DISCUSSION 1: GENDER VERSUS SEX (20 MIN)

WHAT IS THIS DISCUSSION?
It talks about the difference between gender and sex.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?
It helps show how society and culture play a large role in what it means to be a woman or a man, and that there is a difference between what we are born as and what society tells us to be.

STEPS:

Step 1: The facilitator describes the difference between sex and gender. Refer to the chart showing examples of sex and gender as well as the sample introductory speech for ideas on how to best introduce participants to this difficult concept. Starting out with the following questions and definitions may be helpful:

Do you know what the difference is between sex and gender?
SEX is the biological characteristics of men and women.
GENDER is the socially defined characteristics and roles of men and women.

Step 2: Prepare a table on a poster with two columns, one labeled "Sex" and the other "Gender". Ask the participants about their experiences in what defines being a man, or being a woman. If their examples are related to character traits or tasks, write them in the "Gender" column. If they relate to biological traits, write them in the "Sex" column (see example below). Explain to them the difference again.

SEX	GENDER
Biological—Male and Female Inborn/innate Cannot be changed Examples: • Only women can be pregnant and give birth • Only men can supply sperm. • Only mother breastfeeds her child • Only women menstruate	Social—Masculine and Feminine Not inborn/innate Can be changed Examples: • Women does domestic chores • Men is bread winner of family • Women wear sari/kurta • Men plows agricultural land, drives tractor • Women are kind hearted • Men sit in the tea shop and chat

A SAMPLE OF A 5-MINUTE INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPTS OF "GENDER" AND "SEX":

GENDER IS RELATIVE

Males and females have a different list of activities that they have to perform. Those activities are understood as "normal" because they are performed by the majority of males and females of all ages around us. These activities are categorized by gender-related rules that are formed by the people of that society and its history.

Can we think of some examples of what a majority of the men and women do in this village?
- ➢ As one example, men are considered to be the breadwinner of the family, while women are thought to care for the family.

GENDER IS LEARNED

Gender can be understood as learned rather than taught. We learn how a specific gender should perform, even if it is not explicitly taught to us.

For example: when babies are born, they learn from their parents that they are a girl or a boy, and by the age of 2.5 or 3 they are able to classify who is male or female around them. They first learn this by the way elders address them, as it is different for a baby boy than a baby girl, both in terms of the specific word used and in tone. When a baby understands that she is a girl, she learns what a girl does. What should she wear? What should she play with? What should she avoid? She learns the answers to these questions by observing her parents, elders and her friends.

GENDER ROLES ARE UNQUESTIONED

The majority of assigned gender roles are accepted and remain unquestioned.

For example: In certain regions, women do not plow. A part of the culture states that only men may plow the land and so in following these well-established roles, women do not plow. Instead, women are caretakers. They perform household chores and take care of children and the sick.

- ➢ At this point, ask participants to think of more examples of roles that we do without questioning? Examples may include: cooking, dealing with money, cremation, drinking chai in public, etc.

GENDER ROLES VARY IN DIFFERENT PLACES

Gender roles vary across caste and region. For example: In some communities, only men go to the market to sell agricultural products, while in others it is only women who go. Or: In Western cultures it is normal that men can cook food for family but in India and Nepal, for example, usually women are in charge of the kitchen- they are called homemakers too (grihini). Even in the same place or communities and at the same time, gender roles can vary within and across different cultures, religions, and castes.

HOWEVER, GENDER ROLES ARE CHANGEABLE OVER TIME

Gender roles and responsibilities can change over time.

- ➤ Ask participants to think about what has CHANGED over time in their community, in terms of the responsibilities of male and female farmers. Give some examples, like maybe riding cycles and motorbikes, speaking up in a group, being responsible for the money
  - ➤ One example might be that in some communities, girls were not allowed to go to school, but nowadays daughters are sent to school along with sons.

IDENTIFYING GENDER ROLES

To understand the expectations for different genders in our community, we must discover the different roles and responsibilities performed by women and men. Work can be divided into three main categories: productive, reproductive and community. Women's role, as has been noted, includes work in all three of these categories, which is referred to as women's **triple work burden**. Descriptions of these types of work follow:

1) **Productive Work**

Any work related to production, whether for income or family consumption, is considered productive work. For example, farming or weaving baskets. Usually when people are asked about their job, their response is related to productive work, especially work which is paid or generates income. Both women and men can be involved in productive activities, but for the most part their function and responsibilities will differ according to the

gender division of labor. Women's productive work is often less visible and less valued than men's. Women are generally paid less than men for performing same work.

2) Reproductive Work

Involves the care and maintenance of the household and its members, including bearing and caring for children, food preparation, washing, cleaning, water and fuel collection, shopping and family health care. Reproductive work is crucial to human survival, yet it is seldom considered 'real work'. In developing communities, reproductive work is for the most part manual labor intensive and very time consuming. It is almost always the responsibility of women and girls.

3) Community Work

Includes any collective organization of social events and services, ceremonies and celebrations, community improvement activities, participation in groups and organizations, local political activities and so on. Volunteer time is important for the spiritual and cultural development of communities and as a means of community organization. Both women and men engage in community activities, although a gendered division of labor also exists here. For example, men are present and influential in natural resource groups such as water user or forestry committees, despite an obligatory minimum attendance of 30% of women in such groups.

THE GENDERED DIVISION OF LABOR

Hence, women, men, boys and girls are likely to be involved in all three areas of work. In many societies, however, women do almost all of the reproductive and much of the productive and community work. Development projects must remember that women's workload can prevent them from participating in ways that men may be able to. Additionally, any disruption in one area of work will affect the other areas. Extra time spent on farming, producing, trainings or meetings means less time for other tasks, such as child care or food preparation and finally rest. For these reasons, especially in agricultural production, it is important to understand the gendered needs of the partners and members and cooperate with them for a sustainable livelihood.

Step 3: The facilitator lists the following behaviors and activities in a random order. Participants guess if they are determined by someone's gender or someone's sex. This can lead into a group discussion on gender and sex.

SEX	GENDER
- Menstruation - Being pregnant - Giving birth - Lactating (breatfeeding babies) - Providing sperm	- Wearing a sari - Driving a tractor - Child and elderly care - Weeding - Cooking - Washing clothes - Fertilizing