



GENDER EQUALITY AT PRERANA

Guidelines for Staff

Prerana believes in gender equality, promoting equal rights, building choices, and restoring dignity. Through its many programs and interventions, it is committed to furthering Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) - Gender Equality. It emphasizes non-discriminatory and equitable behavior by its staff towards the clients as well as each other.

Here are a few guidelines on gender-sensitive behavior that all those who come in contact with children are expected to adhere to during the course of their work at Prerana. The objective is to ensure that our behavior is fair, equal, just, and non-discriminatory. Please note this is an introductory note on understanding and practising gender sensitively in Prerana.

Definitions as understood in this document:

Gender

Gender is to be understood as a social construct that classifies individuals into men, women, transgender, non-binary and other identities. It is not biological and is affected by our social environments.

"Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities." (WHO)

Gender equality

Gender equality requires equal enjoyment by women and men of socially-valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Where gender inequality exists, it is generally women who are excluded or disadvantaged in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources. (UNFPA)

Gender equity

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must often be available to compensate for women's historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality. (UNFPA)

For the purpose of this document, the word 'staff' includes employees, consultants, trainees, interns, facilitators, and volunteers. A child is to be understood as an individual under 18 years of age.

1. We believe in equality. No staff member/volunteer/intern must discriminate between any child or colleague on the basis of their gender and/or sexual orientation.

Language:

2. **The language used in interacting with a child must not be discriminatory or biased.**

It is recommended to use he, she and they, as pronouns, and be as gender-neutral as possible in our communication. Example - human resources instead of manpower, humankind instead of mankind, sportsperson instead of sportsman, chairperson instead of chairman, etc.

3. **Communication with clients must not reinforce stereotypes and gendered biases.**

Example 1 - *Girls are better at cooking and boys are better at playing sports. Girls create dramatic situations, boys are bad at expressing emotions, boys don't cry, boys are stronger than girls.* Such statements promote stereotypes and are not founded on facts. A child's ability to succeed in an activity or express themselves is not based on their gender but influenced by their surroundings, and it is our responsibility to encourage them to break free from stereotypes.

Example 2 - *Rajeev is an intelligent/smart/hardworking boy. Saima is a beautiful/kind/cute/pretty girl.* The above sentences focus on the physical attributes of the children, and also bank on stereotypes where boys/men are usually praised for their intellectual abilities but girls/women are appreciated for their physical appearances. Such language must be avoided, and children must not be reduced to the stereotypes around their gender.



Example 3: A male client likes pink color, a girl client does not like jewelry, a transgender client likes to dance. It is important to respect the child's choices and not impose stereotypes upon the child in any such situation.

Example 4: *Girls are naturally better cooks. Boys are tough, girls are delicate. Boys should protect girls.* Such communication is reflective of **benevolent sexism**, which means that it appears to be positive but reduces children to their genders, and reinforces stereotypes.

4. **When reporting and documenting cases, it is important that the language does not blame the client's gender for the harm that has been caused to them.**

Example: *Seema is a 15-year-old victim of CSE. She often wears provocative clothes and is friendly with boys.* Sentences like these show moral judgment on the part of the writer and can lead to the reader inferring that the victim was in a vulnerable situation because of her own doing.

GENDER NEUTRAL LANGUAGE - EXAMPLES

Gendered noun	Gender-neutral noun
steward, stewardess	flight attendant
watchman	Security Guard
Sales Man	Sales person
camera-man	cameraperson
sportsman	sportsperson
manpower	human resources
actor, actress	actor

Gendered noun	Gender-neutral noun
man	person, individual
mankind	people, human beings, humanity
freshman	first-year student
man-made	machine-made, synthetic, artificial
common man	average person
chairman	chair, chairperson, coordinator, head
mailman	mail carrier, letter carrier, postal worker
policeman	police officer

5. **The sexual orientation of a client should not be used to discriminate against them or to stigmatize them, or exclude them from activities.** All children must be treated fairly, and equally, regardless of their sexuality.



Activities:

5. **No child should be stopped from participating in an activity, on the basis of their gender and/or sexual orientation.** It is suggested that the staff evolve activities and games that are inclusive of every client.

6. **Activities must not reinforce gender roles and responsibilities.**

Example 1 - Assigning girls to clean, cook, take care-giving roles, and assigning boys tasks like going to the market, playing sports, etc further gender roles, and must be avoided.

Example 2 - Using pink color for the material to be used by the girls and blue color for boys is not acceptable. It is important to seek the children's inputs in planning this and help them also understand why their identity is not associated to a certain color.

7. **Dividing children into gendered groups (Team Boys and Team Girls) should be avoided, and mixed groups must be encouraged.** It avoids othering of one gender by the other and promotes inclusion.

Child participation:

8. **A culture of consent should be encouraged where all children must be helped in understanding the importance of seeking permission and respecting the decisions of others.**

This is important in helping them understand that they have agency over their bodies, and so do their peers.

9. **Prerana has a culture of seeking the child's consent for activities.** We believe that child participation is one of the core principles of our work, and that includes seeking and respecting consent. Example: asking a client before taking their picture.



Staff Behaviour:

10. **When talking to each other in front of children or communicating otherwise, the staff is expected to not be discriminatory to each other.** Jokes, comments, or any interaction that is gender-biased, sexist, or stereotypical are not welcome at Prerana.

11. **Prerana has Internal Committees (under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013,) to address any issues of sexual harassment at the workplace.** Concerns related to sexually inappropriate behavior must be reported to the IC of the respective office.

12. **Staff must not discriminate against each other on the basis of their gender identities and/or sexual orientation.** Such behavior is not acceptable at Prerana.

There should be a conscious effort on part of the team members to be gender-neutral, promote equality, and not further any stereotypes and biases. We also have a comprehensive child protection policy that also addresses issues of gender in relation to child protection. For more information, refer to Prerana's Child Protection Policy.

Read the Supreme Court on gender sensitivity among the judiciary [here](#)

Date: 7th April 2021

Documentation: Azra Qaisar

Inputs and Review: Priti Patkar, Kashina Kareem

Design: Azra Qaisar

