



A GENDER-RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION GUIDE

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PREFACE

Language is a mechanism, a tool, that influences thoughts, shapes gender roles and therefore carries a great potential for establishing gender equality in societies. It shows how we perceive life and also determines it. Language plays an important role in the formation of our thoughts and behaviors, hence the construction of our reality about gender.

As UNDP Turkey, we ground on gender equality and women's empowerment principles in all of our programs and interventions, within the institution and in all forms of communication with our partners. The reason we prepared this guide is to determine the ways to have a gender responsive approach when communicating both in the office and with the institutions, organizations, and individuals we work with.

The language we use begins to take shape from the moment we are born. It is kneaded within the norms, thoughts, and actions of the society we live in and becomes a set of rules that we unconsciously internalize. Therefore, we often use a sexist language even without realizing and thus reproduce it at every turn.

Based on the idea that transformation begins with awareness, this guide offers a stimulating path to the limits of our language, demonstrates how it reproduces gender inequality, and offers ways for changing this.

We believe that gender responsive communication is a sign of commitment to gender equality for any country, community or institution. Therefore, we invite you to become the transformation itself by following this sign.

We would like to thank you in advance for your interest and dedication to using a gender responsive language and hope that this guide will help us on the way to become a gender-equal society.

Claudio Tomasi

Resident Representative

UNDP in Turkey



INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and women's empowerment are key to development. Since 1990 human development framework¹, pioneered by the United Nations Development Program, has aimed at achieving economic prosperity along with equitable and fair access to resources and opportunities that enables individuals to realize their potential, and at ensuring that people are not discriminated against by gender, race, language, religion, class status, level of income, physical capacity, age, sexual orientation and sexual identity.

As part of the human development framework, combating gender inequality should be taken into account in all areas. The gender equality perspective requires that attention be accorded to women and men equally and visibly in all processes. Communication efforts need to understand, embed and use this perspective.

The United Nations information circular, entitled "Guidelines for promoting equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat" (ST/IC/1992/67) of 29 October 1992, states that, "Bias-free language is important because language reflects the attitude of the user. Expressions or words that suggest the superiority of one gender over the other should be avoided".

Similarly United Nations developed various tools for gender inclusive language which "means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes. Given the key role of language in shaping cultural and social attitudes, using gender-inclusive language is a powerful way to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias."²

The Gender-Responsive Communication Guide is both a tool, an outcome and an indicator of gender equality mainstreaming efforts of UNDP in Turkey, an effort that has been accelerating since 2015.

¹ UNDP human development framework was pioneered by UNDP, with Mahbub ul-Huq, through the Human Development Report (HDR), beginning in 1990. For the definition see: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev>

² United Nations Gender Inclusive Language, at <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/index.shtml>



WHY GENDER-RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION?

Language shapes our interpretation of the world. It defines how we think and behave. The words we choose when communicating reflects our assumptions about the outer world, including gender relations.

The definitions of reality are not a given but are constructed through language. There are definitions that are dominant, but also alternative ones that question the prevailing norms.

It is also possible to ensure transformation takes place in the meaning accorded to reality and hence in thoughts and behaviours through changing the language of communication and managing the content of communication mediums. We should not forget that language has both the power of exacerbating and reproducing gender inequality, but that it also has great potential for establishing gender equality in society.

Gender stereotypes deliver a “biased” perspective on the world and on opportunities, set boundaries for women and men and reproduce traditional gender roles.

Gender-biased language has penetrated our workplaces and daily lives. Gender-responsive language on the other hand fights the unconscious assumptions that manifest themselves in daily language.

Gender-responsive communication is both an inclusive and a strategic tool for gender mainstreaming and a must-have skill for all development practitioners. It is a tool because through which women and men are equally and fairly represented, benefit equally from resources and opportunities, and perform equal roles – a tool where gender balance is taken into account during decision-making processes and where stereotypes are questioned. As stated in the UNDP Guide for gender responsive communications, it is a must-have skill because development practitioners must be aware of the ways in which language can either enforce or subvert gender inequalities” in all levels of their interaction and intervention.³

³ Marin, F (2018) *Let's speak Gender, 10 Principles of Gender Responsive Communications for Development*, UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub, Istanbul. <https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/gender-equality/10-principles-of-genderresponsive-communications.html>



WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY?

The term “sex” defines the biological differences between women and men while “gender” stands for the differences that are constructed socially and have social origins. An individual’s gender is constituted by roles and features that are not solely naturally and biologically specified, but that are primarily imposed by norms and stereotypes. The roles, behaviours, actions and characteristics socially constructed for women and men are expressed in the concept of “gender”. Gender is a construction which varies by time and culture.

Gender equality stands for the fact that individuals enjoy equal opportunities and rights in every aspect of life; have equal access to resources and are treated equally regardless of their sex; can develop personal knowledge and skills in all areas they wish and realize their potential; and are able to exercise their own preferences.

GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender stereotypes can be defined as simple assumptions and thoughts concerning the behaviour patterns of women and men. These assumptions and thoughts are determined in accordance with the gender regime in a society. They ensure the systematic reproduction and reinforcement of unequal relationships between the sexes. By limiting the multidimensional and complex nature of individuals, gender stereotypes standardize perceptions. They accept and impose both a gender binary in the social structure and the notion that one gender is superior to the other.

Gender stereotypes reflect on language and on any kind of communication in specific areas, such as personality, physical characteristics, roles and occupations. While men are predominantly represented as aggressive, competitive and outward, women are personified as passive, collaborative and inward. The man is positioned as the one who maintains family and home, yet a woman is assigned the role of mother/wife and of taking care of the family. Physical characteristics and occupations are also coded with feminine and masculine stereotypes independently of individuals’ characteristics.



FEMININE STEREOTYPES	MASCULINE STEREOTYPES
<p>Personality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kind • Delicate • Emotional • Attentive 	<p>Personality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extroverted • Bold • Competitive • Rude
<p>Physical characteristic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slim • Well-groomed • Gracious 	<p>Physical characteristic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Poorly groomed • Sloppy
<p>Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At home • Wife and/or mother • Responsible for housework • Family caretaker 	<p>Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the public sphere • Maintaining family and house • Rule-maker/decision-maker • Protecting and representing the family
<p>Occupation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare giver • Nurse • Stewardess • Teacher • Secretary 	<p>Occupation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctor • Artisan • Engineer • Pilot • Mechanic • Technician • Manager • Judge • Administrator



GENERIC USE OF “MAN” AND “HE”

The generic use of ‘man’ and ‘he’ (and ‘his’, ‘him’, ‘himself’) is commonly considered gender-neutral. The case against the generic use of these terms does not rest on rare instances in which they refer ambiguously to ‘male’ or ‘human being’.⁴

Rather, every instance of their generic use is problematic. Using the generic ‘he’ and ‘man’ is problematic because it often leads us to omit the distinctive elements of women’s experience and behaviour.⁵

Casey Miller and Kate Swift (1976) cite a study in which college students chose pictures to illustrate chapters of a sociology textbook. Those with chapters entitled “Society,” “Industrial Life” and “Political Behaviour” tended to select pictures of both women and men. However, when the same chapters were named “Social Man,” “Industrial Man” and “Political Man,” students of both sexes tended to select pictures of men only. “This is convincing evidence that when you use the word man generically, people do tend to think male, and tend not to think female.”⁶ Megan M. Miller and Lori E. James (2009) repeated the same experiment conducted by Don M. Mackay and David C. Fulkerson (1979)⁷ on interpretation of college students sentences containing generic he as excluding females. Miller and James made test with 48 participants and they reached the same results as Mackay and Fulkerson reached almost 30 years ago: “(...) although people know that it is acceptable to use GM (generic masculine) pronouns when referring to a hypothetical person whose sex is unspecified, they do not interpret these terms as generic (i.e., as possibly referring to a female or a male). (...) When masculine pronouns are used generically, people tend to mistakenly interpret them sex-specifically and to exclude women”

As a matter of fact, the word “man” often implicitly assimilates being male with being a human and makes a woman invisible while claiming to apply to “everyone”.

4 Marin, F (2018) *Let’s speak Gender, 10 Principles of Gender Responsive Communications for Development*, UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub, Istanbul. <https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/gender-equality/10-principles-of-genderresponsive-communications.html>

5 Virginia L. Warren *Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language*, in APA Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession at <http://www.apaonlinecsww.org/apa-guidelines-for-non-sexist-use-of-language> last access 15.01.2021

6 Casey Miller and Kate Swift. (1976) *Words and Women*, New York: Anchor Press, p. 21.

7 MacKay, D. G., & Fulkerson, D. C. (1979). “On the comprehension and production of pronouns”. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 18, 661-673. Megan M. Miller and Lori E. James. (2009). “Is the generic pronoun he still comprehended as excluding women?”, *The American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 122, No. 4p, p. 483-496



STRATEGIES TO REDUCE NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

Gender roles mean that men and women tend to be associated with specific products and services, with women traditionally assigned to the kitchen or to a beauty parlour and men assigned to the realm of sports, for example, and each sex tends to be visualized with possessing certain physical characteristics. The requisite factors called for in order to avoid a language that upholds gender stereotypes and that contains sexist features, as well as to reduce gender-based negative outcomes in communication, are outlined below:

- Avoid exclusionary forms such as, “Dear mothers, please bake cookies for our class party.” Choose inclusive alternatives, “Dear families, please bake cookies for our class party.”
- Do not represent certain jobs or roles as only appropriate for women or men, i.e. farmers are men, elementary teachers are women. This leads to gender-based assumptions. When referring to a job or role, use a gender-specific pronoun only if the reference is to the gender of the person.
- Avoid expressions that marginalize women by adding the word “woman” as a prefix before certain occupations, on the assumption that some jobs are exclusive to men.
- Avoid using titles to name people and occupations that often reflect inequitable assumptions about men and women. Gender-fair language promotes more inclusive and equitable representations of both women and men, opening up possibilities rather than restricting choices.
- Identify men and women in the same way. Diminutive or special appellations to name women are usually unnecessary. In most cases, generic terms such as doctor, judge, or actor include both genders. Alternate forms are needed only occasionally, and in these cases, the alternate form replaces both the masculine and the feminine titles.
- Seek alternatives to the phrases that omit, patronize or trivialize women, as well as to those that reinforce stereotypical images of both women and men.
- Avoid using preconceived, stereotypical sexist words, expressions, proverbs, idioms and try to build sentences differently. Kadına ve erkeğe aynı davranışı gösterin.
- Ensure women and men are equally represented in visual communication.
- Treat women and men in the same manner.
- Use forms of address that promote gender equity. Avoid forms of address



ress that label a woman in regard to her relationship to a man (her marital status), or forms of address that depict a woman as the mere appendage of her husband, trivialize women or render them invisible.

- Recognize, explore, question and transform gender inequalities in society by focusing on the world of perception and language.

BE SENSITIVE WHEN USING VISUAL MATERIAL

An essential feature of UNDP communication activities is that they must not impact any individual negatively. This concept is governed by the “do no harm” principle, the central aspect of human development and of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Using and producing visual material is also one of the areas where this principle will be adhered to. We should keep in mind that respecting the privacy of persons who are featured in our magazines, videos or other materials should be a priority. Their safety and personal rights are our main concern during UNDP communication activities. Everyone involved should be informed about any visual material we produce and consent to participate in this effort.

Within this framework, “informed consent” indicates what kind of information we collect; how and where we will use this information; what kind of benefits it will bring; clearly informing persons about potential outcomes that may arise; having their consent to participate in the work and the choice to opt out of doing so. The person may opt for keeping her/his name confidential and for not using her/his visuals may agree to including information or to being completely visible. Or a person may allow partial use of information or refuse unabashedly to any such consent.

The final communications product should be based on the aforementioned consent. In particular, when photographing or using children’s images one must seek the consent of families or of other responsible adults. Even if received, the children’s best interests should be taken fully into account in every situation. After receiving informed consent, the following are needed for achieving an inclusive approach:



- Put people in the centre. Choose visuals that represent both women and men equally.



Photo: Levent Kulu/UNDP Turkey, 28 May 2019 – UNDP Turkey Country Office, Ankara

- Ensure that men and women are not playing stereotypical / traditional roles.



Engineer Girls of Turkey Project. Photo: Beril Toper, 27 November 2019 – Construction of Çanakkale 1915 Bridge



Photo: Bora Akbay/UNDP Turkey, February 2018 – Iğdır, Turkey (<https://www.best5.org/>)





Photo: UN Women Turkey #HeForSheAtHome Campaign. Ahmet Düverioğlu, Professional Basketball Player



Photo: UN Women Turkey #HeForSheAtHome Campaign. Anil Altan, Actor



- Avoid visuals that victimize the survivor or disadvantaged people.
- Avoid visuals that reproduce gender stereotypes.



Photo: UNDP Jordan #EqualPartners Campaign



Photo: UNDP #EqualPartners Campaign

- Avoid representing refugees or any social group in an impersonal way or categorizing them as “refugee” or “migrant”, or portraying them as sufferer or victim.



- Use visuals and expressions that highlight personal differences, such as nationality, age, sex, ethnicity or disability.



Photo: Levent Kulu/UNDP Turkey, 10 May 2020 – Büyükçekmece, Istanbul

- Avoid speaking on behalf of people, rather act in a manner that encourages them to be heard.

POINTS TO CONSIDER IN VIDEO/FILM PRODUCTION

Visibility ensures that our work gets known, inspires other work and sets an example. Today, video clips represent the most important aspect of visibility efforts. During a video production, gender equality and inclusion are core principles to be observed starting from generation of the idea for the film and throughout the entire production process.

As development professionals, our responsibility is to know our institutional values on gender equality and to place them at the core of all our work. People or institutions that collaborate with us will be made aware that they must conform with the aforementioned principles, knowledge and guidance. Within this framework, the vital points to consider in video/film production are as follows:

- Conduct a video/film production process by contacting and collaborating with gender equality experts.
- Collaborate with people or institutions that have the requisite gender equality awareness/work for video/film production.
- You can transmit this Gender-Responsive Communication Guide, prepared by UNDP in Turkey, to people who are in video/film, or who produce video/film. Ensure those people preview various materials related to the topic and underscore our sensitivity to this issue.



- Clearly state our clearly enunciated policy of not using sexist language towards parties that participate in the production process. If necessary, include this in the terms of reference and similar documents.
- Before recording starts, inform the narrator that the recording may be cut and remade if sexist language is used in the dialogue.
- Remind the narrator that if they use an expression that is incompatible with principles of your institution, we will ask them to make the recording again.
- If we do not know the narrator's language and the translator's rendering shows that she/he has used expressions that are inappropriate in terms of gender equality, ask that she/he approves the changes that need to be done in the Turkish subtitles to ensure respect for gender equality norms.

ENSURE GENDER-SENSITIVE COMMUNICATION AND CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES

PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH TITLES AND OCCUPATIONAL REFERENCES

Biased	Bias-free
salesman, saleswoman	sales representative, salesperson
career woman	professional, executive, business person
steward, stewardess	flight attendant
waitress	waiter, server
male nurse	nurse
congressman	member of congress
spokesman	spokesperson, representative, (when talking about a specific person: Mr., Mrs., Ms.)
alumni	graduates



chairman, chairwoman	chair, chairperson
committee man, committee woman	committee member
corporate wife	corporate spouse
faculty wife	faculty spouse
freshman	first-year student
front man	front, figurehead
hostess	host
housewife, househusband	homemaker
middleman	go-between
man and wife	husband and wife
self-made man	self-made person, entrepreneur
businessman	business executive, entrepreneur
cleaning lady	cleaner
delivery boy	courier, messenger
foreman	supervisor
girl Friday	clerk, office assistant, receptionist
insurance man	insurance agent

AVOID USING EXCLUSIONARY TERMS

Biased	Bias-free
man	person, individual, human being
mankind	humanity, human beings, people, men
chairman	chairperson, president (in certain cases)
the average man	the average person/individual, people in general
manpower	workforce, human power, labour force, workers



to man (verb) a project	to staff a project, to hire personnel for the
man-made	of human origin, human-induced,
cameraman	camera operator, for plural: camera crew
mailman	mail carrier, letter carrier
policeman	police officer
repairman	repairer, technician
serviceman	service representative
landlady, landlord	proprietor,
gentleman's agreement	honourable agreement, unwritten agreement
manhood	adulthood (when referring to people in general and not to men)
brotherhood	kinship, community solidarity, human fellowship, human kinship
common man	common person, average person
countryman	compatriot
motherland, fatherland	native land
fellowmen	human
forefathers	ancestors, forebears
fraternal	warm, intimate
Frenchmen	the French
mother tongue	native language
rise of man	rise of civilization
thinking man	thinking person, thinker, intellectual



AVOID REPRODUCING STEREOTYPES

Biased	Bias-free
kingmaker	power behind the throne
lady	woman
ladylike	courteous, cultured
like a man	resolutely, bravely
maiden name	birth name
maiden voyage	first voyage
man (verb)	staff, run
man enough	strong enough
manhood	adulthood
man	strong, mature
manpower	human resource
master (noun)	owner, expert, chief, superior
master (verb)	learn, succeed at, overcome
master (adj.)	expert, gifted, accomplished
master of ceremonies	host, moderator
masterful	skilled, authoritative, commanding
mastermind (noun)	genius, creator, instigator
mastermind (verb)	oversee, launch, originate
masterpiece	work of genius, chef d'oeuvre
masterplan	comprehensive plan, vision
masterstroke	trump card, stroke of genius
man-made	artificial, synthetic, machine-made
man of action	dynamo
man of letters	scholar, writer, literary figure



USE GENDER-RESPONSIVE TURNS OF PHRASE

Biased	Bias-free
all men are created equal	we are all created equal
be his own boss	be one's own person
best man for the job	best person for the job
boys will be boys	kids will be kids
everybody and his brother	everybody and their cousins
every man for himself	everyone for themselves
a man's home is his castle	your home is your castle
John Q. Public	the average citizen
every schoolboy knows	every school child knows
gentleman's agreement	honourable/informal agreement
no-man's-land	limbo, unclaimed territory
to a man	to a person, without exception

EXAMPLES AND PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES

Biased	Bias-free
(manager talking to the director): I will have my girl do that job	I'll ask my assistant (or secretary) to do that job
Social Good Summit attendees and their wives are invited	Social Good Summit attendees and their partners are invited
John and Mary both have full time jobs; he helps with the housework	John and Mary both have full time jobs; they share the housework
Research scientists often neglect their wives and children	Research scientists often neglect their families



The average construction worker is experiencing impacts on his health by the age of 35	Generally, construction workers are experiencing impacts on their health by the age of 35
The Convention participants and their wives are invited	The Convention participants and their spouses (guests) are invited
Transport will be provided for delegates and their wives	Transport will be provided for delegates and their spouses
All ladies on the committee supported the proposed amendment	All women on the committee supported the proposed amendment
All political leaders must work 12 hours a day and seven days a week. This places a heavy burden on him. He must cope with this or lose popularity	All political leaders must work 12 hours a day and seven days a week. This places a heavy burden on them. They must cope with this or lose popularity (s/he can also be used)
Maria is a career woman	Maria is a professional woman. Maria is an engineer
A doctor knows that every day he will touch a life or a life will touch his	A doctor knows that every day they will touch a life or a life will touch theirs
Pam had lunch with girls at the office.	Pam had lunch with women at the office.
You can always read a doctor's bill, but you can never read his prescription.	You can always read a doctor's bill, but you can never read their prescription.



ANALYSING DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

Review and analyse the different information media that are used within internal and external communications. These should reflect the office's vision, position and actions on gender equality.

- Language used
- Images used
- Type of messages being conveyed
- Target of message
- Presence of gender issues, and whether they are marginal or prominent
- Evidence of the office's vision and position on gender in the country

ENSURE GENDER RESPONSIVENESS IN COMMUNICATION WITH EXTERNAL PARTIES

- Be gender-responsive on website in terms of language and visuals. Üst yönetim tarafından yapılan konuşmaların içeriğinde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine ilişkin mesajlara yer vermek ve dil kullanımına özen göstermek
- Include gender equality-related messages in the speeches delivered by senior management and be attentive to language use.
- Elect both women and men as official spokespersons of an institution. Etkinliklerde kadınları ve erkekleri eşit olarak görevlendirmek
- Aim for gender parity while identifying speakers at events
- Assign women and men equally at events.
- Encourage equal participation of women and men at events.
- Ensure that women are not only given roles of presenter and/or facilitator at events, but also of chair and speaker.
- Preserve a gender-responsive approach in the content, language and



visuals of institutional communication and publicity materials.

- Pay attention to language in relation to gender used in publishing, documentaries, television interviews and radio broadcasts.
- Avoid gender stereotypes in press releases and social media messaging.
- Provide equal representation of women and men in visuals to be shared in the print and visual mediums and through social media.

ENSURE GENDER-RESPONSIVENESS IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Ensure gender-responsive language is used in the following instances: Kadınlar ve erkekler için kullanılan hitap cümlelerinde (Bay, bayan, sevgili, sayın)

- Every kind of correspondence (e.g. letters, e-mail)
- Salutation sentences used for women and men (Mr., Mrs., dear, honourable)
- Language that management uses for employees and language that employees use among themselves.
- Language that is used in presentations and communication in internal meetings.
- Language that is used in inter-office communication materials (e.g. bulletins, brochures sent from headquarters or a country office)
- Language in posters and slogans used for office decoration.
- Inter-office language and communication guides.

One should take care to ensure the equal representation and active participation of women and men in office events, and that both women and men are assigned as facilitators or coordinators at events.



INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS: SOLIDARITY BETWEEN US

To communicate in a gender-responsive way, one must make a habit of using language that is not confrontational and competitive, but solidarity-oriented. Gender-responsive communication is that which conveys situations specific to women and men and avoids repressive power relations. The relationships among employees in the workplace should be based upon collaboration, honesty and looking after one another's rights. Changing our communication culture starts with actively listening, empathizing and exhibiting concern for the well-being of others. Once open communication has been established, and an exchange of views, collaboration and confidential horizontal relationships replace individualist, competitive behaviour and power-oriented vertical hierarchical relationships, we begin to communicate in a gender-responsive way.

DEBATE VERSUS DIALOGUE

Debate	Dialogue
Assuming that there is a right answer and you know what it is	Assuming that many people have parts of the answers
Combative: Participants attempt to prove the other side wrong	Collaborative: Participants work together towards a common understanding
About winning	About exploring common ground
Listening to flaws in an argument and making counter arguments	Listening to understand, find meaning and reach a consensus
Defending our own assumptions/truths	Admitting that other people's thinking can improve one's own
Searching for flaws and weaknesses in others' positions	Searching for strengths and value in others' positions
By creating a winner and a loser, discouraging further discussion	Keeping the topic going even after the discussion has formally ended
Seeking a conclusion or vote that justifies and endorses your position	Discovering new options, not seeking closure



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