

Guidelines for Gender Champions

1. Introduction

Gender socialization of both boys and girls begins early, and it is important to initiate change processes at a young age to shape attitudes and transform behaviors. Schools and colleges play a major role in this regard, because students spend large amounts of time engaged with peers in such settings. Creating positive social norms in educational institutions that value girls and their rights is important to improve the well-being of girls and achieve long-term and sustainable social change.

India is home to around 232 million individuals aged 15-24 years, who account for 19.15% of the country's population. Engaging with these young boys and girls is crucial to help them critically assess notions of masculinity and question prevailing gender inequities. We need to tap into the goodness and sense of justice of these young boys and girls, and give them tools for maintaining those gifts as they encounter people and experiences that are different from their own. We need to engage with these boys and girls to challenge and shift gender norms that contribute to girls and women having less worth, opportunities and decision-making ability than boys and men.

In order to promote gender equality, guaranteed by Article 15 of the Indian Constitution, we need to change the mode of interaction at all levels - home, school, workplace and so on. To increase the outreach for creating an environment that fosters equal treatment, Government of India envisages engagement of Gender Champions in all schools and colleges across the country. **Gender Champions can be both boys and girls above 16 years of age enrolled in educational institutions.** It is a joint initiative of the Ministry of women and Child Development and Ministry of Human Resource Development.

2. Vision

Gender Champions are envisaged as responsible leaders who will facilitate an enabling environment within their schools/colleges/academic institutions where girls are treated with dignity and respect. They will strengthen the potential of young girls and boys to advocate for gender equality and monitor progress towards gender justice.

3. Objective

The broad mandate of a Gender Champion is to provide an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to understanding the social and cultural constructions of gender that shape the experiences of women and men in society. The aim is to make the young boys and girls gender sensitive and create positive social norms that value the girls and their rights.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of a Gender Champion

The responsibilities of the Gender Champion will include the following:

- i. Provide overall guidance to the peer group in integrating /mainstreaming gender in all activities of the Institution in the form of **focused group discussions, debates, poster competitions** etc.
- ii. Engage a variety of stakeholders from the school, college, civil society organizations, women's groups and media in gender mainstreaming activities.
- iii. **Identify gaps** in school/college's activities vis-à-vis gender, and make recommendations on how to address these gaps, e.g., observe classrooms to detect bias in interactions
- iv. Promote Gender Champion Club in their educational institutions and undertake innovative activities, like creating a website or blog on gender equity and regularly writing an equity column on issues on, e.g. **untold stories of extraordinary men and women** who changed lives of women and girls, **about enabling legislations, government schemes** or about **finding a new Gender Champion** in his/her educational institution, or competitions to analyze greeting cards from gender perspective, **organize film fest on gender equity** etc.
- v. Organize awareness programmes on various gender issues including legislations to influence behaviour change. This could be facilitated through **workshops, theme based plays, films, painting competition**, etc.
- vi. Organize the **school annual function or the college fest on theme of gender equality** and women's empowerment and encourage students to sign up and express their support for gender justice and equality in attractively designed Gender Champion booths.
- vii. Organize **exposure visits** to various public service institutions at the village, block, district and city level (public health centres, hospitals, post offices, banks, police

stations, block office, SDM/DM office to facilitate knowledge about gender issues as they affect diverse populations.

- viii. **Popularize phone numbers** of such services as police helpline, women helpline, hospitals among students.
- ix. Arrange for providing necessary life skill education and information/guidance about existing public services to their fellow students.
- x. Demonstrate knowledge of important Government schemes, events, legislation, and court rulings which has a major impact on the treatment and experiences of diverse groups.
- xi. Document best practices to measure the extent of behavior change and display the same through exhibitions, fests, annual magazines etc.

5. Eligibility Criteria

A Gender Champion should fulfill the following eligibility criteria –

- Gender Champions can be both boys and girls above 16 years of age
- Should be enrolled in and regularly attending school or college.
- She/he must have secured minimum of 50% marks or equivalent grade in the annual examination/school leaving certificate.
- Excellent oral, written, and presentation skills.
- Should have demonstrated leadership qualities
- Excellent understanding of the socio-cultural issues and prevailing gender norms and practices

6. Selection

The students shall be selected by the Head of the Institution in consultation with the student representatives as Gender Champions on the basis of their intelligence, decisiveness and honesty, which are absolutely essential qualities of a leader. The selection decision will also be based on whether the candidate

- i. engages him/her in visible and hands-on initiatives to reduce gender disparities and has organizational skills, including the ability to manage priorities,
- ii. makes continuous and substantive time investments in mentoring his/her peers,
- iii. is easily recognizable by students/peers as a supporter of gender equality and

- iv. has experience in the field of gender equality, and an in-depth understanding of key issues and debates.

6.1 Suggested Selection Process

The process of selecting the Gender Champion is as follows:

- Head of the Institution will put up the guidelines/eligibility criteria in the notice board of all schools and colleges across the country.
- Applications from interested Gender Champions shall be invited giving time of at least one month.
- Applications shall be received by the Office of the Head of the Institution. Short-listing of eligible candidates will be done by the Screening Committee formed by the Principal/Head of Institution. The Screening Committee will have among others, two student representatives (one male, one female). Also at least one member should be a woman or a lady teacher, to be co-opted by the Committee.
- After verification of the credentials of the shortlisted candidates, the incumbent can be called by the Principal/Head of the Institution (heading the Screening Committee) for screening/interview and selection.
- The Principal will issue the Gender Champion Badge and the selection letter to the best candidate/s.

7. Appointment of Nodal Teachers

Depending on the strength of the educational institution, one or more teacher will be assigned to function as nodal teachers to facilitate the activities of the Gender Champions.

8. Duties and Responsibilities of Nodal Teachers

- i. Provide overall guidance to the Gender Champions on various aspects of activity implementation
- ii. Participate in all meetings organized by the Gender Champions
- iii. Motivate and influence the Gender Champions to constantly pursue their activities
- iv. Communicate with a wide range of stakeholders to facilitate the work of the Gender Champions
- v. Facilitate Gender Champions to organize training programmes and other events

- vi. Collect quarterly reports of the Gender Champions, assess them and send it to the Head of the Institution.

9. Annual Activity Calendar

The Gender Champions alongwith the nodal teachers appointed for facilitating them will draw up an Annual Activity Calendar meant for the students of that educational institution. Activities may be planned for any two days in a week. The Activity Calendar will be based on the roles and responsibilities of the Gender Champion mentioned above.

10. Term of the Gender Champion

The term of the Gender Champion shall initially be for a period of one year and extendable for 1 or more years as may be decided by the Head of the Institution. The Gender Champion will receive a **certificate of appreciation** from the Head of the Institution for his/her committed efforts on successful completion of activities towards promoting gender equality.

11. Identity Cards to Gender Champions

Gender Champions will be given an Identity Card to authorize their identity, visibility and engagement with the students and other stakeholders to undertake their specific activities. They shall be provided with a special badge after their selection.

12. Training

It is envisaged that a formal training programme shall be organized to equip and empower the Gender Champions. This shall include IEC material pertaining to information about gender stereotypes, various forms of gender based discrimination, gender equity and equality, legislations, life skills etc. Training programmes will be organized by the schools/colleges with inputs from experts. The method of training will be participatory and interactive to enable the Gender Champions further sensitize students, peer group in schools/colleges and family members on gender issues. The Ministry of Women and Child Development will be designing a model training module on sensitizing Gender Champions on gender issues.

13. Monitoring and Reporting

The Head of the institution will maintain a list of Gender Champions with their contact details and verification status. The school/college will also keep a record of efforts/initiatives undertaken by the Gender Champions. At the end of each quarter, Gender Champions will prepare and submit a report to the nodal teachers, on the implementation of activities related to gender equity. The report will be based on the Gender Champions daily diary. The quarterly report will be submitted in a pre-designed format with suitable enclosures as required. (Annexure II)

14. Assessment and Evaluation

On the basis of the quarterly progress reports, each Gender Champion will be assessed according to his/her level of proficiency and accomplishment. These quarterly reports will be assessed at the end of his/her tenure to measure his/her performance. The Gender Champions will be awarded with a **certificate of appreciation** from the Head of the Institution for his/her committed efforts towards promoting gender equality.