

## Gender Equality Part 1

### Objectives:

- Introduce students to international gender discrimination laws and the policies in Madagascar
- Students should be able to describe the current status of traditional gender roles in Madagascar
- Students should be able to identify barriers to gender equality

### Behaviour:

- Boys to understand that girls and boys have to be treated equally
- Girls to advocate for their rights
- Girls to increase their self-esteem

### Information:

#### **Traditional gender roles in Madagascar:**

##### **Finance and Culture**

In rural areas, women are dedicated to housekeeping activities while men to business. It's a common Malagasy value "*ny vehivavy ravaky ny tokantrano*" which means literally "women are the jewellery of the house". Malagasy people living in rural areas think that women in business are too modern and developed, which doesn't align with local culture. Therefore, girls are encouraged to participate in activities focused on watering, cooking and housekeeping while boys study and train for business<sup>1</sup>. Commonly, when parents are no longer able to fully fund their children's school fees, they prefer to take their daughter out of school while allowing their son to continue studying.

It is often common for girls and young women to participate in under-age paid work to contribute additional funds to the family's income. Some local practices remain culturally ingrained, such as; *moletry*, *tse nan'ampela*, *vady fofo*, *tsimandrimandry*, exposing girls and young women to prostitution to provide financial assistance to their families.

##### **Social and Culture**

Both in rural and urban areas, girls and women have difficulties expressing their ideas and opinions in family and community situations. For instance, during family events women are not permitted to take the floor, as this privilege is reserved for male relatives, even when the event is happening within the woman's own family. Malagasy people used to say "*fanakana malemy ny vehivavy*" which means women are vulnerable. Although some girls and women dare to stand up and speak-out, their ideas are not considered important since these are "*hevim-behivavy*" (women's ideas) which people consider not valuable.

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<sup>1</sup> Mpanazava Eto Madagasikara, Pre-CSW62 Consultation, October 2017

These situations reduce girls and women's opportunities for further knowledge development, reaching their full potential or establishing skills towards productive employment.

## **Rights and Considerations:**

### **International Policy:**

#### **Human Rights:**

*"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"*<sup>2</sup>, therefore all boys and girls, men and women have the right to be treated as equals. Every person around the world has the same rights. Whoever we are, we are all equal.

#### **CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women:**

The Convention defines discrimination against women as *"...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."*

By accepting the Convention, countries commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination;
- to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises

The Convention provides the basis for realising equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life, including the right to vote and to stand for election, education, health and employment. Countries agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

#### **National Policy in Madagascar:**

Madagascar signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ratified the CEDAW. Thus, Madagascar has to set up a national policy and national action plan to address all forms of discrimination against women. The table below outlines Madagascar's involvement and agreement towards international policy:

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<sup>2</sup> Article 1, Universal declaration of Human rights

TREATY/ PROTOCOL/ CONVENTION/ CHARTER	SIGNED	RATIFIED
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	X	
CEDAW, in 1989	X	X
Optional Protocol to the Convention, in 2000	X	
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, in 2004	X	

Therefore, to turn these promises into actions, Madagascar has enshrined equality between men and women in its Constitution since 1992<sup>3</sup>.

The current Constitution stipulates, in Article 6 that; *“All individuals are equal in law and enjoy the same fundamental freedoms protected by law without discrimination based on sex, educational level, wealth, origin, religious belief or opinion. Law promotes equal access and participation of women and men in jobs public and functions in the field of political, economic and social life”*

#### **Women’s Rights in Madagascar:**

Across Madagascar girls and women legally have to be treated as equal to boys and men. They should all enjoy the same fundamental rights and freedoms, so when girls and women feel discriminated, they can stand up and speak out. For example; equal opportunities in school, positions of leadership in the community and productive employment. Girls and women are more than able to express their ideas anywhere and anytime they want to.

Boys and men have to understand and agree that girls and women are not worth less than them. They are both equal and have the same rights; therefore there is no place for discrimination of sex and educational level across Madagascar.

#### Summary and Key Messages:

- *“All human being are born free and equal in dignity and rights”*
- Across Madagascar girls and women have the right to be treated as equal to boys and men. They legally enjoy the same fundamental rights and freedoms.
- When girls and women feel discriminated, they should stand up and speak out
- Girls and women are more than able to express their ideas anywhere and anytime they want to
- Boys should encourage their family, friends and communities to listen to women and girls and include them in discussions, decisions and education
- Teachers and authority figures should listen and act upon any discriminatory actions to ensure women and girls are treated equally in all aspects of life

#### Sources:

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<sup>3</sup> Articles 8, 21, 27, and 28, Constitution of Madagascar 1992

Mpanazava Eto Madagasikara, Pre-CSW62 Consultation, October 2017  
Plan sectoriel de l'Education (PSE), MEN, 2017  
Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>  
Article 6, Constitution de la IVe République de Madagascar