



# **Gender Equality Policy**

## **Asmae – Sister Emmanuelle Association**

# Table of contents

- I- **Rationale for this policy** .....3
  - What are we talking about?**.....3
    - Gender... what is it all about? .....3
    - Gender inequalities in Asmae's field of action .....4
  - Being consistent with our values** .....5
  - Being part of a wider dynamic** .....5
- II- **Principles and Commitments** .....6
  - Guiding principles** .....6
  - Our gender mainstreaming method** .....6
  - Our operational commitments .....7
  - Our organisational commitments .....9
- III- **Implementation and monitoring mechanisms (3 pages MAX)**..... 10
  - Scope of the document**..... 10
  - Responsibilities** ..... 10
  - Means of implementation** ..... 11
  - Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, Accountability, and review** ..... 11

## I- Rationale for this policy

This policy aims to clarify the position of Asmae - Association Sœur Emmanuelle regarding gender equality, the reasons that drive us to act, the commitments that result from these and the outline of the work to be carried out in order to put these commitments into practice. The purpose is to define a common understanding of what we mean by gender equality, where Asmae stands today, where we want to go and how to get there.

This document demonstrates Asmae's explicit intention to implement coordinated and coherent efforts in favour of gender equality.

This approach echoes our fundamental values and principles (equality, non-discrimination) which stem from the Human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the Child rights-based approach (CRBA) promoted by Asmae. It also is in line with the organisational and programmatic guidelines and commitments taken over the last few years.

### What is this document about?

#### Gender... what is it all about?

**Gender** refers to the roles, behaviour, characteristics, and representations that society associates with men and women. Unlike sex, which is assigned at birth on the basis of biological characteristics (reproductive system, hormones, chromosomes, etc.), gender is the result of a social construct, i.e., norms that evolve over time and space (social expectations of women and men differ according to time, place, ethnic group, etc.). The gender lens is used to analyse the norms and power relations established by society, often based on a hierarchical relationship between men and women. In patriarchal societies, these norms and power relations have been and still are favourable to men, with characteristics and attributes associated with men promoted as they are considered intrinsically superior. This hierarchy creates unequal power dynamics and access to resources and opportunities, which can still be observed today. These dynamics are particularly unfavourable to girls, women and anyone who does not correspond to gender norms. This is known as **gender inequality**. Yet **gender equality** is a fundamental human right, according to which every person, regardless of gender, has the same rights and opportunities. Guaranteeing this right implies to fight against the discrimination and violence suffered mostly by girls and women, but also by anyone who does not correspond to gender norms, including boys and men who do not meet the expectations of the dominant and valued masculinity (known as hegemonic masculinity<sup>1</sup>). Equality also requires everyone to participate in decision-making processes, to have universal access to all human rights, and to challenge discriminatory and unequal social norms.

Adopting a **gender mainstreaming approach** means systematically analysing roles, power relationships, responsibilities, and differences in terms of empowerment and access to and control of resources based on gender, without excluding other factors of discrimination. Gender is one social characteristic among others, such as age, social class, skin colour, nationality, ethnic origin, or disability. These characteristics intersect and reinforce each other, creating multiple situations and experiences of vulnerability and exclusion. This is known as "intersectionality"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annexe 1: Glossary for gender-related terms.

<sup>2</sup> Crenshaw, K. (1989) 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: a Black Feminist Critique of Discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Practice', Univ. of Chicago Legal Forum, 89: 139-167.

## Gender inequalities in Asmae's field of action

Despite the considerable progress made over the last few decades in promoting respect of fundamental human rights, discrimination based on gender is still rife.

In **education**, 180 million more girls have been enrolled in primary and secondary education since 1995, and the global enrolment rate for girls has risen from 73% to 89%. **Yet girls account for three quarters of primary school-age children who may never attend school. Women still account for almost two thirds of illiterate adults**<sup>3</sup>. **Boys, for their part, are particularly affected by school drop-out**: 132 million boys of primary and secondary school age were not in school in 2020, mainly because, in some countries, they have to work from childhood (of the 160 million children who work, 60% are boys)<sup>4</sup>.

In the area of **protection**, although the number of girls forced into early marriage has fallen<sup>5</sup>, **12 million girls around the world are still married before the age of 18** - almost one every three seconds<sup>6</sup>. Gender-based violence (GBV<sup>7</sup>) is also a widespread phenomenon, affecting **one woman in three** during her lifetime<sup>8</sup>. Boys are more likely than girls to be victims of physical bullying and corporal punishment as a form of discipline within the school and family environment.

Major gender inequalities also persist when it comes to **professional integration**. According to the Global Employment Trends for Youth published by the ILO in 2022, young women worldwide are **twice as likely to be NEET** (young people Not in Employment, Education or Training) as their male counterparts, and **young men are almost 1.5 times more likely than young women to be employed**. The report also notes a strong gendered division of the labour market, with young women being five times more likely to work in care services than men, who are much more likely to work in the construction sector, where women are virtually absent.

**Discrimination, violence, exclusion, and inequality based on gender are a violation of universal human rights.** While they may take different forms from one country to another, the underlying mechanisms and logics are the same - they are linked to social roles and norms, gender stereotypes<sup>9</sup>, discriminatory laws and policies, relationships as well as the unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities based on gender.

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO (2020). GEM report 2020

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO (2022). *No Child Left Behind: A Global Report on Boys' Early School Leaving*, available at [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381106\\_fre](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381106_fre)

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. *Sustainable Development Goals*, « Goal 5: Gender equality », available at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF (2020). *Child marriage database*, available at <https://data.unicef.org/resources/dataset/child-marriage/>

<sup>7</sup> See Annex 1 - Glossary of gender related terms.

<sup>8</sup> World Health Organization (2021). On behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Data on Violence against Women, available at <https://www.unwomen.org/fr/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

<sup>9</sup> See Annex 1 - Glossary of gender related terms.

## Being consistent with our values

While gender mainstreaming is a recent component in Asmae's work, the values that underpin it are at the very foundation of our organisation.

Indeed, to act in favour of gender equality is to fully achieve our vision of "a just world which ensures that children and youth can live and grow up in dignity with their families and in their environment, so they can become free women and men who play an active part in society".

Taking gender into account in our work and actions also means being as close as possible to the values and positions Sister Emmanuelle stood up for throughout her life: non-discrimination and respect for every human being. These two ideals cannot be fully respected without fighting gender-based discrimination, inequality and violence.

*"One of my major concerns remains women's empowerment."*

Sister Emmanuelle

Sister Emmanuelle called herself a feminist. Alongside taking a stand against discrimination and inequality against girls and women, she led actions in favour of their freedom and emancipation. Gender mainstreaming within Asmae is therefore fully in line with the association's identity.

Finally, gender mainstreaming is aligned with our ambitions for the future, as it is reflected in the first axis of our Strategic Plan 2025 entitled: "Consolidating the quality of our action and our expertise", which includes the deployment of transversal approaches such as the promotion of gender equality.

## Being part of a wider dynamic

Gender mainstreaming within Asmae is part of the gender mainstreaming process in the development sector as well as in international political and legal bodies. This approach has been promoted since the 1970s by civil society and the United Nations. This consideration was institutionalised at the four World Conferences on Women, which provided a framework and priorities at the international level. Another framework for action is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined by the United Nations in the context of the 2030 Agenda which, in addition to the specific SDG 5 on "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", integrates gender in a transversal way<sup>10</sup>.

Furthermore, our commitments to gender equality are based on human rights principles such as equality and non-discrimination, guaranteed by numerous international conventions (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)<sup>11</sup>) as well as regional ones (Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women).

Finally, the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in Asmae through this policy is part of Asmae's responsibility and accountability, as for the quality of its actions, towards the people and communities it supports, its technical and financial partners (French Development Agency), the organisational networks to which Asmae belongs (Coordination SUD, the F3E and the Coalition Education<sup>12</sup>), its donors, its volunteers and its staff.

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<sup>10</sup> Targets 1.4, 4.5, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.a, 8.5, 8.8.

<sup>11</sup> Both ratified by the different countries of intervention of Asmae

<sup>12</sup> Platforms and networks of French NGOs.

## II- Principles and Commitments

### Guiding principles

#### 1. *Equality as a fundamental right*

The Rights-Based Approach is at the heart of Asmae's work. In this approach, children and young people have rights which duty-bearers (states) and responsible actors (civil society organisations, professionals, parents, adults in the community) must respect and protect. As equality and non-discrimination are among the fundamental principles of human rights, any violence and discrimination based on gender constitutes an infringement of the rights of children and young people and engages our moral responsibility.

#### 2. *Intersectionality: Intersecting inequality factors*

Like gender, other characteristics such as age, social class, nationality, ethnic origin, and disability are factors of discrimination and inequality that intersect and reinforce each other. Asmae therefore adopts an intersectional approach by considering these multiple factors of inequality to ensure that each child and young person's unique needs and challenges are taken into account.

#### 3. *Do No Harm*

The "Do No Harm" principle is key: it means ensuring that actions undertaken by Asmae, including those promoting gender equality, do not exacerbate inequality, discrimination, and gender-based violence, do not expose children, young people, communities or partners to greater vulnerability or increased risk of harm or abuse, and strive to prevent and reduce any unintended negative effects that such an approach might cause.

#### 4. *Valuing the knowledge, skills, and participation of all*

Asmae values and welcomes everyone's voice equally to balance power relations and meet the needs of the most affected persons. Asmae's projects are anchored locally through its country teams, which are made up of national staff working in partnership with local organisations and institutions. Asmae's projects, tools and methodologies are co-developed using the specific knowledge and experience of the people concerned (children and young people targeted, partners, countries offices staff). Asmae also seeks to ensure the effective participation of children, young people, and their families by raising awareness of gender issues and enabling them to play an active role in achieving equality.

#### 5. *Promoting equal relationships*

For Asmae, promoting equality means fighting against gender-based power relations to enable the emergence of egalitarian, more harmonious and symmetrical relationships. This involves both empowering people who are discriminated against on the basis of gender, i.e. girls, women and people who do not correspond to gender norms, as well as promoting inspiring role models for boys and men, who are also subject to gender norms and stereotypes, and for whom Asmae intends to promote "positive masculinities", being agents for equality.<sup>2</sup>

## Our gender mainstreaming method

Asmae commits to analysing gender mainstreaming in its actions using the scale below. Ultimately, Asmae would like all the actions it supports to be at least gender-sensitive, with a gradual move towards the responsive and transformative levels, to act on the root causes of gender inequalities in order to promote sustainable societal changes.



## Our commitments

### Our operational commitments

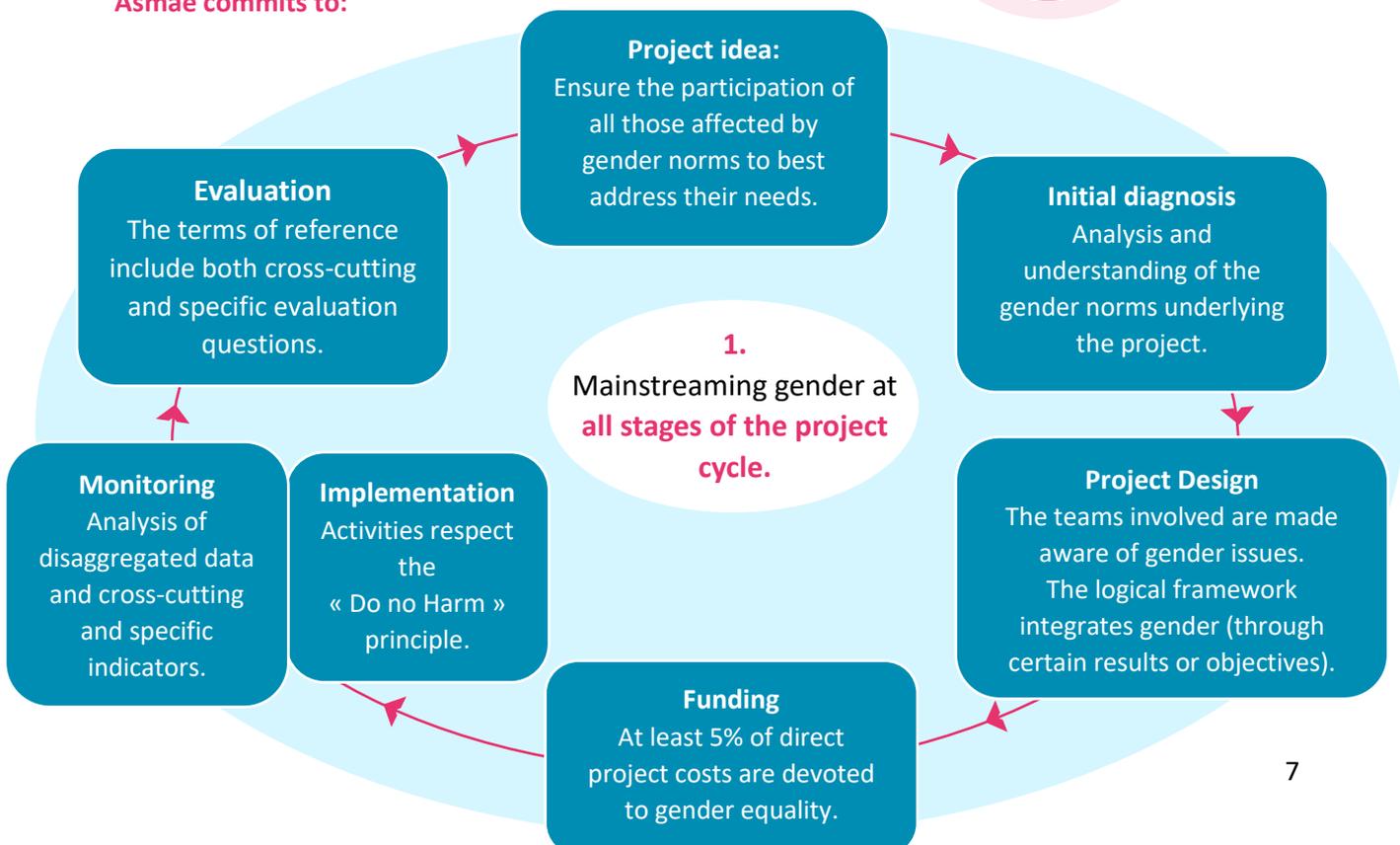
#### INTERNATIONALLY

At the international level, Asmae works on four themes. Within this framework, the promotion of gender equality is one of the four cross-cutting approaches, alongside inclusion, the rights-based approach and participation. This transversal dimension implies integration across all levels of Asmae's action.



Thus, in the context of its international actions,

**Asmae commits to:**



## 2. Mainstreaming gender in its partnership dynamics by:

- **Raising awareness and training** its partners on gender equality issues.
- **Promoting** the work of partners with gender expertise.
- **Supporting** partners in developing a gender policy.
- **Establishing partnerships** with organizations that work directly for women's rights and gender equality.



## 3. Promote gender equality in our activities through **concrete actions** such as:

- ➔ **Raising awareness and train** children, young people, their parents, partners, professionals as well as authorities **on gender equality and human rights**, raising awareness of gender norms to promote equality.
- ➔ **Supporting children and young people** to carry out awareness-raising activities on gender equality, gender-based discrimination and violence.
- ➔ **Empowering girls and young women** so they participate in today's world and build tomorrow's world.
- ➔ **Providing young people opportunities to train and develop skills** that go beyond those traditionally assigned to their gender and support consequential social changes.
- ➔ **Promoting as much as possible shared responsibility within the home**, particularly on the issue of parenthood and the role of each parent in the education of their children.
- ➔ **Fighting against all forms of gender-based discrimination, violence and exploitation**, including harmful practices.
- ➔ **Raising awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights**, also by promoting education and actions around menstrual health, including with boys and men.

### IN FRANCE

As part of the Yalla project raising awareness on children's rights, Asmae commits to:

- ➔ **Systematically train volunteers** on gender issues.
- ➔ **Raise awareness and train** children, young people and all interested professionals **about children's rights, by raising awareness on gender inequalities and gender stereotypes**, in particular as part of the "No rights for stereotypes" module.
- ➔ **Promote gender equality** through **concrete actions** such as:
  - **Disseminating the "No rights for stereotypes" module** to partner schools.
  - **Supporting children, young people and teachers** in setting up awareness-raising initiatives on gender equality in schools (e.g. ensuring that girls are included in all games during break time).

As part of the activities of the isolated mother residential centre (La Chrysalide), the nursery (L'île aux enfants) and the Small Steps Space project, Asmae commits to:

- **Provide training** to social workers and early childhood professionals on gender issues.
- Make gender a **subject for collective attention and discussion** within teams.
- **Raise parents' awareness** of gender inequalities and stereotypes.
- **Integrate gender issues** into the individual and collective support provided to Chrysalide residents.
- **Guarantee an egalitarian environment, professional practices and the use of educational materials** that do not convey stereotyped norms and models to children.

## Our organisational commitments

### MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN ASMAE'S ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Asmae is committed to promoting a gender-sensitive culture among all its employees through:

- **The implementation of training modules** to clarify Asmae's position on gender issues and to raise awareness of these issues among all teams.
- **Zero tolerance** for gender-based and sexual harassment, violence, exploitation, and abuse committed in the context of Asmae's activities.
- **The dissemination of the code of conduct** promoting behaviour consistent with gender equality and signed by all employees upon their arrival at Asmae.
- **Allocation of human, technical and financial resources** that are necessary to meet commitments taken on gender mainstreaming and the promotion of gender equality.

### MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Asmae is committed to adopting human resource practices that promote gender equality through:

- **The adoption of a gender perspective** when updating or developing our human resources policies.
- The implementation of a **safe and accessible reporting protocol** in case of gender-based discrimination or prejudice, as well as gender-based harassment by an Asmae employee.
- **Periodic analysis of Asmae's human resources data** such as the distribution of staff by gender and in decision-making positions, average salary by gender; as well as the implementation of specific strategies to correct any gender inequalities identified in this framework.
- **A recruitment process without discrimination.**
- **Recruitment and performance reviews that reflect Asmae's commitment** to gender equality.

Asmae is committed to dedicating specific human resources to gender mainstreaming through:

- The presence of a **Gender Advisor** dedicated to gender mainstreaming at head office who supports and monitors gender mainstreaming efforts in Asmae's activities.
- The presence of **Gender Focal Points** in each country team, responsible for supporting and monitoring gender mainstreaming efforts in projects carried out in their country and reporting to the Gender Advisor at head office.

## COMMUNICATING THROUGH AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH AND WITHOUT STEREOTYPES

Asmae is committed to adopting inclusive internal and external communication that does not convey stereotypes and promotes gender equality through:

- The use of **inclusive language that does not invisibilise the feminine**.
- The **dissemination of inclusive and positive images** that respect the dignity of the people portrayed, do not stereotype, and pay particular attention to gender issues and other factors of discrimination to represent the diversity of the people and communities involved in Asmae's work.
- The **valorisation of our actions in favour of gender equality** and the promotion of gender equality, in particular on the occasion of international days or publications of international reports.

## III- Implementation and monitoring mechanisms

### Scope of the document

This policy applies to all actions supported and carried out by Asmae in France and internationally, to our organisation and to all Asmae staff, including members of the Board of Directors, employees, interns, volunteers and service providers working with Asmae.

### Responsibilities

The implementation of this gender mainstreaming policy at Asmae is a collective responsibility. The following persons are therefore responsible for meeting the commitments made in this document:

**All Asmae staff** are responsible for ensuring that the fundamental principles and commitments set out in this policy are implemented within the scope of their duties.

**Human resources staff** are responsible for sharing the gender policy with newly recruited staff. **Managers** must ensure that everyone in their team who is affected by the scope of the policy is aware of its existence, understands it and respects it.

**The country teams** are responsible for drawing up a document summarising the issues and priorities at country level and the actions consequently planned. Data collection and analysis of data will allow for the evaluation of the operationalisation of this policy and the impact of the actions carried out in this framework.

**Country Representatives and Project-Partnership Managers** are responsible for the proper

dissemination of this policy within their teams.

**Gender Focal Points**<sup>13</sup> are responsible for supporting the operationalisation of this policy in their country. This includes developing gender mainstreaming strategies for projects, overseeing gender mainstreaming in each country, as well as monitoring progress and reporting to the Gender Advisor at Head Office.

**The Gender Advisor** is responsible for the promotion and management of gender policy within the Head Office and the organisation overall.

**The Executive Committee and the Board of Directors** must provide political and strategic support for this document and guarantee the allocation of human, technical and financial resources needed for the proper implementation of this policy.

The posts and persons in charge of each specific task enabling the wider implementation and enforcement of the policy will be specified in the Gender Action Plan allowing for the operationalisation of the policy.

### **Means of implementation**

The promotion of gender equality within Asmae must consider the diversity of the socio-cultural contexts of the countries in which the organisation operates and the factors of resistance to change that are specific to each context. To this end, the country offices will draw up a document reiterating the fundamental principles and commitments of this policy, specifying the cultural context and gender issues affecting the country and how it will promote gender equality in line with this context. The purpose is to adjust the actions implemented according to the specificities of each country so as not to interfere but to support the changes underway and the existing policies in each country.

The main implementation mechanism of this policy consists of a Gender Action Plan, which will enable the commitments of this policy to be implemented in the short, medium and long term. This action plan will define a set of tasks to be carried out, objectives to be achieved, associated with a timeframe and the resources needed to achieve them.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, Accountability**

Monitoring and evaluation indicators will be defined to assess the implementation of the policy and to adjust the gender action plan accordingly. Periodic reports (at least once a year) will be communicated internally to give an update on the progress of the implementation of the action plan. On this basis, articles summarising these elements will be published in our various external communication media.

The implementation of the policy, its review and potential revision will be carried out through dedicated evaluations, in line with strategic organisational milestones such as Strategy 2025 and Ambition 2030.

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<sup>13</sup> If a country has a Gender Technical Advisor, this person takes on the role of Gender Focal Point.

## Annexe 1: Glossary for gender-related terms

**Gender discrimination:** Any distinction, exclusion, or restriction based on a person's actual or perceived gender. The first article of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the UN on 18 December 1979, states, referring specifically to women, that it refers to “Any distinction, exclusion or restriction [...] which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”.

The CEDAW recognizes and addresses two forms of discrimination, whether contained in laws, policies, procedures (*de jure* discrimination) or practice (*de facto* discrimination).

- *de jure* discrimination: e.g., in some countries, a woman is not allowed to leave the country or hold a job without the consent of her husband.

- *de facto* discrimination: e.g., a man and woman may hold the same job position and perform the same duties, but their benefits may differ<sup>14</sup>.

**Gender roles:** set of behaviors that a society associates with a given gender and that are expected and accepted according to a person's gender. These roles are learned from birth and are reinforced by parents, teachers, peers, and society.

**Gender stereotypes:** Generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed or performed by someone based on their gender. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits a person's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives.<sup>15</sup>

**Gender-based violence:** Any types of sexual, physical, verbal, psychological (emotional), or socio-economic violence perpetrated against a person based on their gender.

**Masculinities:** This concept corresponds to the set of attributes, roles and behaviors contained in the social and cultural expectations, representations and practices associated with men and boys. These expectations are not the same for all men and vary in space and time like all gender norms.

In this context, the concept of "**hegemonic masculinity**"<sup>16</sup> refers to the predominant model of masculinity in patriarchal societies, which sees men as dominant and powerful. This standardized masculinity is one of the foundations of the patriarchal hierarchy, and is a major contributor to inequality and gender-based violence, as well as excluding many men and boys who don't fit in.

This is why, since the 1990s, the gender approach has stressed the importance of working with men and boys to implement projects that rethink masculinity and promote so-called positive masculinities, actors of gender equality.

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<sup>14</sup> UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, November 2017, *Glossary of Terms and Concepts*.

<sup>15</sup> Based on the definition of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

<sup>16</sup> R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 1995