes an expression of power which harms men as well as women.

- Because gender differences are prejudicial against women, girls face many obstacles; they experience discrimination and violence.

- Even within the same family, we can often see boys flourishing and girls languishing.

❑ Such gender differences do not only harm girls; they harm the entire family, community and country. Several rigid roles, qualities and responsibilities are imposed upon boys as well. They too are often prisoners and victims of a set of stereotyped gender roles.

Characteristics of Gender

- Relational – Socially constructed
- Hierarchical – Power relations
- Changes – Changes over time
- Context – Varies with ethnicity, class, culture, etc.
- Institutional – Systemic
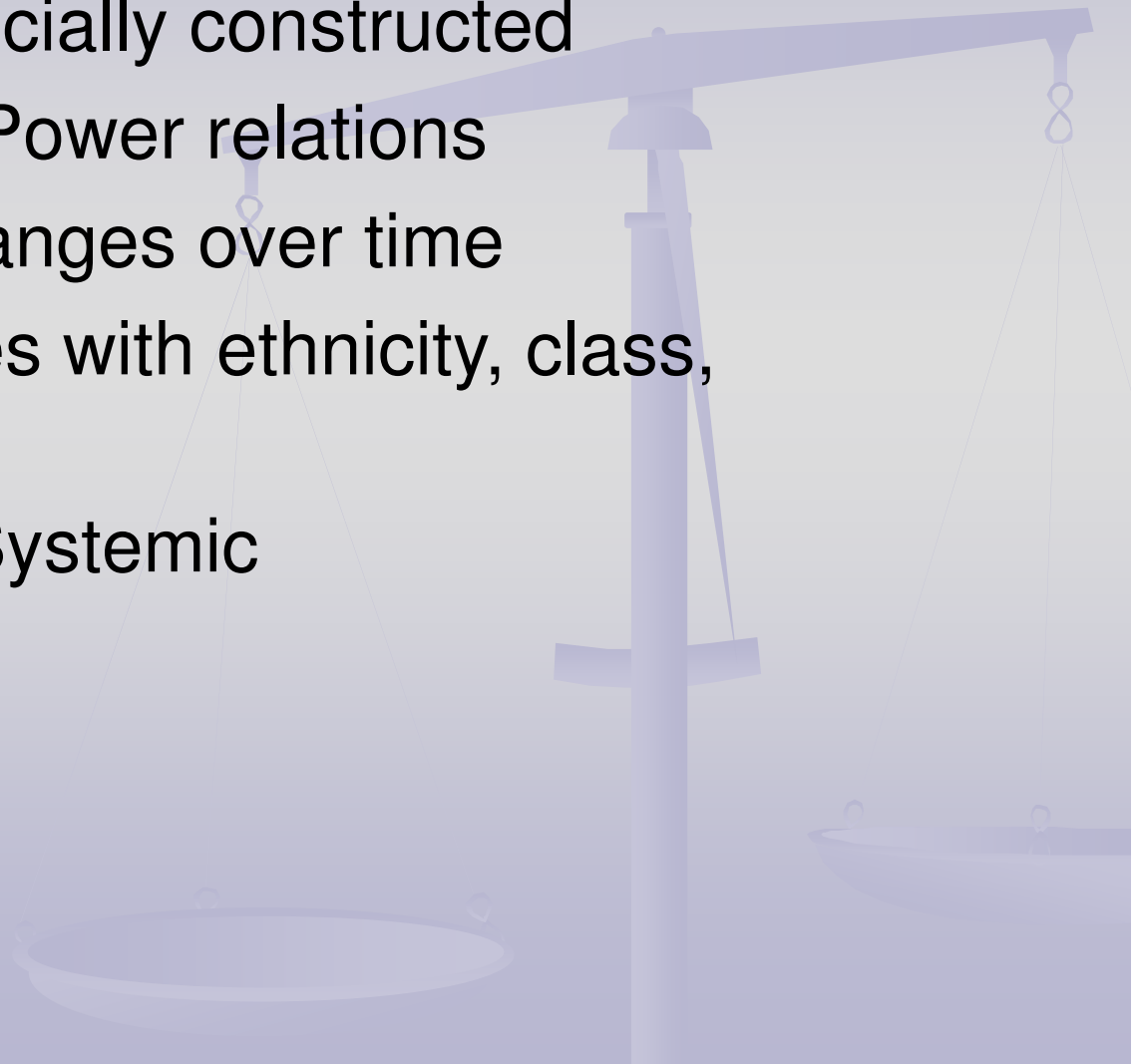
Characteristics of Gender: contd.

■ **Relational:** It is relational because it refers not to women or men in isolation, but to the relationships between them and how these relationships are socially constructed.

■ **Hierarchical:** It is hierarchical because the differences established between women and men, far from being neutral, tend to attribute greater importance and value to the characteristics and activities associated with what is masculine and to produce unequal power relationships.

Characteristics of Gender: contd.

■ **Changes over time:** Even though gender is historical, the roles and relations do change over time and, therefore, have definite potential for modification through development interventions.

■ **Context specific:** There are variations in gender roles and relations depending on the context: ethnic group, socio-economic group, culture etc., underlining the need to incorporate a perspective of diversity in gender analysis.

Characteristics of Gender: contd.

■ **Institutional:** It is institutionally structured because it refers not only to the relations between women and men at the personal and private level, but to a social system that is supported by values, legislation, religion, etc.

How is Gender Constructed

Gender is constructed by society over the different life periods/cycles of a girl and a boy. For example:

■   Adults/parents reinforce gender norms at home, e.g. in colour of clothes (blue for boys and pink for girls), toys (airplanes, cars for boys, and dolls and kitchen sets for girls), boys can go out and play till late but not girls;

■   Girls are identified as an extension of the mother/wife/daughter, so she(a child with her own rights, feelings, thoughts) is not considered as an individual

❖   Boys are given preferential treatment from the earliest moment of life, so they internalise that they are superior while girls are inferior. This leads to denial of personhood among girls;

❖   Even if a girl exerts her personhood/identity, they are discouraged from and/or punished. This eventually silences a woman;

- Girls are often denied access to networks dominated by high ranking men-circles essential to advancement in education, politics, business and careers.

- Gender is socially constructed throughout a man's and woman's life through social/gender norms, also institutionalised as masculine and feminine principles/traits. The institutions that perpetuate gender norms include the family, society, religion, the education system, legal system and health care system.
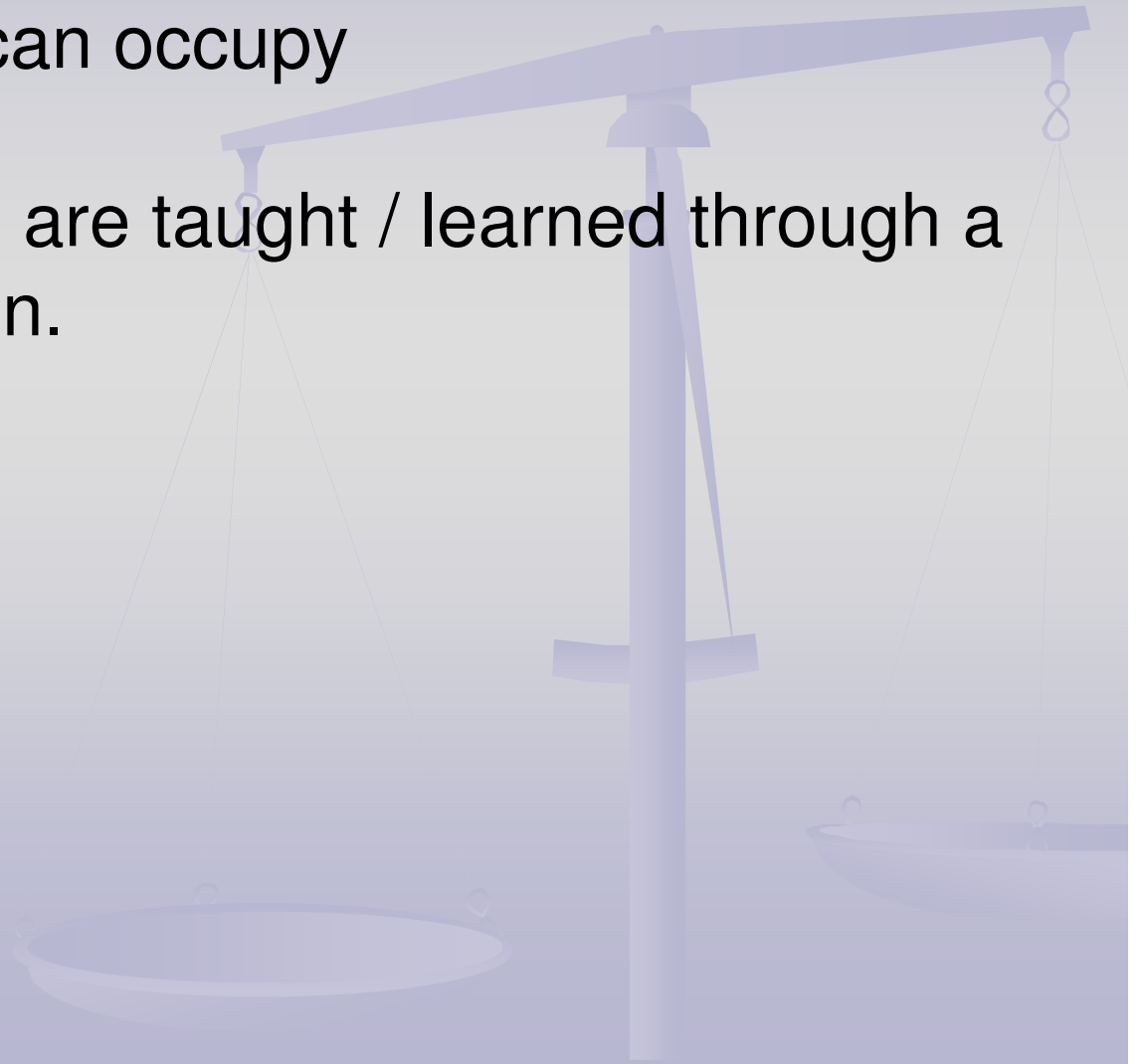
Socialisation refers to conditioning a person to behave in a certain way based on social expectations. For example:

- Dress: what you can wear and why

- Attributes: what qualities you should have, how you should behave

- **Spaces:** where you can go and where you cannot go, what spaces you can occupy

- **Gender roles:** these are taught / learned through a process of socialisation.

The process of socialisation involves the following:

- Manipulation: the way a child is handled

- Canalisation: Directing attention of male or female child to different objects

- Verbal Appellations: "How pretty you look", "How strong you are". These create Self Identity.

- **Activity Exposure:** Girls help mothers in the kitchen, boys go to bank or shopping with father.

- **Social Control:** Punishment is meted out to those who defy social norms.
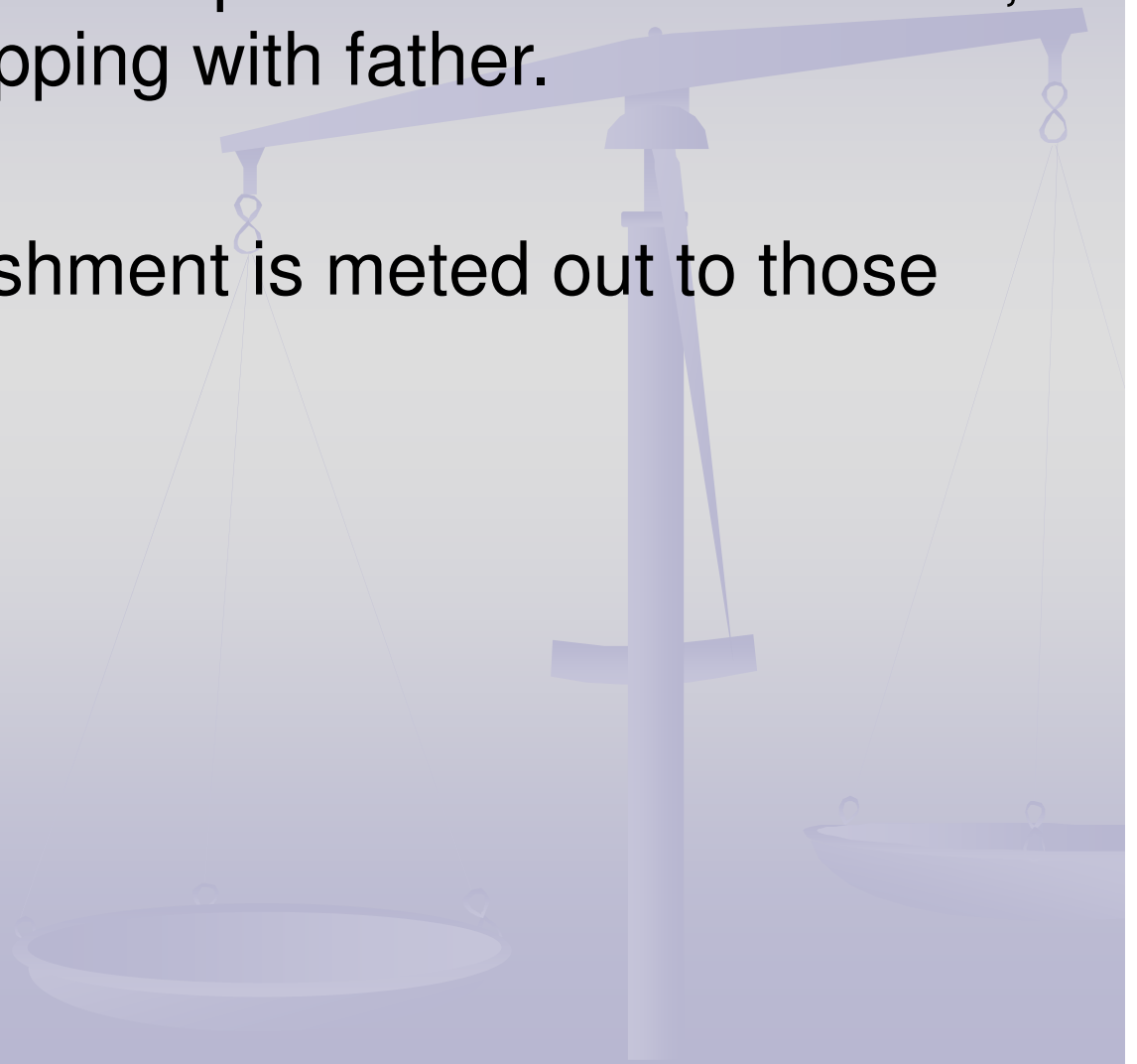
Gender as an Embedded Social System

- It begins with the **social beliefs** we have about men and women

- It consists of a set of internalised social practices

- The gender and associated power relations have become institutionalised over time and hence embedded into our social systems

■   The gender system is used for distinguishing men and women

■   It is also used for organising relations between men and women on the basis of apparent difference and inequality

■   It defines the **gender norms** that govern behaviour of men and women in society

■ It defines the **gender roles** for women and men (e.g. women as carers and nurturers, and men as breadwinners)

■ It also defines the **sexual division of labour** (men do productive work while women do reproductive work – both physical and social reproduction)

❖ Gender System sets **Different activities** for men and women (men's tasks are in the public domain and valued, while women's tasks are in the private domain and under or not valued)

❖ Sets **Differential access to and control over resources** (e.g. land, money, technology, knowledge, time & space)

❖ It defines **differential decision making and power.** Men make the decisions in household and outside, while women are supposed to follow. Power of decision making centres Men.

How gender works as a system

Beliefs in society

↓

Gender norms

↓

Gender roles for men and women

↓

Sexual division of labour

↓

Different **activities and tasks** for men and women

↓

Differential **access to and control over resources**

↓

Differential **decision making and power**

Certain **beliefs** in society about men and women
(e.g. men are strong, women are weak,
men are rational, women are emotional)

Define different **gender norms** which govern the behaviour of men and women in society (e.g. men can express themselves, men can be articulate, women must not express themselves or be articulate)

Different **gender norms**

↓

Define different **gender roles** for men and women (e.g. men must be breadwinners, women must be carers, nurturers)

↓

Sexual division of labour

- Productive work for men – earning income/wages
- Reproductive for women – caring, nurturing social reproduction;
- Community leadership for men
- Informal leadership without public or formal recognition for women

Sexual division of labour

Different **activities and tasks** for men and women (women's tasks undervalued and invisible, e.g. cooking, cleaning, women's work fragmented,

Public domain for men, private for women)

Differential **Access to and control over resources**
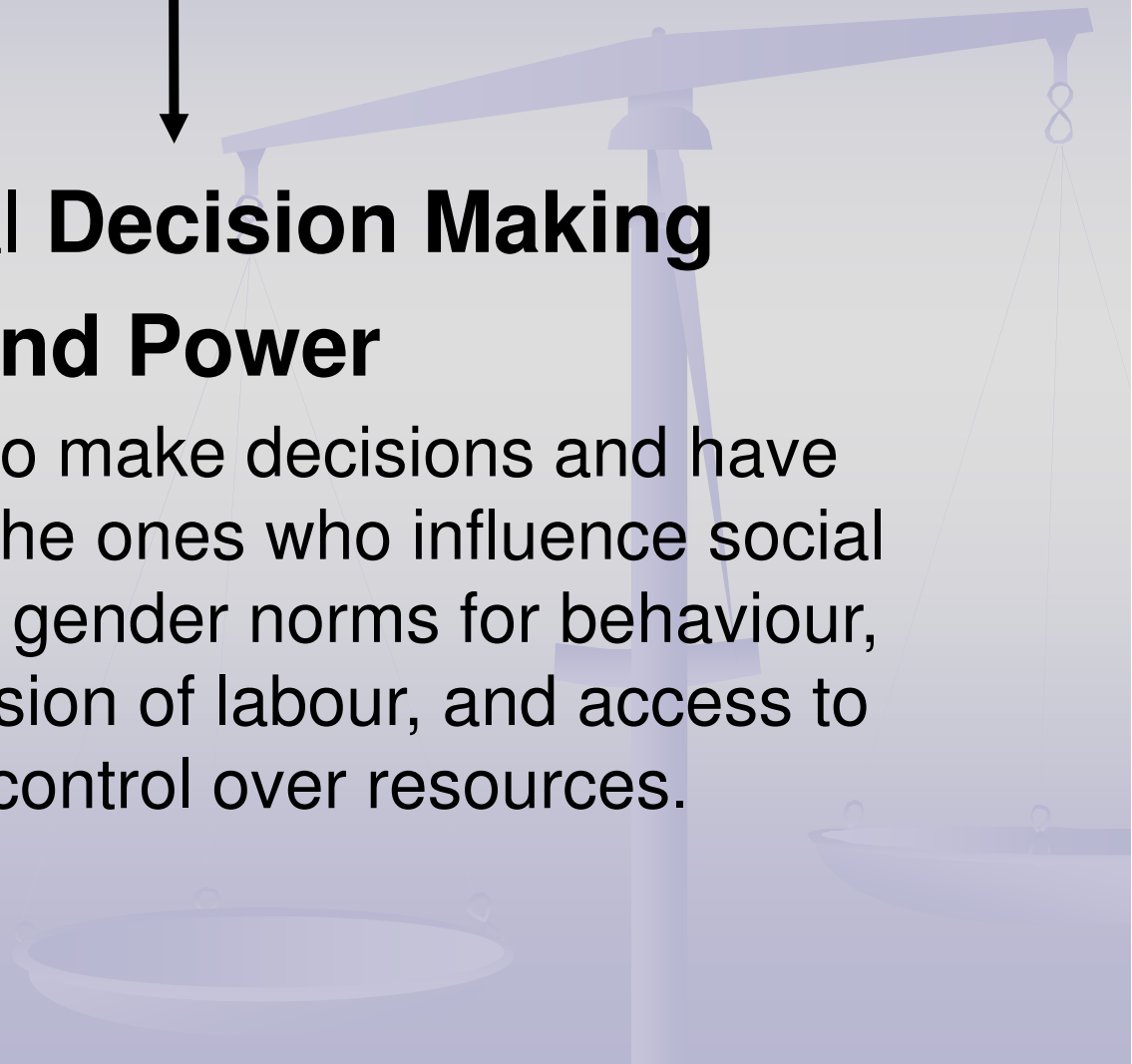(Resources like money, land, technology, knowledge, time, space).

# Differential **Access to and control over resources**

↓

## Differential **Decision Making and Power**

Those who make decisions and have power are the ones who influence social beliefs and gender norms for behaviour, sexual division of labour, and access to and control over resources.

■ This is a system which feeds on its subsystems and perpetuates itself.

■ This system can be changed at any level;

■ either by changing social beliefs,

■ or by changing norms for behaviour of men and women,
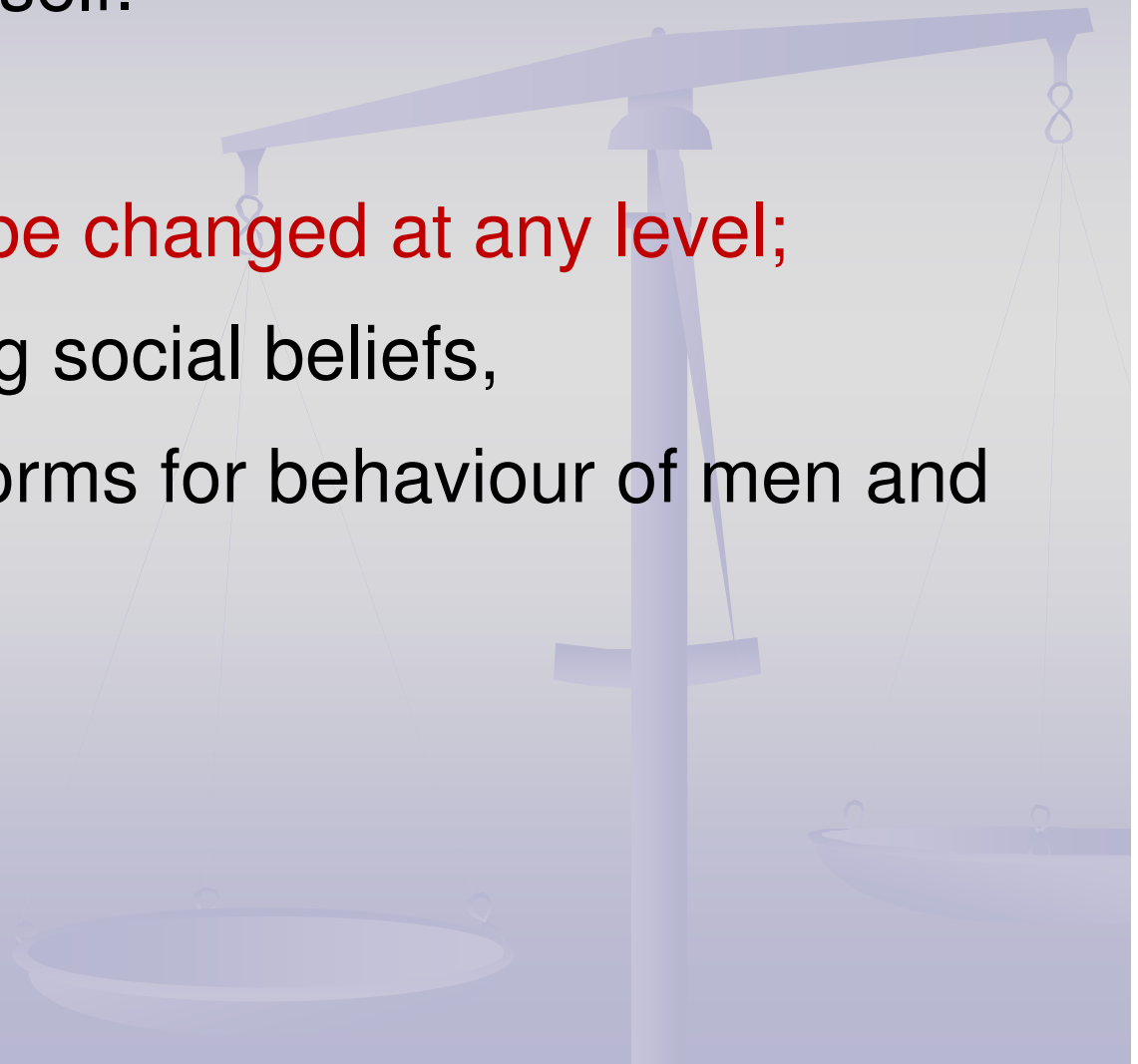
- or by changing the roles,

- or the work that men and women are supposed to do,

- or in the allocation of resources.

- **Gender constructs can be changed over time, space and contexts.**
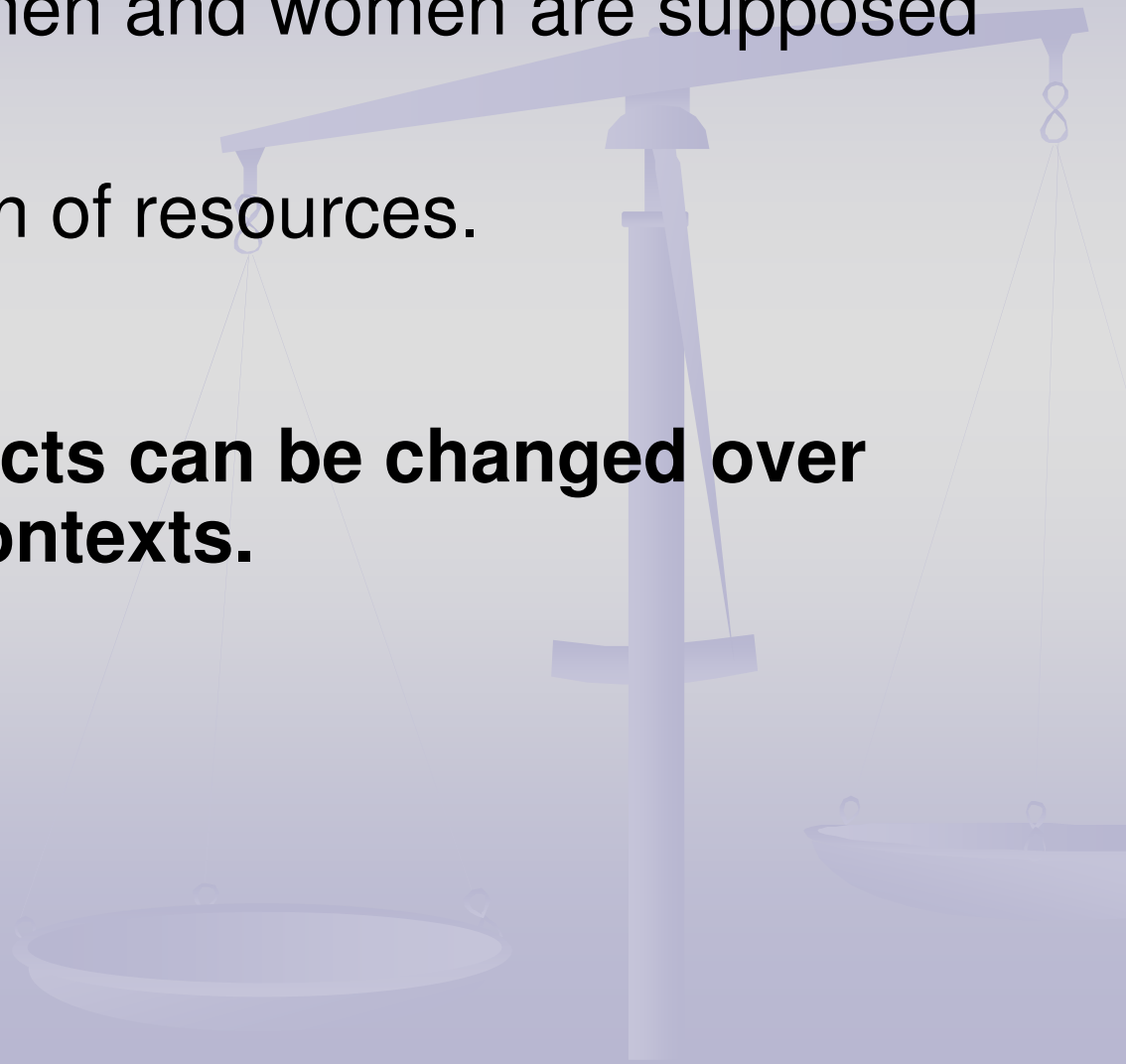
TODAY…

- In fact, many of the gender constructs are changing in today's day and age…

- Women who are privileged and in fortunate position are pushing the boundaries of the gender roles and sexual division of labour by asserting for more equality, equal partnerships in their relations with men (be it spouses or male colleagues, etc.) and being better educated.

■   **But it is still a long way to go for the majority of women worldwide, especially if opportunities to education and jobs are limited, and especially if access to resources and funds are still in the control of men.**

For more information, see:

- WABA Gender training kit Part 2:1 and 2:2.
- http://www.iwtc.org/ideas/15_definitions.pdf
- http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/
- http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/sexual-orientation-gender/gender-gender-identity-26530.htm

List & Summary of Global Documents relevant to Gender

- Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):
The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/

- The Beijing Declaration:4th World Conference on Women:
It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development.
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#statement

- The 2002 WHO Global Strategy for IYCF:

The **Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding** aims to revitalize efforts to promote, protect and support appropriate infant and young child feeding. It builds upon past initiatives, in particular the Innocenti Declaration and the Baby-friendly Hospital initiative and addresses the needs of all children including those living in difficult circumstances, such as infants of mothers living with HIV, low-birth-weight infants and infants in emergency situations.
http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/global_strategy/en/

- The ILO Convention C-183(2000) on Maternity Protection:

Maternity Protection at workplace is a legal and social recognition of the contribution that women make by having babies.It enables them to combine both productive and reproductive roles successfully at their workplaces.
http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C183

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child: (CRC)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. In 1989, world leaders decided that children needed a special convention just for them because people under 18 years old often need special care and protection that adults do not. The leaders also wanted to make sure that the world recognized that children have human rights too.
http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

- UN Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5:
The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest. MDG 4 deals with reduction in child mortality rate, while MDG 5 is about improvement in maternal health.
http://www.who.int/pmnch/about/about_mdgs/en/index.html
http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/maternal.shtml

- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000):
Recognized that war impacts women differently, and reaffirmed the need to increase women's role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. The UN Security Council subsequently adopted four additional resolutions on women, peace and security: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889(2009) and 1960 (2010). Taken together, the five resolutions represent a critical framework for improving the situation of women in conflict-affected countries.
See more at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325%282000%29

Bibliography

- Kamla Bhasin , *Understanding Gender* , New Delhi, Women Unlimited, 2004.

- Lakshmi Menon , *Gender Issues in Breastfeeding Advocacy* , Penang, Malaysia, World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action, 2003.
  http://www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/gender/pdf/Gender20Orientation.pdf/

- Lakshmi Menon , Vibhuti Patel , *Grinding Realities,* Penang,Malaysia & Mumbai,India , WABA & Post Graduate Deptt. Of Economics, S.N.D.T Women's University, 2005.

  http://www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/gender/pdf/gender_orderform.pdf

- Kamla Bhasin , *What is Patriarchy?* , New Delhi, Women Unlimited, 2004.

- Kamla Bhasin , *Exploring Masculinity* , New Delhi, Women Unlimited , 2004.