



The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development

BOTH HALVES OF THE SKY: GENDER SOCIALIZATION IN THE EARLY YEARS

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Women hold up half of the sky. –Chinese proverb

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In recent years, considerable international attention has focused on the plight of the girl child. In particular, there has been increasing concern about and interest in promoting greater participation by girls in schooling, since the education of young girls often lags behind the education of boys, beginning and reinforcing a long cycle of discrimination.¹ This discrimination harms both women and men, particularly as shifting economic and social factors in nearly every

¹ See *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits and Policies*, edited by Elizabeth M. King and M. Anne Hill. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

society are requiring and resulting in a re–definition of individuals' roles at work, at home and in the shared culture.

Girls' successful participation in education is a key goal within individual countries' plans for Education for All, as well as in the agendas of UNICEF and other major international organizations supporting development efforts. In order to achieve this goal, however, it is necessary to step back a moment and consider the way in which it is defined, as well as the supports for and impediments to reaching it.

In most countries, girls and boys are raised from the beginning to take on very different roles, and to exhibit different characteristics. In some cases, the expected behaviours of girls may make them more likely to succeed in schooling than boys, in other cases, the expectations of girls preclude their real participation in education. Although there is much good will to address the inequities of opportunities for girls and women to receive basic education within many societies, it can not be assumed that educated women will be embraced by their culture or easily take on new roles. Education can not magically “erase” all gender inequities or resolve the problems created as traditional roles disintegrate, and both women and men are left uncertain as to how they can successfully meet their needs. In other words, while girls' participation in education is important, it needs to be addressed within the context of each country's values, goals and childrearing practices—it is necessary to identify the gender socialization patterns which will support or impede the successful participation of girls and boys (and women and men) in changing societies.

By the time a child reaches school age, she or he is firmly rooted in a gender identity, which brings with it a whole set of expectations about behaviour and character. Yet most of the research on gender socialization does not look at this early, pre–schooling development, nor does most childrearing research focus on the development of gender traits. In response to these gaps in our knowledge, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG) coordinated a set of studies looking at gender socialization of young children in six countries.

In this article we will describe the studies conducted in 1996, which were designed to give us a preliminary understanding of how these cultures socialize their children into gender roles. The studies' intent was to begin to map young children's experiences, and to identify attitudes, practices and beliefs that would be likely to impact on children's later development. As a secondary focus, a Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methodology was implemented with communities in an attempt to see how useful PLA could be in this process of mapping gender socialization. PLA is a community assessment technique that has been used to gather information on a wide range of issues.

Following a brief discussion on the arguments that have led to an international call for increased participation of girls in education, we will present an introduction to the studies, and then an overview of the PLA process, with special attention to the impact this methodology had on the kind of data that were generated. Then a summary of the findings from the six studies is presented, followed by a discussion of what might be done in the future to increase our

understanding of gender issues, and how PLA methodology might be used as a tool in this endeavor.

Girls' Successful Participation in Education

Equity is a primary argument in support of increased participation by girls in schooling. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Part I, Article 2, states that nations are obligated to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights. Specifically it states:

States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

In other words, all children have a right to develop to their full potential regardless of gender. Having rights to equity, while being a sufficient reason to provide for girl children, is not the only cogent argument that can be made to support greater attention to gender.

Another argument in support of girls' participation in education comes from studies which have found that education not only benefits the girl, but also society. (Shultz 1993; King and Hill 1993) There is a positive correlation between each additional year of schooling a girl receives and the health and education of her children. For example, from a review of the literature, Shultz has concluded the following:

An added year of maternal education tends to be associated with a fairly constant percentage decline in child mortality rates. The reduction in child mortality associated with an additional year of mother's schooling is about the same [for rural and urban areas], between 5 and 10 percent. (1993, 69)

In looking further at the factors that contribute to a decrease in infant mortality rates, Shultz states, "Mother's education explains more of the variation in child mortality than do other variables such as access to health care, cost of health care, or even family income available for health care." (1993, 70) Thus, providing girls with more education has an impact on future children's survival. It also benefits society as a whole. As noted by Summers,

Increased schooling has similar effects on the incomes of males and females, but educating girls generates much larger social benefits. Because of what women do with the extra income they earn [they spend it on their children's health and education], because of the extra leverage it affords them within the family, and because of the direct effects of greater knowledge and awareness, female education has an enormous social impact. (in King and Hill 1993, pg. vii)

Accumulating evidence would suggest that efforts should be made to promote girls' access to education and to ensure that a girl continues her schooling as long as possible. Three basic issues relating to this have been addressed by the development sector. One is girls' access to schooling.

The second is retention—the degree to which girls remain in school. The third has to do with the quality of the experience and what is being learned. Considerable effort has gone into the development of strategies and techniques in relation to all three of these issues.

In countries around the globe, the accessibility issue has been addressed not only by building schools closer to where children live, but also through such strategies as increasing the number of female teachers in places where parents do not send their daughters to school if the teacher is male. To increase retention and quality, written materials are being reworked to represent boys and girls more equitably, and curriculum is being redesigned to provide material of greater interest to girls. Training is aimed at helping teachers to become more aware of their own gender biases and the way teachers reinforce gender differentiation. These efforts have had only marginal success. One of the reasons for limited success is that many of the efforts address the issue of gender equity at the age which girls could enter primary school. This is too late!

Realizing the need to begin earlier, some countries have created community-based pre-school programmes as a strategy for creating gender equity in education. These have proved moderately effective in:

- *Providing a fair start to girls as well as boys.* It is not unusual to find that there is an equal number of boys and girls in pre-school programmes. At this entry point into the educational system, boys and girls appear to be attending on a par with one another.
- *Helping parents better perceive the capabilities of the girl child, leading to a longer period of schooling.* When parents see that girls are just as capable of learning as boys, they are more likely to understand the value of education for their daughter. Also, if the girl has been released from household chores in order to attend pre-school, parents are more likely to continue that arrangement if they come to value girls' attendance at school.
- *Increasing the probability that girls will enter and remain in primary school.* A positive early childhood experience also helps girls see that they can learn and reinforces their interest in attending primary school. Research on the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme in India indicates that girls who have attended the ICDS programme are more likely to both enter primary school and to continue in it than girls who did not attend the ICDS programme. (Lal and Wati, 1986)
- *Providing role models of what women are able to do.* The great majority of adults working in early childhood programmes are women. They provide role models for a young girl in terms of what she might be able to achieve as an adult. The more status and prestige those working in ECCD programmes have, the more effective they will be in providing girls with positive role models.

However, simply creating an ECCD programme is not enough. The benefits of ECCD programmes can only be obtained if they are designed with an understanding of the culture. When young girls and boys enter the classroom they bring their early socialization experiences with them. In most cultures, children are well tracked into socially acceptable gender roles by the time they enter a pre-school. It is critical to have a better understanding of the events that have shaped the child during the earliest months and years of life, and to be able to answer such

questions as: How are girls and boys raised? What does each child bring with her or him as a foundation for learning and development? What type of psychosocial stimulation has the child received, and what type of socialization has he or she undergone? What are the cultural variables that play a part in determining whether or not a girl will go to school, and what she will seek to gain from the experience? What do parents and the community feel they will lose and/or gain through the girl's (and boy's) education?

The disciplines of cross-cultural psychology, anthropology, developmental psychology, and medicine, among others, have brought to light the ways in which cultures socialize their children, and the values, attitudes and beliefs that are brought to bear in the raising of children. Research on childrearing practices indicates that there are differences in how children are raised from one culture to another, and between how boys and girls are raised within many cultures.² Thus, the first step is to try to understand more about young children's (boys and girls) experiences during the early years, and to determine the obstacles to equity.

While it would be ideal if everyone working in a given community had the time and skills to conduct in-depth studies in order to have a better understanding of the dynamics within a given setting, the reality is that most planners and programme people lack the resources to carry out such studies. They need a way to gain some understanding of the culture, not through an outsider's assessment of community needs, but from the perspective of the community itself. The Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methodology, while requiring training of the implementation team, offers a good tool to help communities map their interests and values. Like any research method, it requires skill and sensitivity on the part of the implementers. However, its advantage lies in its ability to empower communities to identify their own concerns, goals, and even biases, and to practice the process of addressing them collaboratively.

Background on the Studies

Through a grant to the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG)³, studies of gender socialization during the early years were funded in six countries: Morocco, Mali, Bolivia, India, Indonesia and Jamaica.⁴ Funds for the study allowed several activities to take place. Researchers began by conducting a literature review (inclusive of anthropological, psychological, sociological, health and nutrition, and education studies) related to gender socialization in their country. While in many of the countries there exists a body of knowledge

² See *Coordinators' Notebook*, issue No. 15, on Childrearing Practices.

³ From USAID, and with the participation of the Education Development Center (EDC), the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB), Save the Children (SC) and UNICEF.

⁴ Within the countries, the number of communities that were studied varied: in Morocco, Mali, Jamaica, one community was selected for the study. In Bolivia, two communities were studied; in India four communities were studied, and in Indonesia the researcher analyzed five pre-existing data sets rather than using the PLA protocol.

related to gender differences for children from primary-school age and upward, only a few studies yielded information about gender-specific socialization practices for very young children. The information gathered was shared at a workshop held in April 1996. The literature review revealed many questions that need to be addressed in order to have a better understanding of gender differentiation during the early years.

To gather this information, the researchers worked together to develop a PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) Protocol, that was then used in all six countries to gather information in relation to the gaps in knowledge.⁵ Some of the researchers had used this methodology in previous studies; for others it was a new technique. The researchers did field work between May and December of 1996. Where possible, they worked with local non-governmental agencies that were already active in the communities selected for inclusion in the study. This had several advantages. First, the individuals coming into the village were not complete strangers; the NGO staff were known to the community. Second, there was greater potential for follow-up with an action plan, since the local NGO would continue to work with the community. Third, participation in the study helped raise the local NGO's awareness of gender issues.

Once data were gathered and analyzed, the researchers involved in the study had an opportunity to share their results with each other. This took place at a week-long workshop held in Washington D.C., January 20–24, 1997.⁶ During the workshop, each researcher presented the results of her or his study, both in terms of the data gathered and in assessing the effectiveness of the PLA methodology. There was then a general discussion, and the group jointly derived a set of conclusions.

In sum, the project was designed to do two things: to assess the use of PLA as a process for gathering data on early childhood experiences, and to gather data on gender socialization that could be used for the purposes of programme planning. The studies provided rich data on both.

PLA (Participatory Learning and Action)

PLA represents a step in the evolution of a methodology that began in the 1970s as RA (Rapid Appraisal). The technique was developed by Robert Chambers as a way of gaining a timely, relevant and cost-effective assessment of conditions within a community. This assessment was then used in the design of rural development projects. The technique drew from methods of participatory research, applied anthropology, and field research on farming systems, and soon became known as RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal). While the local community was an active participant in the early forms of RRA, the technique was basically created for the use of outsiders who came and gathered information, then took it away to design what they saw as an appropriate

⁵ Eileen Kane assisted the process. As a reference, we used her book, *Seeing for Yourself; Research Handbook for Girl's Education in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, 1995.

⁶ This workshop was funded by ABEL2 through ECD with funds from AID/HRD.

project. Over time, more and more control for the process was shifted to the community, and it then became known as PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal). More recently, as there has been a shift from simply using the technique as a diagnostic tool to using it in actually developing a project with community participation, it has become known as PLA (Participatory Learning and Action). When it is done well, those from outside the community come as learners, conveners, catalysts, and facilitators of the community's definition of needs. Then they work with the community to design a plan of action to meet those needs.

Within PLA, various methods are used to assist communities in 'telling their own story'. These methods come from social anthropology. They include a mapping of the community (housing, health facilities, schools, churches/mosques, water sources, etc.), focus groups, semi-structured interviews, diagrams and pictures, time lines (local history, seasonal diagramming), matrices, ranking of variables, as well as direct observation. The time frame for carrying out these activities varies, but the process is most commonly carried out in one to three weeks. The best results are achieved when a multi-disciplinary team is created, with each individual bringing a different perspective to the study. (See below for brief descriptions of the techniques used.)

Early Childhood Care and Development PLA Protocol

The following activities are taken from the Protocol created by our team of researchers. The Protocol is an adaptation of the one developed by Eileen Kane for *But Can She Eat Paper and Pencil?*, for UNICEF Eritrea (1996). The questions and methods below are distilled to give readers a flavour of the activities. To implement them skillfully it is important to have training in the use of PLA methodology, and to adapt the methods to the particular community's interests, communication style, literacy level, and self-awareness. There is a logical flow to these activities, from the general to the specific, with each progressive task building greater group trust and sharing. However, you may not need to use each activity in every setting.

1. Community Map. Using a clear space on the ground or on a floor, invite people to create a map of their community. A good way to start is to draw the main road or some other important feature and then to hand over the stick to the community to draw the map themselves. Once people have drawn in important landmarks, resources, and houses, they can use stones or other markers to identify who lives where and who does what. One person on the team then acts as a “map recorder” to transfer the data to paper, a copy of which is given to the community.

2. Well-being (Card Sort). Write the names of (or symbols for) each family on cards. Gathering a small group of people from the community, tell them your interest is in finding out whether people have a comfortable and secure life in the community. Read out the names on the cards (about five at a time) and ask them to determine, “Who would be the most comfortable and secure, and who would be least? Continue this sorting process, asking if there are four or five groups that might be created. Invite your discussion group to come up with names for each of their groups/categories, then discuss what people are like in each group, what makes them alike, and what makes them different.

3. Life Stages (Time Lines). Draw a line on the ground (or a culturally appropriate symbol for the life span; it might be a circle or some other form). Put in some age markers, such as “birth, before school, youth, young adult, older adult, elder, end of life.” (Make sure they are age categories that make sense in that culture.) Invite people in your community group to mark important stages or turning points that people go through and discuss them briefly. Then create a time line (circle, etc.) for children, from birth to approximately six years of age, and encourage the group to identify key markers in each age period. Use this activity to invite community members to identify and name stages of young children's development as they perceive them, to identify the characteristics of each stage, and to look at both variations among children, as well as the ways the stages are similar and different for girls and boys. Record their observations, then conduct a Focus Group (see item #9 below) to verify the observations, make changes, note exceptions and explore the implications of their data.

4. What Promotes Well-Being? (Comparison Activity). Showing two pictures, one of a child who appears to be healthy, happy and active, and a second of a child who is sickly, thin and appears to lack energy, ask the community group, “How are these children different?” and “What does this one (the sickly child) need in order to be more like this one (the healthy child)?” Out of this discussion, create a list of things that children need in order to flourish (using symbols in non-literate groups). Have the group rank each of these needs, most important to least. Then ask the group to address the needs in relation to boys and girls: “With each of these needs, who is more likely to get them met, the boy or the girl?” Group members can allocate 10 stones for each item, dividing them between girls and boys. A follow-up discussion can focus on the question, “Given these needs, how is each one met?” Group members can note next to each need the answers to these questions: “Who satisfies this need?” and “Who is responsible for meeting these needs?”

5. What Children Need to Know (Focus Group Discussion). Convening groups that are appropriate to the culture, either mixed gender, single gender, mixed ages or peer groups (or all of these), explore the question: “What do children need to know?” Symbolize/record all suggestions and comments. With each response, ask group members to identify whether girls or boys need to know this more, less, or the same. They might weigh each quality by allocating 1–10 stones to it, and then do it for girls, and again for boys. Once the group has generated its lists, invite participants to select the 6–10 things it is most important for boys to know, and the 6–10 things that girls should know, and then rank order the items if they can. A follow-up activity is to “interview the matrix” created from the first comparison by asking the question, “Who helps boys learn these things?” and “Who helps girls learn these things?” Again, invite the group to discuss, weigh and rank their ideas.

The phrase “interview the matrix” refers to examining the matrix and adding a new column or row to deepen the information. Thus, once you have created a baseline matrix, you can expand it by conducting a follow-up discussion (often one that goes into more depth or adds a new dimension of information). Then you can add a new column or row to the matrix, and fill in the extra information. For example, after creating a matrix that provides a rank order of what boys need to know, you might interview the matrix by adding a column to show who is responsible for teaching boys those things. An example comes from India. In response to the question of what

boys and girls needed to know, the group generated separate lists and rank ordered the items, beginning with what was most important. After that they interviewed the matrix by answering the question: “Who teaches boys these things?” and “Who teaches girls these things?” The results are presented in the matrix that follows:

WHAT BOYS NEED TO KNOW	WHO TEACHES THEM		
	MOTHER	FATHER	BROTHER/SISTER
Speak well	■	■	■
Learn to read and write	■	■	■
Give respect to elders	■	■	
Good behaviour/relationships	■		
Farming		■	
Preparing cattle feed	■		
Cattle grazinglearns by himself.....		
Helps parents in work		■	
Pooja (thanksgiving prayer)	■		
How to eat food/wash/clean	■		
Drive a tractor		■	

WHAT GIRLS NEED TO KNOW	WHO TEACHES THEM		
	MOTHER	FATHER	BROTHER/SISTER
Speak well	■	■	■
To cook well	■		
Recognize and respect others	■		
Helping in the housework	■		
Pooja (thanksgiving prayer)	■		

Keep clean	■		
Sing bhajan (religious songs)	■		
Have a good character	■		
Good relationship with in-laws	■		
Farming	■	■	
Help in care of siblings	■		
Alphabets, counting, poems, songs	■		■
How to go to shop for purchase	■	■	

6. Characteristics of Children 5–6 years of age (Creating a Chart). Beginning with a group discussion of the question, “What are children 5–6 years of age like?”, the objective is to get an idea of what the community thinks young children are like, how they should behave, and what is done to socialize children to the appropriate behaviours. Have someone record in words or symbols the various suggestions. Using 10 stones for each item, group members can rank how true each characteristic is for girls and boys.

Then, a second activity is to explore, for each gender, “What are the characteristics of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ children?” It is useful to focus on one gender at a time. “What is a good girl like?” and “What is a bad girl like?” Then items can be rank ordered within each list, and the two lists can be compared.

A third activity is to explore rewards and punishments. Starting with the question, “When are children praised?”, help the group to make a chart, listing the responses in the left column, and comparing, using 10 stones, whether boys or girls are more likely to get praised for this activity. Follow up by interviewing the matrix: “Who is most likely to give praise and how?” A similar matrix can be created addressing the question of “When are children punished?”

7. Daily Rounds (Small Group Interview). The objective is to get an understanding of what children do during the day and who is responsible for them during that time. This small group interview can be done with 6–year–olds, as well as with adults or youth. Identifying a child approximately 4 years of age in the community, ask, “What kinds of thing would a girl _____’s age do during the day? What does she do when she first gets up? What does she do next?”, etc.

Beginning with the time children usually wake up, create a time chart, listing activities in relation to each time of day. Invite the group to list possible caregivers or people responsible for that four–year–old. Then, noting caregivers across the top of the matrix, and activities of the four–year–old down the left hand side, give the group 20 markers for each activity to decide which caregivers

are most responsible for each moment of the four-year-old's day. A separate matrix can be created for four-year-old boys, four-year-old girls, six-year-old boys, and six-year-old girls.

8. Caregiver/Early Childhood Program Observations (Observation Checklist). This activity helps you to identify the amounts and types of interactions between teachers/caregivers and boy and girl children. Are boys responded to differently than girls? Are they talked to in different ways? Use a checklist form that has across the top: “teacher listening to boy”; “teacher listening to girl”; “teacher talking to boy”; “teacher talking to girl.” Include some categories of talk: “teaching/explaining”; “asking a question”; “raising a child”; “verbally punishing a child.” Then, use this form for a given time block when the teacher is interacting with the children. If you have longer observation time, you can actually track how much time during the day the teacher is interacting with children. At 30-second intervals, note what the teacher is doing (talking, listening, to whom and how) across a single line of your form. Simply tick what is happening, then jot down any comments you might want to add. At the end of the observation block, you will have a chart showing roughly the range and nature of interactions. It is useful to do this exercise at different 10-minute blocks of time during the day to get a clear picture of both the type and amount of adult-child interaction.

9. Follow-up Activities (Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews). Using the matrices, lists, charts, maps, and observations generated in other activities, it is useful to follow up by working with focus groups and/or key informants. Focus groups are not simply question and answer sessions. They are a set of carefully chosen key issues (that emerged from the community's participation), that are presented to a group that is in some way homogeneous. The group then discusses the issues, rather than simply answering a set of questions from the interviewer. Focus groups allow you to gain perspective on an issue from sub-groups in the community—older women, younger women, children, elders, etc. Key informants are individuals who may have an interesting or unusual perspective to share—because they are older and have been around a long time, because they are the exception to the rule, because people mention them as leaders or outcasts, etc. (Children and youth, too, make interesting key informants.) Asking them to comment on or explain some of the results of earlier exercises often yields insights and deeper understanding of the culture and community practices.

Data are gathered prior to the visit to give the team some basic information on the community. During the visit, time is structured so that a variety of methods can be employed in gathering information and to cross-check what has been discovered. As information is collected, it is used to modify the process. Thus it is important for the team to build in time at the end of each day to meet with each other, to discuss what they have learned, and then design activities to gain additional information and/or check on ideas that have come up during the day.

The spirit of inventiveness which has gone with PLA is spreading, and helping people in different parts of the world to feel liberated and able to develop their own varieties of approach and method. People (local and outsiders), once they have unfrozen and established rapport, enjoy improvising, varying and inventing methods. Chambers, 1993.

A key to successful use of the technique is the personal behaviour and attitudes of the team members. This includes the ability to be self-critical, and to learn from mistakes. It requires respecting the people one is working with and having confidence in their ability to undertake the task. It involves sitting with and listening to others, not lecturing. It involves “handing over the stick” to community members who become the main teachers and analysts.

The ultimate goal is to grasp an insider's perspective on the community and to understand the community as a whole. The process can be enjoyable for all involved, and it can yield useful information.

While PLA is a very rich tool in terms of providing relevant and timely data at a relatively low cost, there are drawbacks to the technique.

-The validity of the information can be questioned.

While the PLA process can ensure that a variety of opinions are expressed, it does not provide data on the percentage of the population represented by that particular point of view.

-The reliability of the data can be questioned. PLA does not necessarily provide a 'true' picture of what is happening in a village.

The community will make an assessment of who the researcher is and what he or she represents. They may well shape their responses accordingly. A comment by the researcher in Morocco points out some of the difficulties:

Drawing the map, putting all the inhabitants of the community on it, seeking information about household characteristics, etc., made the participants very suspicious. Even when we explained, they continued to maintain a great confusion between the researcher and the Government employees, especially those who work in the Finance or Agriculture Ministries. For people to trust you and to develop a mutual acquaintance needs time.

In addition to the issue of trust, there are people's expectations to take into account. Would the community discuss things in the same way if they thought you were there to build them a school, or provide loans for micro-enterprise projects, or simply to gather data with nothing coming back to the community? The researcher from India comments, “As word spread around amongst the villagers about what we were inquiring about, at times it seemed that they were giving answers which they thought would be more acceptable to us.”

-While PLA can help enrich understanding, it does not provide information on the extent or pervasiveness of an issue, nor does it provide data from which generalizations can be made about a given population.

When quantitative data are available to provide such generalized information, then PLA can help add depth to your understanding. For example, in the case of Bolivia, researchers had national statistics and two research studies available to them before they began working in the communities. Statistical data were provided by the National Institute of Statistics (INE). The two research projects provided information on child development and ways of punishing children in different communities. Data for these two studies were collected through closed-ended questionnaires. The PLA process verified the research findings and provided a rich description of what had been found before. In addition, it facilitated the discovery of details that enhanced understanding and allowed for community participation in the process. The difference between the research projects and the PLA method is reflected in what one woman in El Chaco said, "We never participated in this manner to know who lives here and who goes to school. The information was always taken from us, without our real participation."

Apart from these caveats, it is important to note that PLA is a useful tool when a description is required, and when what is sought is an understanding of attitudes, practices and beliefs. It can help one understand quantified data already available on a community, and it is useful when the aim is to generate suggestions or recommendations, or when there is a need to generate questions for subsequent study. In the studies undertaken in this project, PLA served a particularly useful role in generating questions that require further investigation.

The Use of the Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) Methodology

Those who were to be involved in the Gender Study spent a week receiving training in the application of PLA. Together they designed a format (Protocol) they would use as a basis for initiating the PLA process within a community. Due to the researchers' relative lack of experience with the techniques, they worked together as a group to define a rather limited set of methods they would employ. People were encouraged to adapt and expand on these as their situation required. (A summary of the Protocol used can be found on page 7.)

Experience with the Protocol varied. The researchers who had used the technique previously (from Jamaica and Mali) applied the techniques with ease and were comfortable making the adaptations they felt were necessary. In India, Bolivia, and Morocco, the researchers had no prior experience with the technique. As a result, there was much closer adherence to the Protocol that they had designed jointly. In Indonesia, PLA was not used. The researcher there had several data sets that had not previously been analyzed by gender; given the extent of these data, it was decided that she would work with them rather than generate new data through PLA.

During the January 1997 workshop, where the studies were discussed, time was allocated to an assessment of the PLA process. The researchers' comments on PLA which follow have been

grouped around several themes: the importance of the team and training; the importance of respecting the culture and using the techniques flexibly; the applicability and appropriateness of techniques; the impact of the process on the community; and an evaluation of the technique from the point of view of the researcher.

■ THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAM AND TRAINING

One of the characteristics of PLA is that it is carried out by a team of researchers. Within PLA, considerable judgement is required on the part of those engaged in the process. Having a team work together helps to overcome the particular bias of any one individual. One of the first tasks undertaken within each country was the selection of people to work together in the gathering of data. In all instances, the Principal Researcher determined the qualities and characteristics desired in the team and selected people based on an assessment of their ability to use and learn from the PLA method. Each team had both male and female researchers, and most of the teams included members of the community. For example, in Mali, each team member was paired with a community liaison who facilitated the team's work in the community.

The teams received 3 to 5 days of training from the Principal Researcher before they began working on site. They worked together to translate the Protocol from English to the local language and discussed the various items thoroughly in order to have an understanding of why a given activity was being used. While doing the field work, teams met each day to review what had occurred and to plan for the following day. This process was another form of training. Through the process team members became aware of their own gender biases. They could see how these biases could influence the ways in which they interacted with the community.

However, no matter how good or long the initial training, actual field work is the best teacher. As noted by the Moroccan researcher, "The field work was a good adviser and the best critic. It helped us to bring another view to this method and to adapt it to our context."

■ THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPECTING THE CULTURE, ADAPTING THE TECHNIQUES AND BEING FLEXIBLE

As noted by the researcher from Mali, "You do not go into a village and leave it as if you had never been there. It is important to observe cultural courtesies and to move through your time in the community in a respectful way. You must follow the road." Thus, while you may come into the village with some ideas about the kinds of things you want to learn and the activities that you might engage in with people, it is important to be open to how they are responding to the activities and what they are suggesting. Flexibility is key.

The flexibility of the method allows the team to employ a wide variety of techniques to achieve depth on a given topic, but this may lead to undue emphasis on a given topic, and no information on others. The Moroccan experience provides some insight into the issue.

While we were focusing in this study on the early childhood treatment and perception of children from a gender perspective, the community emphasized other issues which were more relevant to their daily life and detrimental to their future. The main issues were: youth unemployment, the plight of unmarried women, the high dropout rate, especially at the

secondary level, and the lack of schooling for girls. The community claimed that modern pre-schools will facilitate the integration of girls and boys into primary school.

Were they perhaps anticipating help in building a pre-school? This is a good example of a situation in which it is useful to clarify the community's expectations of the researcher and the process before beginning, and for the researchers to explain their expectations of and contributions to the community.

In order to “stay on track” while remaining flexible, it is critical to have many opportunities for reflection and self-assessment while moving through the process. The daily team meetings, which were a time for discussion and revision, allowed for the introduction of new ideas and strategies while serving as a check on the overall process.

■ PLA TECHNIQUES: THEIR APPLICABILITY AND APPROPRIATENESS

Community mapping and the use of stones. One of the activities planned in the Protocol was to do a mapping as a way to gain an understanding of the community and to engage community members in a dialogue. It was suggested that people begin by literally drawing a map of the community on the ground and filling it in using stones or other “found” materials to represent people and households. This approach worked well for some. For others, there were difficulties.

The experience with community mapping and the use of stones had an interesting twist in Mali. Among the Bambara, the culture studied, people believe that the ground is sacred and stones are used only for divination. Only the Wise man within the village can draw on the ground and use stones. So there, community mapping was not done on the ground. Being a culture with a strong oral tradition, people were able to complete the map in their heads.

In Morocco, community mapping was not done on the ground either, but for a different reason: The researcher reported,

Asking rural people to draw a community map with stones or seeds seemed not only amazing, but it felt childish. When we explained this method and demonstrated it, one of the assistants from the community said, “You are using the stones with us because we are illiterate. But we have our children, brothers, who have attended school and can speak and answer you in your language”.

In that setting they chose to draw the map on paper, using pencil and ink.

Stones were not only used in community mapping, they were also used to have people physically rank order and prioritize their responses. Again, there was mixed reaction to this method. The researcher from Bolivia commented,

A positive element of PLA is the use of stones to indicate whether a particular aspect was more likely for boys or for girls, or as a way of calculating the percentage of time a caregiver provided to the child. These icons not only provided a means of quantifying and qualifying the data, but they also facilitated the discussion around a particular subject and its analysis.

In Jamaica, people found it superfluous to use stones to determine percentages. They suggested using a calculator!

Working with groups of people. Many of the PLA activities involve working with people in groups. These groups are generally composed of different kinds of individuals. For example, in Morocco there were 10 groups formed. The researcher describes them as follows:

Group 1. The first group included 9 people, 6 women (from young to middle-aged) and 3 men, one of whom was unmarried. It was the first contact with the community. I presented the subject of the research, the method I was supposed to use, and what was expected from the participants.

Group 2. In the second group 35 persons were assembled, 15 men and 20 women of different ages and socio-economic status. The discussion was focused on describing the community.

Group 3. The third group brought together 8 persons, 3 men and 5 women, among them the richest couple of the village. The meeting was reserved to complete some information concerning the community, and to define the other target groups I planned to work with in the next few days.

Group 4. The fourth group was composed of 9 young women who had children between one or two months and 6 years. They worked with us to define the stages of a child's life, the children's activities, and to illuminate how they perceive their surroundings.

Group 5. The fifth group was male only, 7 men, old and young, all married, who all debated the preceding issues.

Group 6. For the sixth group, 10 women gathered from different age groups, some of them were grandmothers. They discussed the children's daily rounds, identifying the daily activities of boys and girls who are 4 or 6 years old.

Group 7. The seventh group included 8 young girls, who were between 13 and 20 years old. These girls are caretakers for their young brothers and sisters. We engaged in the same debate with them.

Group 8. The eighth group brought together 4 nurses and one female doctor who are responsible for the child service in the Public Health Center which serves the community. The discussion revolved around children's health in rural areas, gender perceptions, and the relationships between mothers and children.

Group 9. The ninth group consisted of three primary school teachers from the two first classes. The discussion focused on the learning capacity of rural children, their adaptation to the curriculum, and the parents' attitudes towards school and the schooling of girls.

Group 10. The tenth group consisted of local officials. We spoke about the economic and social aspects of the community, examined the current infrastructure, and the new projects being

created to benefit the community, and especially what they would do for children under 6 years of age.

Group work is not easy. As noted by the researcher from India, “Although group participation is one of PLA's positive aspects, it is also a negative. Time demands make it hard for the community to stay together as a whole or in small groups for very long periods of time. This aspect made it difficult to delve further into some of the issues.” She also noted that once groups were formed and people grew comfortable with each other, it was difficult to create new groups, although there were times it would have been useful to have additional groupings in order to ensure a wider range of perspectives on an issue.

The Moroccan researcher also commented on the group process. She stated,

People in the rural areas are always busy. When you have a couple in the discussion group you cannot keep them both for a long time. People were always changing and on the move within the group. One person went out and came back 30 or 50 minutes later; new ones entered every 10 or 20 minutes. With the shifts in people it was necessary to provide those who were returning with updates of the discussion, and review what had been discussed in order to involve the new participants in the matter, in order for them to feel comfortable giving their points of view.

Even with these difficulties, all the researchers worked with groups and found them useful in setting the agenda and providing insights not gained through one-on-one interviews. Researchers were able to build on what one group provided, cross-checking and elaborating on the information with other groups. In addition, the use of single-sex groups in most settings gave women a voice that they might not otherwise have had in mixed sex groups.

■ THE EXPERIENCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY

As noted earlier, community members feel much more a part of the process through PLA than when they are asked to be respondents within other research methodologies. Nonetheless there are still constraints. A comment from India:

Communities which have been the subject of much research tended to be much more reticent to respond to our interaction with them, and were generally less curious. Throughout our research, men's interaction with the research team was far more formal than women's. Female researchers were able to relax over a cup of tea with their female respondents and were able to create an atmosphere of openness, relating to each other as women. The male researchers were never alone with their male respondents to establish a similar rapport. Children were open with the research teams throughout.

On the whole, women seemed to enjoy their discussions with us and very often interesting personal anecdotes were related. Their responses seemed to be more frank than the men's who were very conscious while talking to us. For the men it seemed as if they were fulfilling some kind of obligation toward guests who had come to their village (especially among the men's group belonging to the higher socio-economic class of the village).

Thus, a community's previous experience with researchers, even those using PLA, influences their willingness to engage in yet another research project. Key factors include the extent to which trust can be established and what the community gains from the experience. Given time and an open attitude, trust can be established.

■ THE EXPERIENCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH TEAM

Many for whom this was a new experience saw great value in the PLA approach. The following comment from Bolivia reflects a personal experience of one of the team members who works in the social sector.

I think that this methodology is very manageable, even by the community. You can obtain data which can not be obtained through other techniques, such as surveys or interviews. There is more participation by the community and those involved. It does not exclude nonliterate people.

Another comment, also from Bolivia, emphasized the enthusiasm which is generated through the PLA process.

The non-written forms of communication permitted the participation of the old, the young, the men and the women alike. They laughed at the pictures, enjoyed drawing them, and made the pictures and data their own. The use of the corn and bean seeds to represent boys, girls, men and women, facilitated the “telling of their story” and the clarification of information.

Community representatives in Bolivia also saw the benefits of PLA. In referring to the activities of community members it was noted,

As they drew the pictures on the ground, they commented on what boys and girls were like before and now. It provided something concrete from which one could expand the information presented.

In India, one of the NGOs with which the researcher was working focused its work solely on women. Through the study, the NGO was involved in working with men in the community as well. As a result, they realized the importance of working with the whole community—men and women. The researcher from India also noted that many of the team members had to address their own gender biases as a result of exploring gender socialization issues with communities.

One researcher commented on the fact that PLA changes the role of the researcher. She noted,

By using PLA, you lose your status as researcher. You are within the community, you are helping the groups to reveal their way of life, as well as their perceptions and aspirations. People you are working with trust you, believe that you can do something to improve their lives and their children's lives. Some of them speak confidentially to you about their own problems (family planning, children's education and health, failure at school, etc.).

In essence, people are much more open when using PLA. This requires researchers to relate to the community in a much different way than they do when filling more formal roles.

All the researchers expressed frustration at the limited time available to undertake the study. They expressed a desire to return to the communities to provide feedback, and in the majority of instances, to work with the village to create an action plan in collaboration with a local non-governmental agency.

The PLA experience was summarized well by the researcher from Morocco. She stated,

Of course, PLA is not a recipe; it depends on a regular contact with the community since it is an open exchange within the community. A successful PLA requires going to the field with some projects and one or two questions, and letting the community be free to orient the study, to decide their priorities, and emphasize the different actions they want to lead. This flexible method can be used as a tool in the hand of the politicians, researchers and the community. The principal aim is to empower the community and to incite the different age and gender groups to participate equally in building the future of the community.

As Sweetser (1997) noted, “In evaluating one's own work, it is sometimes better to ask, 'Have we created or discovered new questions?' 'Have we expanded the framework for understanding?'” rather than simply, “Have we added new information?” As will be seen in the following section, many new questions have been discovered through this initial set of gender studies.

Findings from the Study

Each of the studies produced a wide variety of rich data. It is impossible to do them justice in the amount of space available. (For more on the studies, see additional CN 21 articles) For the purposes of this article, we have identified some of the findings that were common across all the studies. In presenting this information, we have tried to be sensitive to the fact that gender-specific forms of labour or behaviour within a culture may not be seen as alienating or discriminatory by the people within that culture. Thus, we have attempted to identify local expectations of boys and girls without an overlay of judgement about an ideal form of equality.

The Socialization Process

Before discussing the study results, it is useful to provide an overview of what is understood about the socialization process in general. Based on a review of literature dealing with childrearing practices, Myers and Evans (1997), argue:

- Children, in whatever setting, have general physical, social and emotional needs that require responses from others.
- The specific ways in which these general needs manifest themselves, and the childrearing practices adopted to meet these needs, differ widely from place to place and from caregiver to caregiver.
- Childrearing practices are influenced by the context—the geophysical, political, social and economic characteristics of the nation and region—and by available technologies.

- On the individual level, childrearing practices are determined by beliefs, values and norms, and by the characteristics and knowledge of particular caregivers.
- In a rapidly changing world, it is difficult for cultures to adjust their norms and practices to fluctuating conditions. Increasingly, beliefs, values, norms and practices no longer fit well with current conditions. This can work against the sound rearing and development of children.
- Rapid change has produced a move away from so-called traditional and family-centered practices. As these trends and changes are judged, it is important not to equate “modern” with “good” and “traditional” with “outmoded” or “bad,” or vice versa. Rather, if we are to retain the good practices from traditional systems and to develop quality child care that promotes equity, we will need to be much more systematic in our assessments and much more open to the potential advantages of both the new and the old systems.

It is within this general understanding of socialization that the results of the six studies are presented.

Overview of the Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices that Shape Gender Identity

- **PREFERENCES.** The degree of preference for having a son over having a daughter differed across the countries. Parents in all the countries studied desire sons. The birth of a son is considered to be a positive event; this is not necessarily true for the birth of a daughter.

Through a variety of focus group discussions, people were asked about their preferences in terms of sons and daughters, and why they preferred one over the other.

The extreme at one end of the scale is India, where a girl child is tolerated, at best (the birth of a girl child is celebrated in only 2% of families). Jamaica is at the other end of the scale, with parents stating that they prefer daughters, although they also desire sons. In Bolivia and Indonesia, there seem to be equal preference for daughters and sons, and in Mali and Morocco sons are preferred, although daughters are also valued.

In India, girls are less desirable because upon marriage they leave their birth home. In addition, families have to pay a dowry when their daughters marry. As the researcher noted, “While girls give more solace to the mother because they are the ones who look after the mother more than the boys, it is the birth of the boy that brings more joy because a girl is *paraya dhan* (someone else's property/wealth). The name of the family continues only with the boy.” In the tribal village studied, the women welcomed girls more because at the time of marriage it is the boy's family which has to make a payment to the girl's family. However, girls then go to live in another house. A boy, they felt, would stay with the family for life, and they could lean on him in their old age.

Statements of preferences do not tell the full story. The behaviour in relation to the actual birth of a son or daughter is a much better indicator of preference. In the non-tribal village in India, the birth of a boy brings much happiness; expensive sweets are distributed; and celebrations include a band and fireworks. By contrast, at the birth of the girl (firstborn) only sugar and sugar

lumps are distributed. An announcement is made on the public microphone (this is usually done after the birth of the first child, or the birth of a son), or the whole community is informed by trumpeting and beating on a *thali* (steel plate) with a spoon. Culturally oriented festivals, e.g., *chathi* (sixth day viewing), *annaprashan* (first weaning ritual conducted in traditional Hindu families at 6 months), *mundan* (shaving of hair), are all done with pomp and show for boys, but not for girls. The mother is treated with respect after the birth of a son and a *pooja* (thanksgiving prayer) is said because the woman is *shuddh* (pure). Her rest period is also extended and she is given more attention by her family members. One mother commented that she felt weak and listless at the birth of a daughter, and another mother who finally had a boy after three girls commented that she was “now finally at peace.”

The child is a gift. The male child is an investment for the future. The female child is just a visitor. Morocco

In Morocco, children are seen as the basis of the family. “It is impossible to form a family without children.” Children are valued for the security they represent for parents, especially for mothers. Asked about their preference for female or male children, most answered that they do not have any preference: A child is a gift from God. However, birth rituals, common beliefs, and the division of tasks between children demonstrate that the culture and the community way of life give some preference to male children.

In Mali, opinion varied as to whether or not there was a preference for a male or female child. Some claimed to be indifferent, giving as a reason that males and females complete one another. “A child equals a child.” There was also an expression of resignation. “What God sends us must be accepted.”

Where there was a preference for male children, the following reasons were given:

- “One needs male children to perpetuate the family.”
- “A man without any male heir is considered of a lower status compared to others.”
- “A female child works for her mother only.”
- “A female child will build another man's home; one needs to not be attached to her.”
- “A female child comes and goes, a male comes to stay.”
- “One can always get a female through marriage, a male child can never be acquired through such a process.”

There were others that stated a preference for a female child. Their comments include:

- “A girl is more useful than a boy to her parents.”
- “Good in-laws will take care of the girl's parents if she gets a good marriage.”

– “The boy will leave his parents and care for his wife.”

Though many people may prefer boys, they appreciate having more girls for dowry reasons. The daughters of the family bring in dowries for their brothers. Cattle are given to the girl's parents.

In sum, opinion in Mali varies from person to person and from household to household as to whether or not males or females are preferred. Some women suggest that they usually prefer girls while men prefer boys, stating, “That's the way it is.” What is clear is that a family will not be satisfied with only male children, nor with only female ones; a mixture is considered better. However, to have more sons is considered to be a special blessing.

Within the Javanese culture in Indonesia, there is an attempt to treat children equally. While studies indicate that both female and male children are equally wanted, some data from a matrilineal subculture show a tendency toward daughter preference.

- **BEHAVIOUR.** Clearly, parents have different values and attitudes regarding male and female children. As a result, children behave differently based on gender, with certain behaviours typical of girls and others typical of boys.

While within some of the cultures there was considerable leeway for very young children not to take on a gender-associated role, in all the groups studied, by the age of five, children had a clear sense of themselves as boys or girls and a clear understanding of what that meant in terms of behavioural expectations.

The role of the girl child is to be a demure, accommodating, and respectful homemaker. A “good” girl of six is one who listens to and respects her adults, helps mother in household chores, and one who stays and plays at home. A “good” boy, on the other hand, is expected to be naughty, to have many friends to play with (outside the home), and not always listen to parents. India

One clear pattern across the communities involved in the study was that boys are allowed to be boys, which essentially means that it is expected that they will be naughty and misbehave, that they will be more physically aggressive than girls, and that they will be disobedient—all of which is acceptable when boys are young. As they become adults, however, their behaviour is expected to change. They are to be responsible, trustworthy, dependable and take on responsibility for the family.

Girls, on the other hand, are expected to behave in more circumscribed ways. There is no time when they are allowed to be free and play in the same way as boys. From an early age, girls take on household chores and are involved in caring for younger siblings. They are given tasks and expected to handle them responsibly without much adult supervision, and certainly without recognition. Early on, they receive training for their role as mothers and keepers of the

household. Thus, expectations of what girls should be like now, and what they will do as adults, carries over from the earliest years to later life.

- **DEVELOPMENT.** In terms of developmental “milestones,” girls tend to achieve them earlier than boys.

One of the topics explored in the study was people's understanding of children's growth and development, and the developmental milestones that they used to mark a child's progress. To begin to address this topic, people in the community created a timeline—from birth to death—and then indicated the significant stages that occurred along the way. They were then asked to discuss if boys and girls progressed in the same way, and if not, how their progression was different.

Within Morocco the stages were broken down into years. What follows is the community's definition of what happens within each of the first six years of life.

HOW CHILDREN GROW DURING THE FIRST YEAR

- breastfeeding and wrapping up stage
- taking seat—sitting age
- first teeth appear
- child creeps
- child makes some steps
- child babbles

WHAT HAPPENS THE SECOND YEAR

- child is generally weaned at 18 months
- child eats what the adult eats
- child acquires some language skills
- child starts to communicate with parents and siblings
- mother doesn't carry child on her back

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE THIRD YEAR OF LIFE

- stage of child's integration within the community
- child understands others
- child can respond if asked questions
- child eats with the adults

AT THE FOURTH YEAR

- child goes to the Koranic school
- child accompanies his mother or father or siblings everywhere

WHEN HE REACHES THE FIFTH YEAR

- child still goes to the Koranic school
- child starts to undertake some daily tasks imitating his father or mother

AT THE SIXTH YEAR OF AGE

- the child continues the same activities noted for the five-year-old child.

This then is the general pattern of growth. According to the villagers, however, the girl's growth is different from the boy's growth. For example,

- girls develop earlier
- girls babble and speak before boys
- her blood is lighter⁷
- she starts to walk earlier than boys
- she has a light sleep
- she eats less than boys
- she wets her clothes more than boys
- she is more interested in studying than boys

On the other hand,

- boys grow slowly
- boys speak late
- boys are oafish
- boys wake up later than girls
- he has a deep sleep
- he does not wet his clothes often
- he is always wanting to be breastfed or demanding food

In Bolivia, it is interesting to note that people see life as a circle, rather than linear, so a circle was used instead of a line to depict the life span. The following were defined as stages of growth and development. Within the stages differences between boys and girls are noted.

<i>Birth</i>	breast feed (girls are fed sooner, boys do not appear to receive colostrum)
<i>1–3 months</i>	laugh, smile, play, move arms and feet, babble, say ago–ago
<i>4 months</i>	turn around, start complementary foods that are not hard (banana, soup, egg) bottle fed if mother does not have milk
<i>6 months</i>	eat from the family pot
<i>8 months</i>	sit by themselves, crawl on their knees and others scoot on their behinds, stand, depend a lot on food, first teeth appear (they bite the mother's nipple and get stones to bite on)

⁷ This was not explained further. It would be something to explore in a follow-up discussion.

<i>9–12 months</i>	walk, play with toys, hold on to the cot (do not know how to sit back down), dance. At 11 months young children begin to fight with brothers, (males show more strength, they are rougher)
<i>1 year</i>	girls play with clay, make little pots. Boys play with balls
<i>2 years</i>	talk, play with other children, walk, dance, give you objects, eat by themselves, throw the animals out. A boy is more of a pest, does not want to accept things. Girls grow sooner physically.
<i>3 years</i>	start preschool (they want to go with their older siblings), have more memory, eat at every moment, they get used to eating fruits, they spend their time looking after the cooking pot. Boys eat more.
<i>5–6 years</i>	go to kindergarten or first grade, they get used to an eating schedule, one can tell that the girl has grown more, children buy things by themselves, they play with the ball, go to work with their fathers, they climb trees by themselves, they greet people, go to help in the orchard. Boys go hunting with bows, they need to be watched more. Girls wash clothes already.

The research team in India also worked with different communities to construct life stages. In all four communities, focus group discussions were held with women on their understanding of the life–stages for girls and boys. Overall, the team discovered that men have different perceptions than women about the life stages of children below six years of age, and they place a different importance on some of the stages in comparison to women. In general, women had a much more complete understanding of what occurs at each stage. In addition, girls are generally faster at reaching all the milestones than boys, although the milestones themselves are not different for boys and girls. Following is a list of the stages recorded by the men and the women.

WOMEN'S RESPONSES:

<i>1–3 months</i>	cries, recognizes mother, recognizes loved ones, smiles, holds head up, lies on stomach/side, drinks milk, has no eye contact, is dependent on mother
<i>4–6 months</i>	recognizes mother, recognizes loved ones, smiles, starts teething, sits up, crawls, starts weaning, can concentrate, starts turning, starts cooing
<i>7–9 months</i>	teething, sits up, starts standing, crawls, starts walking, holding things
<i>10–12 months</i>	walks, starts speaking words, asks for things/food

<i>1 year</i>	completes teething, walks, speaks words, starts eating solid foods, can climb stairs
<i>2 years</i>	starts speaking sentences, speaks many words, plays alone and with others, starts running, is possessive of things
<i>3 years</i>	speaks sentences, can be sent to nursery school, asks for things/food, plays alone and with others, follows instructions, knows peoples' names
<i>4 years</i>	can be enrolled in elementary school, plays alone and with others, can do small errands, imitates mother and other adults, dresses her/himself, asks questions, controls excretion
<i>5 years</i>	is enrolled in elementary school, recognizes money, narrates poems and songs, knows good/bad actions
<i>6 years</i>	can get wood, can climb trees, can break small dry twigs, understands responsibilities, bathes her/himself

MEN'S RESPONSES

<i>1–3 months</i>	cries, recognizes mother, recognizes loved ones, acknowledges sound
<i>4–6 months</i>	smiles
<i>7–9 months</i>	teething, crawls, childhood illnesses start, does mundan (shaving of hair)
<i>1 year</i>	crawls, walks, starts speaking words, asks for things/food
<i>2 years</i>	touches/explores new things
<i>3 years</i>	speaks sentences
<i>4 years</i>	plays with others and alone
<i>5 years</i>	becomes samajhdar (sensible), can be sent to nursery school
<i>6 years</i>	can be enrolled in elementary school

In Bolivia, India and Morocco, girls were noted to achieve developmental milestones earlier than boys. This was also reported to be true in Indonesia and Jamaica. Mali was an exception. There boys were said to reach developmental milestones before girls. The question is, why do boys in Mali appear to achieve these milestones earlier than girls? One reason may be that in Mali children are taught to achieve these milestones. Boys are expected to sit by three months of age. They are helped along with the process by being seated in containers shaped to support their bodies or by sitting in a nest of clothes that supports them in an upright position. Girls are not expected to sit until four months of age, so it is not until that time that they are given the same kinds of supports and training that boys were given a month earlier.

There is another possible explanation. For the Bambara, numbers have meaning. The number 3 is for boys; 4 is a girl's number. Thus it is not surprising that boys achieve milestones at age three months while girls reach them at four months.

The achievement of some developmental milestones—sitting, crawling, pulling to stands—quite different in Indonesia. The reason for this is that children are carried until they are seven months of age. Up to that time they are not allowed to be put on the ground, so their movement is more restricted. The constant holding leads to a close mother–child bond.

- **SOCIALIZATION.** Socialization of children (through childrearing techniques and educational practices) reproduces and reinforces “social” gender differences. Women play a primary role in socializing young children; men are not significantly involved with children under the age of five.

In all the studies there was a discussion of what children need and the things that adults (and older siblings) do to ensure that these needs are met, and that young children learn what is required of them. There was also discussion of who was responsible for teaching children what they need to know.

In Jamaica, the following needs were identified for boys and girls, and those responsible for meeting those needs were noted.

YOUNG CHILDREN'S NEEDS	WHO MEETS THEM
proper home training	parents
good role model	same–sex parent
good education	parents
spiritual upbringing	parents, church, community
BOYS' NEEDS	WHO MEETS THEM
guidance	parents

GIRLS' NEEDS

supervision

security

WHO MEETS THEM

mother

Parents, other family members, community

While there is an emphasis on both parents being able to meet the needs of young children, the reality is that the father is absent in a great majority of the families. Jamaican family structures, particularly among the poor, are often characterized by female-headed households (estimated as representing 30–45% of families). In general there is an unequal contribution of mothers and fathers to child welfare, with mothers having more immediate responsibility for the day-to-day care of children.

In India, women talked about how they treated boys and girls differently and what they thought that meant. The group felt that girls matured faster biologically than boys, and that was why they were ahead on developmental norms. In addition, women felt that girls learned faster because “girls try to behave like their mothers from an early age; they learn to be responsible for their own work much faster than boys.” Girls may learn faster because they are treated differently. One mother commented, “We give more love to the boy and look after him more; this means that we carry him around more in our lap, and usually hand feed him. The girl is just given a roti to eat and ignored; when she has her food in her hand she will eat it. This is why she learns faster.”

Thus, in India, it would appear that girls are left on their own, and as a result, they develop independence. In Jamaica and Indonesia, it was found that mothers are much stricter with their girls than their boys. The reasons for this are quite different. As expressed in Jamaica, “Girls and boys under six can mix and play with their own age group. But if [girls] are playing with older children, they need to be watched because they are too trusting and innocent and can be sexually abused.”

In Indonesia, within the matrilineal Minang culture, girls tend to receive more discipline and less warmth than the boys. Since women in Minang culture have high status both within the family and the society, this finding was surprising to the researcher. Her hypothesis is that, “this may be due to the fact that women are expected to be the safeguard of the customary law and cultural ceremonies.” Mothers may feel that girls need to be strictly disciplined to take on this role. Boys are more indulged in terms of their behaviour.

Regardless of what boys and girls are expected to do, in all the studies it is the mother who takes on the primary responsibility of socializing the child. In Table 1 are data from Indonesia which show the role that each parent plays in relation to a variety of tasks.

TABLE 1
SELF-DESCRIBED PARENTAL ROLE IN CHILD CARE

	<i>dominant in child supervision</i>	<i>dominant in helping child's academic study</i>	<i>dominant in teaching manner (child socializing)</i>
JAVANESE (N=395)			
mother	45.1%	28.1%	40.8%
father	8.1%	18.4%	11.3%
both mom and dad	44.3%	31.1%	47.1%
MINAHASAN (N=201)			
mother	56.2%	46.3%	44.8%
father	6.0%	15.4%	9.0%
both mom and dad	36.3%	18.9%	45.8%
other	1.5%	19.4%	.5%

Source: Megawangi et al.(1994)

In Bolivia, the answer to the question, “Who teaches children the things they need to know?” depends on whether it is a girl or boy. Mothers tend to teach responsibility to girls, fathers do the same with boys. Teachers seem to educate girls much more than they do boys; teachers are responsible for socialization as well (e.g., not fighting, sharing, not being afraid). However, mothers are the primary teachers for boys and girls.

- **COMPLEMENTARY ROLES.** There is a certain balance between male and female roles within the traditional culture that seems to have remained in balance as long as the traditional culture was intact. Traditional culture is used as justification for differential treatment of boys and girls, even when the traditional culture is no longer fully intact.

The first and most important observation is that the poor rural and urban families are locked into a pattern of gender bias in the perceptions and treatment that perpetuate gender role stereotyping. These are rooted in social norms of gender work patterns, which have existed for centuries. India

The dilemma found in all the groups studied is that complementary sex roles developed historically, and served the cultures at one point in time. Today, as the ground is shifting, it is more and more the case that traditional roles no longer serve individuals or the society. A good summary of the issue is provided from the India study. The researcher writes, “Their gender-based socialization process is not perceived by them as active discrimination, in that it is not effected as a conscious deprivation of the girl from certain rights, but as a necessary socialization of the girl into her future undisputed role in society.” She goes on to state,

In the process of socializing the girl for her role of homemaker, rural and urban poor families allow girls and boys different things, but do not see this as discrimination. In other words, the perception is that it is the “lot” of the girl to be and act in a certain way, so naturally she must be brought up to fulfill that role adequately for her own good. Certain functions are not important for this role, for example, too much education, and if the girl is brought up more like a boy, then she will be a misfit in society and will suffer later in life. It is therefore for her own good that she must not be allowed certain things, for example expressing her own mind, demanding privileges, laughing too much, being disobedient, and not serving others first. This perception, coupled with the poverty of these families, has meant that girls and boys are brought up differently, within the means of the family and [based on] their perceptions of gender work roles.

Clearly the differential treatment of boys and girls is seen as necessary and important to their survival. From Jamaica comes the following description:

Girls' responsibilities are generally heavier than boys, though farming chores mitigated this difference somewhat in [the area studied]. Girls' homebound duties were seen as a strategy of protection and supervision (eventually against early pregnancy), while boys' greater freedom in the world beyond the yard (home space) was seen as a part of a traditional “toughening” and skill-acquisition strategy.

In Mali, there is also a tenacity about holding on to traditional ways. In the Mali study the traditional leaders (the village chief and counselors) held firm that work distribution by sex should be respected. “No boy should be feminized; tasks prescribed for boys must remain so.” On the other hand, family necessity (i.e., when all the children are boys or all the children are girls) may create favorable conditions for accepting gender shifts in tasks, although there are limits on this (e.g., boys do not engage in cooking; girls are unlikely to go fishing).

In conclusion, the researchers in each of the countries observed that when the balance of power shifts within a culture, people become uneasy. This often has implications for gender roles. In Mali, people express their discomfort by saying, “Women have taken the trousers; men have taken the skirts.” It is not clear how this discomfort will play out over time in terms of people's definitions of gender-appropriate behaviour, their ability to support girls' participation in schooling, and their ability to respond to the role shifts dictated by economic and political factors.

- **WELL-BEING.** The community's definition of well-being included a variety of dimensions; formal education is not always among them. Formal education is not necessarily seen as crucial for boys or girls.

As a part of the PLA process, an attempt was made to determine each community's definition of well-being and how they would rank families in relation to this definition. This was done with a small group of people who were asked to describe families in the community and to describe how well they were doing. While in many of the communities people did not understand the concept, or were reluctant to make value judgments about their neighbours in terms of their degree of well-being, eventually most of the communities completed the task.

In the Moroccan village, people were reluctant to use labels such as “poor” or “rich”. Instead they came up with the following categories.

1. The “tired people”. These are people who:

- have empty pockets
- have no land or possess a very small plot, less than 2 acres
- have no livestock, or own just one cow or 3 to 4 sheep
- make profits for the others by working their lands
- have irregular jobs
- often eat bread and tea only
- don't have the means to buy clothes, and when they do they buy the cheapest
- cannot feed and clothe their children normally
- have no means to pay school fees
- are always in debt
- need the labor force of their spouse and children to survive.

2. People who are getting by. These are people who:

- work on their own land
- possess 8 to 12 acres of land
- possess 4 to 8 cows
- are the only beneficiaries of their work
- have no debts
- can pay for their children's education
- possess electricity by using batteries
- can organize some ceremonies (births, circumcisions, marriages)

3. People who are living comfortably. These are people who:

- work for themselves on their own land and have their own livestock
- make profits for themselves
- possess 10 to 20 acres of land
- possess 10 to 20 cows
- have people work for them
- eat well
- buy clothes for the different ceremonies and especially for their children
- buy expensive clothes
- organize ceremonies for different occasions
- possess battery-run electricity
- possess a television
- educate their children
- pay for their children to continue their studies in the city
- dominate the scene of the village

As noted by the researcher, “These characteristics reveal, on the one hand, the social stratification in the village, and on the other hand, the humility within the group. The rich could

not speak about their fortune, while the poor are defined as tired, and not as disadvantaged or poor.”

In Bolivia there were two communities that provided a definition of well-being. In Table 2 there is a definition of well-being from Quilloma. Table 3 shows the ranking from El Chaco.

TABLE 2

CATEGORIZATION OF HOUSEHOLDS ACCORDING TO COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF WELL-BEING: QUILLOMA

<i>Description of Group</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
First	Hard worker Has livestock, sheep Has property in La Paz and Quilloma and in Patacamaya
Regular	Does not have much livestock Does not know how to work Has property only in Quilloma
Third	Does not have much production Has about the same size property as Regular but has less livestock

According to those who live in El Chaco there are five different categories of well-being, each of them with different characteristics as shown in the following table:

TABLE 3

CATEGORIZATION OF HOUSEHOLDS ACCORDING TO COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF WELL-BEING: EL CHACO

<i>Description of Group</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
A	Has a secure life Has a house Has property Is affiliated to the Union Is complete
B	Has less property than A

C	Is not affiliated to the Union The house is located in a dangerous place—at the banks of the river Has property
D	Does not have a house Has property
E	Does not have a house or property

What is interesting in these categories is the information people have not included. According to the Poverty Guide elaborated by the Bolivian Ministry of Human Development,⁸ the criteria used to define levels of poverty are related to the satisfaction of basic human needs. These basic needs are housing, services, education, and health and social security. The only one of these criteria found within the two communities is housing, with some emphasis on the ability to secure an income. Education is not seen as something that those with well-being have, nor is it seen as a vehicle for achieving well-being. Yet, education, particularly of the mother, was found by the Ministry to make a difference in terms of whether or not young children were attending the early childhood programme and/or attending primary school. Mother's education appears to have a positive effect on the education of boys and girls in the community of El Chaco, where more mothers are educated than in Quilloma. In El Chaco, a larger percentage of boys and girls are in pre-school programs than in Quilloma.

The role of mothers is also important in the education and general development of boys and girls. Mothers from El Chaco teach education concepts to girls more than fathers do. In Quilloma, mothers teach education concepts to girls, but not to boys. Thus, the researcher hypothesizes that, "Having an educated mother will probably improve the education level of girls." When the community was shown the relationship between the mother's education and the education of the children in the community, their response was, "Education is probably in the hands of the mothers. It is important to think of this, and it is especially important for women."

Even though both communities indicated that education was important for boys and girls, differences were encountered when information was cross-checked through a variety of techniques. The community of El Chaco said that both boys and girls need education. However, the value of education was described differently for boys and girls. Boys are told, "You need to study, and know what we know. You need to be better than others." The response for girls was in relation to the girl herself, and she was not motivated to do as well or better than others. She is told, "You do your homework well and you will learn a lot."

⁸ República de Bolivia, Ministerio de Desarrollo Humano, Mapa de Pobreza: *Una guía para la acción social*, UDAPSO, INE, UPP, UDAPE. 1993.

In Quilloma, where many more boys than girls (3:1) are enrolled in pre-school programmes, all children are praised for going to school. However, while girls are praised by their mothers and fathers for going to school, boys are praised by their mothers, fathers, and teachers. The way they are praised is also different. Girls are told “congratulations.” Boys, on the other hand, are told “congratulations”, and given money. Thus, boys have more motivation to study.

- **URBANIZATION.** Culture and degree of urbanization are stronger determinants of gender socialization than socio-economic status.

While the researcher from Morocco was reluctant to make generalizations from the study of the rural community within which she worked, her findings suggested that “Childrearing, gender socialization, and the value of the child are determined more by the rural culture, including the parents' education, than the socio-economic status of the family.” Childrearing practices are determined by ecological, economic, cultural and social factors which are characteristic of rural areas in Morocco. This finding is consistent with other studies in Morocco. She stated, “We find the same way of life and the same perceptions within other communities... We often see similarities between rural communities. We can confirm this assertion and generalize our findings by doing the same study with the same methods in other rural areas.”

The India study also demonstrated the power of rural/urban differences, rather than socio-economic status, as predictors of a community's adherence to traditional gender socialization practices. The researcher noted,

The most consciously discriminating, orthodox and traditional families are the better-off rural families. These families make a conscious decision to restrict girls' choices, even though they have the means to be more egalitarian...the better-off rural families are usually the most hostile to girls, and tend to have a contemptuous attitude towards the life of a girl child.

In contrast to the better-off, rural families, “better-off urban families, especially the ones with an ECD facility in the area, hold more equitable perceptions about their daughters' lives.” The researcher felt that it was largely due to the influence of the media and the intervention of the ECD facility that these families have a better sense of their own responsibility regarding the girl's food, education and marriage. Urbanization may be a positive factor in raising awareness about gender issues.

- **CHANGING ROLES.** As the society changes, what used to be experienced as a balance is now experienced as an imbalance between male and female roles. Under these conditions, traditional socialization practices are detrimental to both males and females within the culture.

Current childrearing practices can lead to the marginalization of males as well as females, particularly in urban areas. Across the studies there was a concern about the ways in which traditional practices are not meeting the needs of children today. Traditional practices prepared children to take their place within their society. In Mali, for example, young boys learned how to thatch, how to breed goats, and how to garden. These skills provided them with a livelihood as adults. Boys who have moved to urban areas are not taught these skills because they would not be useful in the urban market place. However, formal education is not giving them the skills and competencies they do need in the urban market place. Instead, school prepares them for a world

of paper and pencil work that does not exist; there are few jobs for those who complete their schooling, and the educational system does not give them the vocational skills and competencies to create a livelihood for themselves. Thus, boys in all of the settings we studied are caught in a situation where they are being raised with some traditional values in settings which frequently require very different behaviours of them.

We found in all the cultures studied, that there is less socialization and education of boys into clear roles and behaviours than of girls. Traditional practices included a tendency to privilege boys—giving boys wider leeway in behaviour, and excusing non-social behaviours by saying “boys will be boys.” This does not teach boys responsibility, nor clarify what will be expected of them. When they are asked to take on responsibilities in their adult life, in increasingly complex contexts, they have little support or preparation for the task.

On the other hand, traditional practices socialized girls to take responsibility for themselves and others from an early age. This was part of their preparation to take on traditional roles, but also appears to give them the facility to adapt to the modern world. While the socialization of girls to traditional roles does not give them broad options or opportunities, it does appear to give them a basic set of skills that can be of use in the modern world.

Thus, our examination of gender socialization brought up not only the differences between the expectations of girls and boys, but also the larger conflict people are facing all over the world: how to reconcile traditional values and practices with contemporary pressures, demands and settings. The bottom line is that people want their children to grow and thrive. However, in many settings, their tools for achieving this, or their images of what this should look like, do not match the realities their children encounter as they try to earn a living, create their own families, and meet their physical, spiritual and social/emotional needs.

The examination of gender socialization, therefore, is not simply a matter of tallying the numbers of girls who are included in or excluded from schooling, or documenting discriminatory practices. It requires us to look at the goals people hold for themselves and their children, and the requirements of the day-to-day reality they face and are likely to face in the future. It requires looking behind the “tasks” and “roles” to the values and expectations that help to form character. And because so much of the child's ability to learn, thrive, communicate, and think is formed in the first six years (with brain formation being accelerated in the first three years), it is important to address inequities created by gender socialization right from the beginning.

A key to addressing not only gender inequity, but inadequate socialization for both genders, is to work with parents. They are the children's first and primary teachers. The challenge lies in how we can work with parents so that children are raised in equitable and successful ways. How do we help parents to re-define their ideas of success, to encompass both their rich cultural traditions, as well as the realities of trying to survive and thrive in a contemporary world? It is hoped that, ultimately, through supporting parents in this task, we will move as communities and societies to a new balance between male and female roles, offering acceptable options to both girls and boys.

Where Do We Go from Here?

This research has provided some interesting insights into the cultures studied. However, given the short time frame and the challenges of using a “new” methodology, the researchers felt that, at best, the exercise represented a pilot study. They agreed that the methodology needed more testing, and that the questions raised in the study should be explored further. Thus, funds are being sought to continue the research in each of the six countries.

However, not all of us working to improve conditions for children have the time or resources to replicate these studies in the communities we are trying to support. Therefore, it is useful to examine what this exercise has taught us about how we can address gender questions in relation to the communities with which we work, and to guide the kinds of projects that are developed for young children and their families.

Within each of the cultures there are clearly ways in which socialization produces real differences in the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and beliefs that boys and girls develop during the early years of their life. While many people interested in the gender issue have focused on the ways in which gender inequities have been detrimental to the development of girls, there are also some socialization practices and beliefs which have a very negative effect on boys. Thus, we need to be concerned about the socialization of both boys and girls.

Those of us involved in early childhood programmes face a dilemma. We have some ideas about the importance of equity, and we want to be assured that all children have access to education and life opportunities. Yet, we are working in cultures where the expectations for girls and boys may run counter to what we see as children's basic rights. We are also working in cultures which are undergoing rapid change. Many traditional beliefs and practices are no longer useful, as was noted above, in relation to training boys to become responsible men within the culture. While there will always be some people within the culture who want to hold on to the traditional values, there are others who are aware of the need to make changes. We can support them in their efforts to seek alternatives.

In all societies, gender differentiation happens very early on, sometimes before birth, in terms of expectations and preferences. Birthing practices and the care giving of young children very quickly set the stage for the ways in which children are treated during the early years and on into later childhood and adulthood. Thus, to make a difference in terms of socialization, it is necessary to work closely with families and with communities as a whole, rather than focusing primarily on school-aged girls.

In order to do that in a way that maintains the integrity of the community, it would be appropriate in most community development and education projects to explore the questions that were asked within this set of studies. While it would also be ideal if you were able to use the PLA methodology, it does require training to do it well and in a responsible way. In many countries there are people who are trained in PLA techniques; in other places the methodology may not be known. (For more information on the methods and where you might get training, see Related Resources.) Regardless of whether or not you are able to use PLA, there is a series of

questions that will help in the formulation of appropriate curriculum and strategies. What follows is a brief discussion of the areas covered within the studies and the kinds of questions to ask to better inform your own decision-making. The answers to these questions have implications for programming.

The Community

If you are responsible for developing programmes, then community will be defined in terms of the group that you hope to include within the programme.

The community you choose to work with can be:

- geographically based (e.g., a village in a rural area);
- a group served by a community centre in an urban area;
- a community unified by beliefs or practices such as the families attending a given Mosque;
- the families served by a specific early childhood programme, etc.

A good place to begin is to draw a physical map with members of the community. The reason for completing a community map is to gain an understanding of how the community views itself. What do people know about their own community? What places does it see as important within the community? Where do people gather socially? Are there safe places for children to play? Are there underutilised buildings that might be set up to provide health or child care?

Well-Being

An area that is of interest in getting to know more about a community is how people define well-being. “We are interested in finding out whether people have a comfortable and secure life in the community.” How would people in the community characterize their lives and the extent to which their needs are met? What do they see as the characteristics of those who enjoy well-being? As we saw in the studies, people within the community may well use classifications (e.g., the tired people) and/ or criteria (i.e., proximity to the river) that would not be within our frameworks.

Children's Well-Being

While an assessment of the community's well-being provides the context for understanding children's socialization, it is also important to know what structures people think support a child's well-being. What do children need in order to flourish? What kinds of things promote children's well-being? Again, questions can be asked to try to understand if the community thinks boys and girls need the same thing. In addition, it is important to explore who provides what children need. What needs does the mother meet? What needs does the father meet? Do people in the extended family meet other needs? Answers to these questions have implications for whom one would work with in the community to support children's growth and development.

Life Stages

One question of interest is what people understand to be the nature of children's development, for example, what are the markers in a child's life? When do these markers occur? Are there differences between when boys and girls attain these stages? One interesting finding the studies

brought to light was the fact that many of the observable physical stages are used as markers of development in most of the cultures. In places where these stages are not taught or encouraged, girls pass through the stage before boys. Clearly, people make observations and judgments about children's development. They have a sense of when children's development is on track, when children are too slow, and when they are too fast. A parent education curriculum in this context could help parents become observers of a wider range of behaviours and understand that their attention to the child does make a difference in terms of the ease with which children acquire skills and competencies.

What Children Need to Know

What do people think it is important for children to know? What is the knowledge that children are expected to acquire, and what skills and competencies do they need in order to live and grow in their culture? To what extent are people aware of a need to prepare children for a changing culture? Answers to these questions provide insights into what people perceive as important, as well as providing basic knowledge that will help perpetuate the culture. Again, once there is a general understanding of what children need to know, the next question is, is this different for boys and girls? An important variable in this equation is who teaches children these skills.

Another very important question to be able to answer before designing a parent education programme is, who is responsible for teaching what to whom? What are women responsible for teaching girls and boys? What are men responsible for teaching boys and girls? Answers to these questions would help in determining what women and what men need to know in relation to their traditional roles in educating young children.

Characteristics of Children

What do people think young children are like? How do they expect children to behave? How do people help shape children's behaviour? It is clear from the studies that people have different expectations in terms of behaviour for boys and girls; expectations are lower for boys than for girls. In general, girls are seen as more accommodating, respectful and ultimately controllable. Boys, on the other hand, are not perceived to be controllable. They have a nature that leads them to misbehaviour.

In general, in addition to expecting different things from boys and girls, there are different ways of rewarding and punishing children, based on their gender. It is also helpful to identify these differences, and to identify the possible consequences of different patterns of reward and punishment.

Early Childhood Settings

Up until now we have looked at the child within the context of the community and family to determine the ways in which the child's larger environment establishes and reinforces sex-role differentiation. In some communities, early childhood programmes have already been established to address gender equity issues, but, for the most part, these programmes tend to reinforce gender differentiation rather than provide girls and boys with a wider range of choices. Therefore, it is worth spending some time looking at the ways in which early childhood care settings can address gender issues.

A place to start would be in observing what actually takes place in the early childhood programme. Of particular interest is the interaction between the teacher/caregiver and the boy and girl children. What do teachers do that promotes gender inequity? Are boys responded to differently than girls? Are they spoken to in different ways? One study found that boys were rewarded more often for correct answers and that when they gave incorrect answers, they were helped more often than girls to get the right answer. When girls gave the wrong answer, they were immediately told it was wrong and the teacher moved on to another child. What is the message children get from this experience?

In addition to making observations in the classroom, it would also be useful to review curriculum and media to see what messages are being given. For example, in a set of interactive radio scripts (that reach people of all ages), it was found that the sexes did the following:

MALES

solved problems analytically
spoke for the group
distributed tasks
made final decisions
were adventuresome
were inquisitive
were mischievous
were usually fearless

FEMALES

often used intuition
helped in activities
were on the receiving end of actions rather than instigating them
were wary of technology
were often frightened

Similar differentiations are found in reviewing stories used in ECCD programmes. This information should provide the basis for curricular reforms and for teacher–training reforms so that gender roles present more variation for boys and girls.

After completing all these activities you should have some ideas about the ways in which girls and boys are socialized into gender roles and the attitudes, beliefs and practices that help form those roles. As you learn about the community, share what you learn with the community and talk about your observations. This is an opportunity to seek clarification and verification if you feel that is required, and to make community members a more integral part of the process. Given your new knowledge you could:

Create experimental ECCD programmes designed specifically to address gender inequities, and evaluate the results. In particular, it would be useful to develop programmes which help young children to broaden their range of skills and capacity to think, act and reflect on their actions. In addition, programmes could be put together which help children to develop their character more fully, in ways that will serve them in their contemporary society. Data from this type of experiment would inform planners and policy–makers about alternative strategies that could be explored to promote equity.

Undertake information, education and communication (IEC) activities to promote an awareness of issues related to gender. Socialization practices are difficult to change. A first step in the process is awareness. This is achieved by using a range of IEC strategies to help people identify and understand the issues and then to promote appropriate strategies.

We have a lot to learn about gender socialization and its implications for life-long learning and living. The PLA methodology provides an innovative approach to gathering data on gender, and its use should be explored further. Most importantly, however, we need to be more aware of our own gender biases and the ways that they affect the children—and adults—with whom we work.

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Related Resources

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