



Summary of the UNESCO Regional Consultations against Gender Stereotypes

February 2021

From these regional consultations, we can highlight problematic customs, traditions, stereotypes, laws specific to each region, the proposed solutions and ways forward that emerged.

Whatever the region, the observation is the same: with the pandemic, the situation of women has deteriorated. Confined at home with their husbands, many women are subjected to violence, with no hope of outside help (associations, social workers), especially if the man is no longer able to provide for the family because of unemployment (wounded pride). They have to take care of their home-schooled children. Their jobs, already precarious, have often become more so, or have disappeared altogether.

Customs, traditions, stereotypes, laws:

1. In North America, inequalities between [identity groups](#) (white, black, indigenous and Hispanic) exacerbate those suffered by women (unpunished rapes of indigenous women by white men).
2. [Patriarchy](#) (Asia, Africa): male breadwinner and protector means ascendancy, power, authority and strength over his wife and daughters, and over women in general.
3. [Machismo](#) (Latin America): toxic masculinity that is believed to be genetic. Violence, especially if women are professionally successful.
4. [Work](#): Women earn significantly less than men (all regions).
5. [Violence](#):
 - Femicides (Latin America);
 - Female mutilation, forced marriages, polygamy (Africa);
 - Sexual crimes tolerated by victims (Asia);
 - Women conform to stereotypes (Asia, Arab countries);
 - Fathers invest in a male child, leading to the [abortion of girls](#) (India: 800 girls born for every 1000 boys).
6. Women [stay at home](#). They take care of the house, the children, the land (Asia, Africa, Arab countries). It is the only place where they are safe (Arab countries).
7. [Education](#):
 - Girls take care of the house and fields and do not go to school, meaning there are very few women in leadership positions (Asia, Latin America, Africa, Arab countries);
 - Some teachers have a very negative influence on gender equality (Arab countries);
 - Women cannot leave the country alone to study (Arab countries). [Sexuality](#) is a taboo subject, and teachers are not trained to talk about it (Arab countries).
8. [Laws](#):
 - They exist, but they are not applied (Asia, Europe, Africa);
 - The law discriminates against women, e.g. in property and inheritance (Africa);
 - Crimes against women are tolerated (Arab countries, Asia);
 - Proposed laws are blocked on religious grounds (Mauritania).
9. [Religion](#): Preachers use it to subjugate women (Africa) and are often poorly trained (Africa, Arab countries).

Solutions and ways forward:

- **Education:**
 - Work on [education](#), from a very young age (stereotypes start very early);
 - Demarginalise the humanities and social sciences;
 - Promote girls' access to school and higher education, and then to leadership positions, including political positions;
 - Improve teacher training on gender equality.
- **Culture, Information:**
 - [Change the image of women](#) (be vigilant about the content of songs, work with artists, design comics, encourage the media to put the spotlight on women and inform the general public);
 - Take advantage of the Internet as a means of transforming the collective imagination;
 - Improve information about global programmes and international recommendations;
 - Put forward male and female role [models](#).
- **Men:**
 - Include [men](#) in projects to make them aware that they are passing on to their children stereotypes that they themselves suffered in childhood, which destroy them too;
 - Develop men's involvement in parenthood (Latin America);
 - Think about masculinity in innovative ways.
- Work with [families](#).
- Work with boys in relation to girls.
- Remember that changing mentalities cannot be imposed from the top down, but must come from the bottom up.
- **Law:**
 - [Women](#) politicians need to change their own mindset and that of their male colleagues;
 - Restorative rather than punitive [justice](#) (North America);
 - Ensure laws are enforced;
 - Identify discriminatory laws.
- Develop [social protection](#) for all.
- After training them, work with [religious leaders](#) and [preachers](#) to get their congregations to think about the harmfulness of stereotypes.

Written by Marie des Neiges Meis, based on the synthesis of the 10 hours of UNESCO-SHS regional consultations made by Isabelle CHAPERON, AIC representative at UNESCO.