



the
gender
bender
games

a Manual for facilitators:
Learning gender through
games for kids

by the akshara team

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introduction

This manual is an instrument of dialogue on gender equality, a process of reflective engagement into everyday gender discrimination, and a way for transformative actions and sensitivity amongst children and adolescents. It aims at creating spaces for building unbiased perspectives on gender through a series of contextualized games.

This manual is a guide for teachers, parents, community leaders, and individual change-makers to build a gender equal environment for children. There are step-wise instructions in the manual for facilitating the games and leading discussions, and Facilitators are encouraged to suit it to the needs of their local contexts.

The games in the manual will help Facilitators to view the objectives of the Mela and the concept of gender discrimination from a broader perspective. They will help structure the participation of children and adolescents so as to push effective development of thought. The instructions in the manual make facilitation of each game clear, robust, well-rounded, relevant, inquiry based and simple to follow to bring the best out from the players.

The manual addresses the Facilitators directly and believes in their capacity for driving reflective conversations. Suggestions in the manual are based on prior experience and layered evidence.

We encourage Facilitators to learn about the levels of understanding and extent of experiences with gender discrimination of the children they wish to engage through the Mela. It will help them relate with children better and will be able to draw relevant connections while leading discussions.

karoge toh janoge

One Minute game

If we want to change existing notions on gender, we need to start a process of questioning and thinking amongst our players. They must see that the opinions they hold can be assessed and revised through new lenses. This game will help us dig deeper into concepts such as 'gender linked work' or why certain household tasks are assigned to men and boys whilst others are the purview of women and girls. The following games will make us perform unusual tasks and help us escape the patterns we follow every day to 'suit' our gender. We will ask questions and learn from simple experiences. We will ask why we feel what we feel, do what we do, and know what we know, to realize that our belief about tasks specific to men and women no longer holds any water- that these compartments no longer exist.

What's the Game?

This game has been adapted from the One-Minute Game, which challenges players to complete relatively difficult tasks in less than one minute. It is a simple game in which players are to use the shortest amount of time for selected actions. However, our tasks are handpicked to be different for boys and girls and are those which are not generally given to them at home. We, as Facilitators, will lead the discussion after the game by building on what our players say. The tasks are simple, for instance: threading a needle, joining an electric circuit, bouncing the ping-pong ball, etc.

What's the Objective?

Practical:

- To make adolescent boys and girls do tasks which are generally not done by them.
- To help them see that being good or bad at a task is a matter of practice and not subject to their gender.

Conceptual:

- To engage them in a conversation about their routines, behaviours and perceptions about work and gender.
- To build a foundation for deeper discussions involving stereotypes, inequality and making changes.



Materials required

Tables for Boys will have:

Rangoli powder
Clothes to be folded
Needles and thread spools
2 types of mixed grain e.g. moong and rice
Atta, water and rolling pin

2 volunteers per table with timers or mobile phones

Play set up:

Step 1:

Invite 2 boys and 2 girls to participate.
Arrange each table such that the girls get traditionally male oriented tasks and boys get traditionally female oriented tasks.
Set the timers to one minute and build enthusiasm.
Be as energetic as you can and pass on the energy so that the participants forget their hesitation towards the tasks and do their best.

Step 2:

Ask the boys to complete the tasks, one after the other, as fast as they can:

- To thread as many needles as they can in one minute
- To roll out as many chapattis as they can
- To draw a long straight line with rangoli powder. The longer the straight line, the greater chances of winning
- To neatly fold as many clothes as they can
- To separate moong and rice from each other

Encourage the rest of the children to cheer!

Ask the girls to complete the tasks one after the other as fast as they can:

1. To hammer as many nails as they can inside the wooden board
2. To fix as many wires as possible to the three-pin plug using the screwdriver
3. To fix the Meccano apparatus
4. To bounce a ping pong ball on the racket as many times as they can without dropping it

Tables for Girls will have:

50 grams of nails, 2 hammers and 2 planks of wood
2 screwdrivers, three pin plugs and sets of wires
2 sets of the Meccano game
2 sets of ping pong balls



What's to be discussed and how?

Before talking: Give a minute to let the excitement settle down. Let the participants quieten and if possible sit down.

Brief: Through this discussion, we want to help our players to understand that men and women are socially and culturally conditioned to do certain tasks. Sometimes these lines may be blurred. But women usually do home-based tasks and men do technical or outdoor tasks. Here, our players perform the tasks allotted to them because it is a part of the game. But at home, boys are reluctant to do girls' tasks and girls do not even get a choice to attempt certain tasks and are told that 'only boys are capable of doing them'. Our aim is to establish that the ability to do or not do certain work is not related to one's biology. With training, irrespective of whether one is a boy/man or a girl/ woman, an individual can perform any task efficiently.

Also, 'women's work' is often seen as inferior and hence shameful for a man to take up. The usual excuse is – "I do not know how to do it". But as you will see it is not difficult. We want young people to realise that the skills required for 'women's work' are in no way inherent to women; they are taught these tasks as part of their socialization. Boys too can learn these skills when they are taught. Similarly, girls too can learn 'men's work' if they are trained for it.

Expect this:

Boys will say that they enjoyed the game and the tasks. But many will say that they don't do them at home as their mothers will not let them. So the Facilitator will have to discuss it with them by citing some situations from their daily lives at home.

Girls will say that they enjoyed doing technical tasks but usually do not do them in their homes.

Step 3: Leading Questions:

Use your emoticon cards to show how you feel.

First use the happy one.
DRAWING OF EMOTICON – HAPPY FACE

Pick out some boys and girls and ask them –
From all the tasks, which task did you like to do?
What made you feel positive?
Had you done any of them before?
Under what circumstances?

The tasks you did here are not what you usually do at home. But because you could do them well you feel happy.

Choose an emoticon to show an upset face and ask:

DRAWING OF EMOTICON – UPSET FACE

From all the tasks, which task did you dislike doing?
What made you feel negative?

Had you done any of them before?
Under what circumstances?

Choose an emoticon to show a confused face and ask:

DRAWING OF EMOTICON – CONFUSED FACE

In your family, have you seen any of the tasks you did being done by your parents? For example, is roti making or separating grains being done by your fathers? Or have your mothers hammered nails?

Do you think that it is okay to do these tasks in a game but not at home? Why do you think that way?

Will you have the courage to do these tasks at home by asking your mother or your father to let you do them? Will you offer to help your sisters or brothers?

As a brother, will you help your sister with her household work? As a sister, will you ask your brother if you can help him with his work?



Points explained by the Facilitator:

Choose one player to answer the questions.

If a girl is given a boy's task, does that mean she will not be able to do it? And do you as a girl believe you can do it? Or have you accepted that you can't? And if so? Could you do it today? Do you think if you practice more you'll be better at it?

Choose one player to answer the questions.

If a boy is given a girl's work, is it impossible for him to do it? If a boy can do it here in the game, he can also do it at home. Why do you feel uncomfortable or shy doing it at home?

Most of you will not be willing to take up jobs that are considered 'women's jobs', such as housework. Most of you fear that if you do such work, you will not be seen as a 'boy/man'. Secondly, men do not want to do women's work – especially housework – because it is considered boring and is not paid.

But such division of tasks trap women within the household. For example, your sister does these tasks at home so she has less time than you to study or work and do something she finds meaningful. Therefore it is necessary to understand that this idea of 'men's work' and 'women's work' is constructed by society and not determined by Nature. Doing housework also requires skills. Thus, work should not be seen as superior or inferior. In a family, all work should be divided not according to gender but according to his/her time and ability.

That's it! You all just learned that no work is suitable or unsuitable for any gender. Let us hold on to that as we move on to the next game. But what will we do for this learning?

- If I were a boy like some of you, I would start helping my sister and mother in their work without bias.
- If I were a girl, I would take interest in tasks that my father and brother do and talk about. I would not limit myself. What if some of your friends at home differentiate work based on gender? What will you tell them?