



Take home messages - Lesson Three

In Lesson Three you explored a variety of approaches to tackle gender stereotypes, these were outlined through six key strategies: using international and regional policy and rights frameworks; reforming the national and legal policy environment; raising awareness of gender stereotypes and building capacity of individuals to challenge them; enabling the ability of institutions to recognise and challenge gender stereotyping; promoting diverse representations; and building understanding of gender stereotypes to inform future policies, advocacy and practice. Here is a reminder of some of the key points:

Using international and regional policy frameworks

- International and regional human rights frameworks can be used to counter national laws or jurisprudence that perpetuate gender stereotypes: for example, the Optional Protocol to CEDAW can and has been used in court to challenge rulings that are based on gender stereotypes;
- Legal challenges can be brought through regional and national human rights institutions such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights;
- Simultaneously, gender awareness and sensitisation work is needed with lawyers, legislators and judges to ensure that they do not perpetuate gender stereotyping through their legal reasoning or in the design of legislation;
- Advocacy campaigns emerging from civil society are pushing governments to implement their international commitments to address gender stereotypes in all sectors, including education.

Reforming the national and legal policy environment

- New laws are being established which tackle gender stereotypes by linking them to issues in society, including discrimination (particularly in relation to violence against women), the media and the education and training sectors;
- Concerted pressure from national-based organisations is bringing about reform of laws and policies that reinforce gender stereotypes and discrimination, such as the Turkish Penal Code;
- Gender stereotypes can be combated through the introduction of voluntary codes of conduct, public campaigns and media literacy;
- In the workplace, paternity leave policies are a practical strategy to refute assumptions that only women are capable of caregiving and send a strong message that men also have responsibility towards the care of their children;
- Grassroots campaigns can focus on influencing change within industries - such as the media, the advertising, beauty, fashion and diet industries - which are heavily implicated in creating and reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Raising awareness of gender stereotypes and building capacity of individuals to challenge them

- Given how 'natural' gender stereotypes have become, awareness campaigns are key, particularly in challenging stereotypical attitudes in intimate relationships;
- Collaborations with communities, including emerging and existing leadership is essential in raising awareness of and challenging gender stereotypes;
- Providing space for self and collective reflection is critical in helping to dissect gender stereotypes including in educational institutions to help young people interrogate their beliefs about gender;
- Young people can be provided with skills to critically engage with the media and to question stereotypical portrayals of women and men;

- An important strategy is also to build the capacity of women and men to take up non-traditional roles - interventions are focusing on adopting non-stereotypical subject choices in schools and universities, building women's and girls' leadership skills by engaging girls in sporting activities such as football.

Building the capacity of institutions to challenge stereotypes

- Gender stereotypes in textbooks and learning materials can be reduced by removing sexist references and taking care to represent women, men, girls and boys equally, by promoting positive images of women and girls; and by promoting ideas of gender equality and women's rights;
- Although religious and traditional leaders often play a role in perpetuating gender stereotypes, they can also play a key role in challenging them. This includes women leaders in religious or traditional institutions;
- Judges, lawyers, law students and jurors can be sensitised and guided on assessing the presence and impact of stereotypes;
- In the health sector, participatory methods which include patients have been useful in training healthcare professionals about gender stereotypes;
- In the media, methods are being used that combine building capacity of individual journalists and media staff to represent gendered stories in non-stereotypical ways;
- Independent artists can be huge proponents of positive and transformative images of women and men.

Promoting a diversity of representations of women and men

- A key way of challenging simplistic gender stereotypes is to create and circulate more complex representations of women and men, in their full diversity;

- In the media, music and television can be used to promote positive portrayals of both men and women;
- Popular media such as soap opera and films can be used as a fun and educational way to help people interrogate their beliefs;
- Online campaigns which include blogs, digital postcards, shared video and audio help women share their stories across the globe;
- Participatory approaches, such as developing radio programmes, video and digital storytelling and participatory photography are useful ways to encourage women to create their own representations and express their own voices.

Building understanding of gender stereotypes to inform future policies, advocacy and practice

- It is important to undertake ad hoc research that exposes gender stereotypes or exposes resistance to stereotypes. There are good examples in relation to education, media representations of women, and an emerging methodology to track women's and men's attitudes towards gender equality, gender roles and gender stereotypes;
- Many research gaps remain, including a lack of research into gender stereotyping in sectors such as the economy, migration, and the environment, and the stereotyping of different women, where their other identities intersect- such as ethnicity, class, religion and age;
- Monitoring the prevalence of gender stereotypes in the media across the world can enhance the case for action. Media monitoring is undertaken by a diverse network of volunteers - from grassroots groups, gender and communication civil society groups, journalist unions, media practitioner associations and universities.