



privilege
power

PRIVILEGE, POWER AND TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

VIRTUAL DIALOGUE REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

This Report presents an analytical summary of the discussions during the UN Women Training Centre's 14th Virtual Dialogue, raising issues for further debate on power, privilege and training for gender equality.

The 14th Virtual Dialogue hosted by the UN Women Training Centre's Community of Practice (CoP) was a space for participatory discussion on privilege, power and training for gender equality. Through an interactive webinar with four expert panellists and an online discussion forum, the Virtual Dialogue explored why privilege and power matter for training for gender equality, and how they can be addressed through, and within, such training.



4 WEBINAR PANELLISTS



Laxman Belbase



Dr Andrea Cornwall



Dr Lucy Ferguson



Dr Joanne Sandler

Objectives of the Virtual Dialogue

To discuss:

WHY

Why do privilege and power matter for training for gender equality?

HOW

How can we address privilege and power through, and within, training for gender equality?

WHAT

What practical examples exist of using training for gender equality to address privilege and power?

What are Virtual Dialogues?

Virtual Dialogues are online discussions on topics related to training for gender equality that form part of the UN Women Training Centre's [Community of Practice \(CoP\)](#).

Virtual Dialogues are inclusive processes of learning, sharing and collective knowledge production that aim to improve the quality and impact of training for gender equality worldwide.

¹ Please see Section V of this report for details on the participants.

II. BACKGROUND

Gender inequalities around the world are a reflection of gendered power structures. At its core, power is established to retain advantages and privileges.¹ Yet, critical reflection on “*power, patriarchy and privilege are often missing from discussions on [...] gender and organizational change.*”² Even intersectional approaches tend to focus on those who face multiple forms of oppression, overlooking the powerful and privileged.⁴ Challenging privilege also prompts resistances, laid bare in the backlash against the global movement to end sexual harassment.

The fact that power and privilege are constructed means that they can be deconstructed. Such transformative change is at the heart of training

for gender equality. To achieve gender equality – through training and beyond – we must address gendered power relations and the privileges that underlie them. As Dr Lucy Ferguson has argued, we need training that “*explicitly engages with privilege in order to facilitate tangible, lasting transformation in favour of gender equality.*”⁵

The following sections summarize the participants’ discussions during the Virtual Dialogue.

III. KEY MESSAGES

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PRIVILEGE AND POWER?

DEFINING PRIVILEGE AND DIFFERENT FORMS OF POWER

Privileges can be understood as the “automatic unearned benefits bestowed upon perceived members of dominant groups based on their social identity.” As noted in the Concept Note of the Virtual Dialogue, sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, age, disability, education, socio-economic status, occupation, location – all of these intersectional identity

markers confer privileges and give power to some, and disadvantage others.

Webinar panellist Dr Andrea Cornwall discussed feminist perspectives of power. These do not only look at ‘power over’ – or oppressive forms of power – but also consider forms of power that can contribute gender equality, such as:

² Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden (2004) *Power and Privileges – on Gender Discrimination and Poverty*. Stockholm: Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Regeringskansliet). <https://www.government.se/49b74f/contentassets/fof72a30b3f84ba7a9f7557f18cb5a5/power-and-privileges---main-text>

³ Cavaghan, R. (2017) *Making Gender Equality Happen: Knowledge, Change and Resistance in EU Gender Mainstreaming*. Abingdon: Routledge.

⁴ Ferber, A. L. and O'Reilly Herrera, A. (2013) “Teaching Privilege through an Intersectional Lens”, in K. Case (Ed.) *Deconstructing Privilege: Teaching and Learning as Allies in the Classroom*. New York and London: Routledge, p. 83-101.

⁵ Ferguson, L. (2019) “Exploring privilege through feminist gender training”, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 2(1), pp. 113-130.

⁶ Case, K. A. (2013) “Beyond Diversity and Whiteness: Developing a Transformative and Intersectional Model of Privilege Studies Pedagogy”, in K. Case (Ed.) *Deconstructing Privilege: Teaching and Learning as Allies in the Classroom*. New York and London: Routledge, p. 1-14.

- ‘power to’ considers power as agency and is very important in relation to empowerment;
- ‘power with’ is about building a sense of solidarity, collective engagement and collective action – an important way of thinking about how things can be done differently to disrupt patriarchal forms of power and the exercise of ‘power over’;

- ‘power within’, which concerns how to tap into our sense of our own power, and activate us all and as people who can work to be able to challenge inequalities of power, to challenge oppression, and challenge and some of the effects that patriarchy has in producing those kinds of naturalized inequalities.

WHY DO PRIVILEGE AND POWER MATTER FOR TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY?

PRIVILEGE AND POWER AT THE HEART OF TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

As Webinar panellist Dr Joanne Sandler pointed out, gender training to date – particularly training on gender mainstreaming with bureaucrats and power holders – has rarely challenged power. However, as the Virtual Dialogue revealed, efforts to link training for gender equality to feminist pedagogy and other types of critical pedagogies are beginning to turn the tide.

At its core, training for gender equality aims to support transformative change towards a world characterized by greater equality between women, men and persons of diverse gender identities. Evoking such change necessarily means addressing the power and privileges that underlie inequalities. Thus, understanding how power and privilege operate is a central part of training for gender equality. In this way, training offers a critical entry point into the examination of the structures and systems of privilege and power that underlie gender inequality.

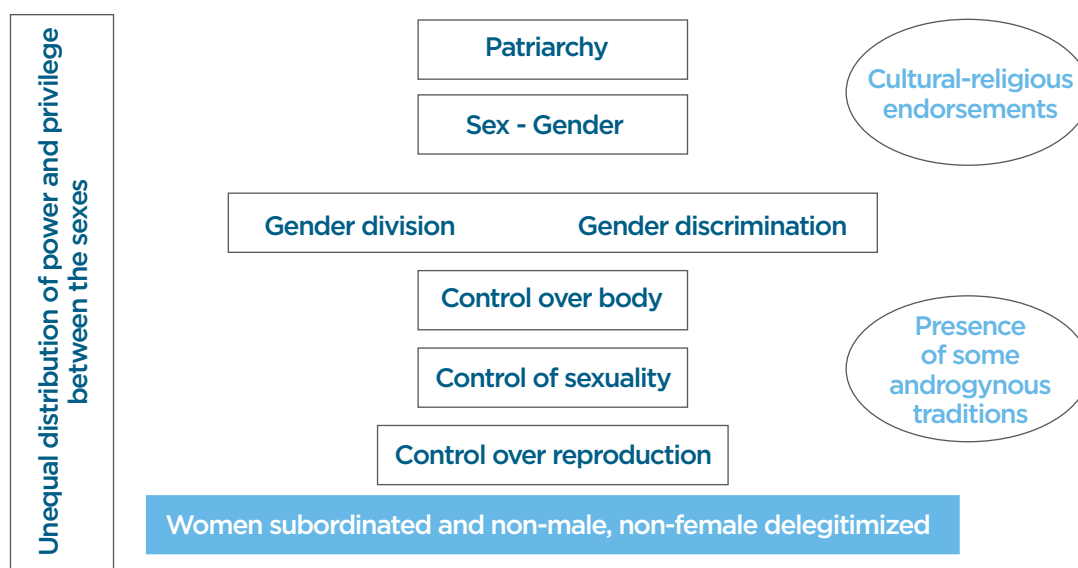
As the figure below by Webinar panellist Laxman Belbase illustrates, patriarchal systems distribute privilege and power in ways that subordinate women and delegitimize persons of other gender identities. The Virtual Dialogue participants

“Having privilege is not the problem; it’s how you use it. We have to look at the underlying structures that sustain both patriarchy and gender inequality so that when we talk about 50/50, it’s not just about the numbers.”

**– Dr Joanne Sandler,
Webinar panellist**

highlighted that patriarchal systems’ distribution of power also negatively affect men, particularly when we take into account other intersectional identity markers alongside gender – such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic background and age, among others. the judiciary, candidates and political parties.

Figure 1: Unequal distribution of power and privilege between the sexes



Source: Diagram from the Webinar presentation by panellist Laxman Belbase.

TRAINING AS AN AVENUE FOR ADDRESSING PRIVILEGE AND POWER

As Webinar panellist Dr Andrea Cornwall explained, by thinking about power in more complex ways – and considering different dimensions of empowerment in relation to these forms of power – training for gender equality can disrupt some of the privileges that we take for granted, and the related practices of privilege and power that are part of our everyday lives. Training for gender equality can help to make privileges and power dynamics visible. In this way, it helps enable us to be critical of them, and to look at what their consequences are. By doing so, training helps us think together about how do we can build ‘power to’, ‘power with’ and ‘power within’ to change conditions of inequality.

This view was shared by the Virtual Dialogue participants, however they noted that training alone is not sufficient to address power and privilege. Dr Joanne Sandler noted that training can prompt questions, reflection and dialogue – all of which are central to addressing issues of privilege and power. However, to elicit real change, training for gender equality must be one part of longer-term change processes.

Gender training helps us think together about how do we can build ‘power to’, ‘power with’ and ‘power within’ to change some of those conditions of inequality.”

– Dr Andrea Cornwall,
Webinar panellist

“Training can start to provoke questions, it can start hopefully to provoke dialogue, but eradicating the fear that patriarchy has instilled in all of us is an ongoing and collective initiative that we have to work on in every space – not just in training workshops.”

– Dr Joanne Sandler,
Webinar panellist

HOW CAN WE ADDRESS PRIVILEGE WITHIN, AND THROUGH, TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY?

USING THE CONCEPT OF PATRIARCHY

Patriarchy is a particularly useful concept for training that seeks to address issues of power and privilege. As Dr Andrea Cornwall pointed out during the Webinar, everyone is affected by the negative effects of patriarchy – men, women, transgender persons. Women as well as men can sustain patriarchy through the ways in which we behave, or permit one another to behave, in different situations, from workplace settings to family life. Analysing patriarchy gives us an entry point for thinking differently, and framing differently and acting differently. Using this entry point, we can begin to disrupt some of these forms of behaviour that result in inequality, and which are underpinned by unequal distributions of privilege and power.

“Patriarchy is a particularly useful concept to think about within training – I find sometimes it’s more useful than gender equality –because everybody is affected by it. Whether you’re male, whether you’re female, whether you’re trans, whoever you are, patriarchy can affect you negatively and can produce effects that are negative for you.”

– Dr Andrea Cornwall,
Webinar panellist

OPERATIONALIZING FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES

Operationalizing feminist pedagogies and privilege studies’ pedagogies offer important ways of addressing privilege in training for gender equality, especially when we are working with people who are in positions of privilege, rather than the most marginalized or the most vulnerable. While critical pedagogies – largely derived from Paolo Freire’s ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ – can offer insights for gender training, their assumptions need to be carefully considered when engaging with privileged participants. Dr Lucy Ferguson noted that feminist pedagogies are

embedded in a commitment to feminist critique, which challenges the basis of all knowledge and ways of knowing. They are also grounded in a feminist project, which aims to transform power relations in pursuit of a world characterized by social justice. Privilege studies’ pedagogies analyse “*privilege and power in teaching about privilege, pushing the boundaries of teaching multiculturalism, diversity, or oppression and discrimination.*”⁷

⁷ Case, K. A. (2013) “Beyond Diversity and Whiteness: Developing a Transformative and Intersectional Model of Privilege Studies Pedagogy”, in K. Case (Ed.) *Deconstructing Privilege: Teaching and Learning as Allies in the Classroom*. New York and London: Routledge, p. 1-14.

Drawing on her recent paper⁸, Dr Ferguson explained that we can operationalize such pedagogical principles to engage with privilege in gender training by:

- Considering how to construct a ‘feminist classroom’⁹ and address the reflexivity and positionality of the trainer. A number of black feminist scholars have reflected on assumptions that we have about ‘who is the teacher?’ The same issue applies to training for gender equality. To develop a feminist classroom, trainers must address their own reflexivity and positionality, thereby acknowledging their own privileges at the beginning of the training. In this way, a training does not adopt an ‘oppositional approach’; instead, it enables trainers and trainees to work together to construct, deconstruct and understand each other’s privileges.
- Exploring how to achieve a significant emotional and cognitive experience in the training. As Allen and Rossatto (2009) have argued, such an experience is needed ‘in order for oppressors to come to a problematized understanding of their oppressor identity’.¹⁰ One way of doing this is by revising attention to ‘voice’ and to placing the student at ‘the centre’. For instance, although the validation of personal experience is important, it is equally important for trainees to work on listening to others and not always dominating the discussion. Dr Ferguson also quoted Allen and Rossatto (2019), “*no easy comfortable exercises will do when it comes to subverting and dismantling the territories of the oppressor.*” This is especially relevant for gender training. While trainers are often encouraged or obliged to default to easy, comfortable exercises, there is a need to push ourselves to go beyond these in order to work with privilege.
- Understanding how addressing privilege can generate emotional or defensive responses.

“When participants start to confront privilege, they experience what Case (2013) calls ‘epistemological nausea’. Because whereas before, the bearers of multiple privileges were allowed to feel ‘normal’, intersectional explorations of privilege in training ‘whirls everything around repeatedly’. I think that’s what our job is as gender trainers – to whirl everyone around repeatedly.”

– Dr Lucy Ferguson,
Webinar panellist

“The notion of ‘male innocence’ struck a chord with me in terms of working with UN agencies and public organizations. We need to look at unquestioned assumptions about individuals and institutions believing themselves to be naturally or inherently non-sexist, merely because they have an external mission embedded in liberal norms of promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment.”

– Dr Lucy Ferguson,
Webinar panellist

Cavaghan (2017) explores such responses to discussions of male privilege¹¹, while Wekker (2016) does so in terms of ‘white innocence’ in the Netherlands, where discussions of race deeply challenge the Dutch sense of self as inherently colour-blind, egalitarian and anti-racist.¹² Such responses may similarly arise in

⁸Ferguson, L. (2019) “Exploring privilege through feminist gender training”, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 2(1), pp. 113-130.

⁹ A feminist classroom is one in which everyone’s views and questions are heard and responded to. For more information, see: <https://medium.com/the-red-elephant-foundation/what-does-a-feminist-classroom-look-like-afo73dac3dc9> and <https://everydayfeminism.com/2014/01/creating-a-feminist-classroom/>

¹⁰ Allen, R. L. and Rossatto, C. A. (2009) “Does Critical Pedagogy Work with Privileged Students?”, *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Winter, pp. 163-180.

¹¹ Cavaghan, R. (2017) *Making Gender Equality Happen: Knowledge, Change and Resistance in EU Gender Mainstreaming*. Abingdon: Routledge.

¹² Wekker, G. (2016) *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

international development contexts, where many organizations and professionals may assume that they are ‘naturally’ or ‘inherently’ non-sexist because their mission statement considers gender equality. As trainers, it is vital to engage

with what Case (2013) calls ‘epistemological nausea’ – that is, the feeling that participants have when are confronted with intersectional explorations of privilege that ‘whirl us all around repeatedly’.

MAKING FAMILIAR VALUES, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES VISIBLE AND ‘STRANGE’

To address privilege and power in a training context, Dr Andrea Cornwall noted that the first step is to make patriarchal values, attitudes, practices and arrangements visible. As Webinar panellist Laxman Belbase pointed out, it is important to be clear about what it is that the training wants to make visible, as well as participants’ current knowledge of these issues and concepts. A needs assessment and analysis of the participants, therefore, must precede any training activity.

While making patriarchal values, attitudes, practices and arrangements visible, Dr Cornwall stressed that it is also vital to ‘make them strange’ – that is, to re-present elements of participant’s everyday workspaces or of their everyday lives that they have taken for granted. To this end, it is useful to create an artifact – such as a piece of theatre, a piece of drawing, a piece of writing, or a piece of analysis (as discussed below) – that allows us to take a step back from what we take for granted, and examine these issues more clearly.

The second step is to look critically at these patriarchal values, attitudes, practices and/or arrangements to try to understand their short-term payoffs and long-term consequences. This involves asking, ‘why do we carry on doing these things?’ and ‘how does allowing them to continue benefit us in the short-term?’ Often, we sustain these elements in the short-term because it is much easier not to challenge the status quo. It is easier not to take risks, it is easier to carry on as we always have, since it can be risky or uncomfortable to open up discussions that challenge power and privileges. Then, trainings must ask ‘what are the longer-term consequences of sustaining these inequitable attitudes, forms of behaviour and arrangements?’ This enables participants to analyse the harmful consequences of inequalities bound up in patriarchal arrangements and relations.

“We need to be very cognizant about what we want to make visible in the trainings. [...] Given the capacity among individuals to grasp and potentially struggle with new concepts, it is important to do an analysis of who are we talking with and who is in the room, so that we can make the best use of the knowledge that lies there.”

– Laxman Belbase,
Webinar panellist

“Techniques that are part of making the familiar ‘strange’ – of re-presenting to ourselves the things that we’ve taken for granted, because ‘we’ve always done things that way’ or ‘we’ve always thought about things that way’. That’s a very important intellectual technique for feminism. It’s been part of the ways in which feminists have disrupted some of those arrangements that are unfair and unequal.”

– Dr Andrea Cornwall,
Webinar panellist

Dr Joanne Sandler agreed that any training must provide a space for participants to analyse their own power and privilege. In tandem, Laxman Belbase pointed out, facilitated exercises also need to help participants understand that “it is not just about them”, but rather that there is a larger picture – a larger context – in which they can play a constructive role in the process of disrupting unequal power relations. While it is important to look at participants’ individual experiences, it is vital to connect these to the broader picture of underlying power systems, structures and dynamics.

The third step suggested by Dr Cornwall is to analyse what we can do to begin to change inequalities. Trainings need to explore how participants can begin addressing privileges and different dimensions of power, particularly by highlighting concrete actions they can take in their everyday lives. These steps may be small, but the cumulative effects of small, concerted acts of change are immensely transformative. Thus, beyond analysing the underlying causes and harmful effects of gender inequality, it is important that training explores how participants can exercise their own agency to change the status quo. This is vital to support participants to exercise ‘power to’, ‘power with’ and ‘power within’.

“I think as a facilitator, sometimes we tend to indulge in looking at the experiences so in-depth, we forget to bring a broader view [...] – the systems, problems and systematic approach into the picture.”

– Laxman Belbase,
Webinar panellist

“The cognitive process of separating out the payoffs – the normative attachments, the ways in which we end up locked in to inequalities – and [looking at] things that we can do to change them, is a powerful process in itself. [...] The steps we can take may be small, but through small, concerted acts done together, huge changes can come about.”

– Dr Andrea Cornwall,
Webinar panellist

REFLEXIVITY – THE ART OF SELF-INVESTIGATION

In terms of pedagogy and epistemology, Webinar panellist Laxman Belbase highlighted the importance of reflexivity. This is an approach for encouraging reflection among training participants, including the facilitators, and thereby enabling the training to be a personally transformative experience.

This ties into analysing the assumptions we have about the distinctions between teachers, versus trainers and facilitators, before we engage in any kind of workshop or training activity. The participatory approaches at the heart of training for gender equality frame trainers or facilitators not as teachers who impart knowledge, but as persons who facilitate dialogue.

“There needs to be a space for individuals to first deal with themselves, their own power and their own privilege. I would say that that has been the missing element of many efforts to do gender training.”

– Dr Joanne Sandler,
Webinar panellist

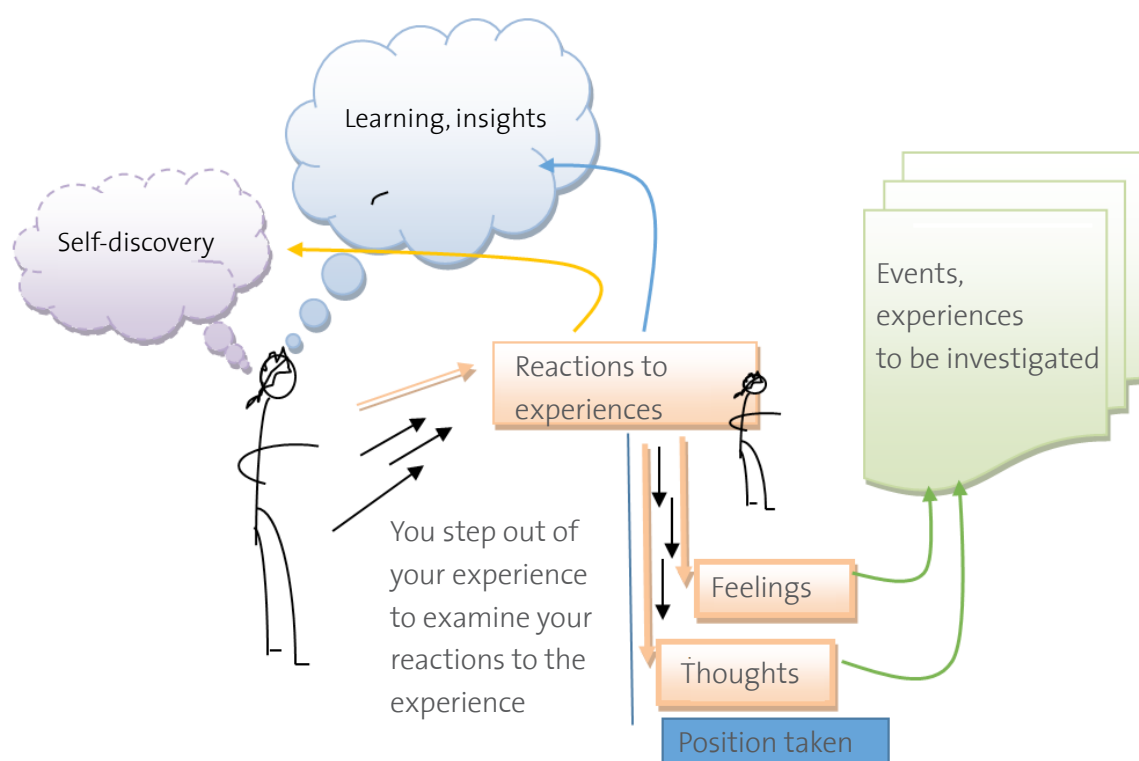
This means moving past hierarchical conceptions of trainers as teachers and trainees as students in favour of an approach where all participants' voices are equal. This is critical to ensuring that participants become empowered to engage in and push forward positive change.

Reflexivity can facilitate a self-discovery process for both facilitators and participants. When we begin to question power, the question arises, "are we asking people to give up their power, or give up the privilege?" Using reflexivity can help us diffuse feelings of powerlessness or loss of power, as moving towards a more equitable distribution of power is not a zero sum game.

"To come into a room as a facilitator, not as a teacher, but as someone who can facilitate this conversation so that the group feels self-empowered to take some necessary steps. I think in some cases, we may trigger something. [...Reflexivity] can diffuse the feeling of powerlessness or loss of power, because it is not in zero sum game."

- Laxman Belbase, Webinar panellist

Figure 2: Reflexivity – the art of self-investigation



Source: Diagram from the Webinar presentation by panellist Laxman Belbase.

ENGAGING WITH EXISTING ANDROGYNOUS CULTURE

Laxman Belbase discussed his experiences of bringing up existing androgynous traditions that exist in the communities during training sessions as a way of exploring how patriarchal power systems operate. In trainings with men and boys at the community level in South Asia, for example, discussing androgynous culture can help to interrogate how patriarchy and power operate vis-à-vis the multiple, intersectional and, often contradictory, experiences of power among participants.

This is a means of moving beyond artificial conceptions of the gender binary, and towards discussions of *“what it means to be a human”*. This can be extremely empowering, encouraging participants to analyse and challenge the restrictive power systems in which we live, with the aim of *“understanding of how we should be living together as people.”*

“My experience of working at the community level with children and young people is that if you facilitate the conversation in a way that brings in existing androgynous traditions in the communities, this can counteract the ideology of patriarchy and [explore] how power really operates, and the multiple, intersecting, contradictory experiences of power among people in the room.”

– Laxman Belbase,
Webinar panellist

CHALLENGES OF ADDRESSING PRIVILEGE IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Some of the most significant challenges of addressing privilege and power in gender training scenarios include:

- Resistances and conflicting epistemologies. When training challenges power and privilege, participants may begin to fear that they themselves will have to give up their power, privilege or position. Laxman Belbase explained that in the face of such resistance, reflexivity can help participants to locate themselves in the broader picture. This will support them through initial feelings of discomfort, moving towards reflecting on their own roles and responsibilities to identify how they can use their power and privilege to advance gender equality.

He also noted that resistances can be addressed by learning from local feminist leadership, particularly in terms of which pedagogical approaches may or may not be helpful in certain contexts.

“Feminist pedagogy questions everything within the systems where we are operating – most of which are quite patriarchal. So that does bring disruption, discomfort and, hence, resistances, especially from the leadership. [...] The point of training is not to eradicate fear – the point is to make participants live with discomfort for a while, so that they start interrogating their own roles and responsibilities to enable them to use their own power and privilege to do good.”

– Laxman Belbase,
Webinar panellist

As Dr Lucy Ferguson noted, resistances are understood as a necessary part of a transformative process. However, they can be difficult to address. When people who have always thought about the world in a particular realize that their perceptions are underpinned by privilege, this can create epistemological tensions. To address these challenges, we can draw on black feminist epistemologies, such as Patricia Collins' insight that black women acknowledge a strong connection between what one does and how one thinks. This opens up avenues for different ways of thinking about knowledge of gender. For instance, the idea that oppression and privilege are not simply understood in the mind offers the tangible starting point for using useful tools in training for gender equality – such as applied theatre (discussed below) – to explore the ways in which privilege is felt in the body and, thereby, address privileges in a more effective manner through training.

- Engaging with gatekeepers. Dr Joanne Sandler highlighted the importance of identifying gatekeepers who are more open to being allies for gender equality, and engaging with them. These partners, in turn, will be well-placed to engage with other gatekeepers. Laxman Belbase discussed innovative ways in which MenEngage and other organizations have worked with gatekeepers, especially religious and cultural leaders at the community level. For example, the global movement Musawah applies critical feminist analysis to scripture, in order to find avenues and common elements as an entry point to start engaging religious gatekeepers on taking progressive steps towards gender equality, on a step by step basis. One example of a successful avenue for beginning such engagement is violence against women, which has been a well-accepted term by some gatekeepers. This has been successfully used as an entry point to start building on to advance women's rights and gender equality. In some contexts, it may be helpful to discuss power and discrimination without explicitly using the term 'gender'. However, we must bear in

"The thing about gatekeepers is that there are so many of them. [...] Working in a bureaucracy, or at any level, is about trying to find those gatekeepers who are supportive, and then let them deal with other gatekeepers."

**- Laxman Belbase,
Webinar panellist**

"Sometimes in South Asian or African contexts, it might be helpful to talk about power and discrimination without using the word 'gender' [...] But obviously, challenging patriarchy is something we will eventually do. I don't think there is a way out because ultimately, that's what we are trying to change."

**- Laxman Belbase,
Webinar panellist**

mind that challenging inequitable gender norms is what we are ultimately trying to do.

- Limitations of gender training formats. Trainers can often feel frustrated by the limitations of training formats. To address these limitations, Dr Ferguson stressed the need to ask 'what can we do within the time, and the space, and the remit that we have?' Therefore, we need to explore "new and innovative ways of doing feminist gender training" and "feminist ways of being in gender training". This will enable us to move beyond technocratic training and towards more transformative training for gender equality.

- A reliance on didactic models of training. Often in organizational contexts, there is a reluctance to explore participatory training approaches, as managers are used to more didactic training methods and models. Dr Joanne Sandler noted that in more formal organizational contexts, managers can become nervous about participatory initiatives because they favour didactic methods that can be easily controlled. However, in her experience, they are the first people to relax once a training intervention demonstrates that it can create a productive participatory environment that is respectful of everybody's rights in the room. Despite hesitation around using participatory approaches such as drawing, videos and theatre (discussed below), these are especially useful, including in formal organizational settings.
- The gender binary. We tend to operate in binaries, even in training for gender equality, which is problematic – especially as we strive to expand understandings of gender to be more inclusive of LGBTI identities. Dr Joanne Sandler emphasised the importance of exploring understandings of gender at the beginning of any training intervention, clarifying that gender is more of a spectrum than a binary – and that understandings of gender are constantly changing and dynamic. Videos such as Paula Stone's TED Talk, "I've Lived as a Man and a Woman - Here's What I learned"¹³ are useful ways to stimulate discussion around privilege, power and the spectrum of gender. Laxman Belbase recommended exploring models used by Anand Pawar at SAMYAK called the 'circle of invitation' to disrupt some of the narrow views of gender as a binary concept. He also stressed the importance of reflecting on our multiple, intersectional identities as an entry point for deconstructing the notion of a gender binary.

"We need to look for feminist ways of 'being' in gender training, and try to summon the 'transformative courage' to collaboratively construct a feminist gender training – one that moves beyond training's often technocratic form and explicitly engages with privilege in order to facilitate tangible, lasting transformation for gender equality."

– Dr Lucy Ferguson,
Webinar panellist

"I would encourage everyone not to hesitate to use methods like theatre, videos, music and drawing with people who identify as lawmakers or bureaucrats or officials. There is a lot of reluctance – people have been telling me for 40 years not to use those techniques, and I will tell you that those techniques are especially important for people who work in the formal sector."

– Dr Joanne Sandler,
Webinar panellist

¹³For more information, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=24&v=lrYx7HaUIMY

TOOLS FOR ADDRESSING PRIVILEGE AND POWER IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

THE POWER WALK AND PARTICIPATORY EXERCISES

The Virtual Dialogue discussions highlighted practical tools that can be used to address issues of privilege and power in training for gender equality scenarios. Webinar panellist Dr Lucy Ferguson recommended:

- Creating a Privilege Test – a questionnaire that participants can use to ‘calculate’ how privileged they are. McIntosh’s checklist of male privilege and Everyday Feminism’s list of 160 examples of male privilege are helpful resources for constructing lighthearted exercises and discussions. These allow space to reject or dispute the results but, most importantly, create a space for discussion.
- The Power Walk, which can be a very powerful tool because it encourages people to confront

– in a very physical way – their multiple intersecting privileges and discriminations.

Laxman Belbase recommended participatory exercises that address intersectionality as ways to engage with issues of power and privilege. For example, reflecting on what a day looks like for a man and a woman in the same family in a particular context. This helps participants to visualize the differences, workloads, roles and expectations that are contingent on gender. It is also important to analyse how these experiences intersect with other identity markers – such as age, race, ethnicity and religion, among others – to demonstrate that we exist in multiple, complex systems wherein multiple identities intersect, and experiences differ across contexts.

THE POWER WALK, RECOMMENDED BY WEBINAR PANELLIST, DR LUCY FERGUSON

The Power Walk, notably the version developed by the Regional Learning Community for East and Southeast Asia, begins with an explanation of its learning objectives – i.e. to help participants understand patriarchy as a system of unequal privileges and power relations, based on a binary understanding of gender, that interacts with other power systems to restrict many people’s rights, opportunities and progress in life.

- Standing in a row, participants are each given a ‘character card’. Each participant reads aloud the role they have received and adopts the role of this character.
- The facilitator reads out a series of statements, such as “*I have had or will have opportunities to complete my education*” and “*I can travel around the city easily*”, etc. If a statement applies to a participant’s character, they take a step forward. If it does not, they stay where they are.
- Remaining in their positions at the end of the exercise, the group discuss questions like “*What does it feel like to be standing where you are?*”, “*Why are you so far ahead?*”, “*Why does this inequality exist?*” and “*What would need to happen in our society so that everyone could be standing at the same point, with equal levels of power and privilege?*”
- Forming a circle, facilitators and participants then discuss the participants’ reflections about patriarchy, power and privilege.

CREATING ARTIFACTS

Dr Andrea Cornwall suggested creating an artifact in training scenarios – such as a piece of drawing, a piece of writing, or a piece of theatre (discussed below under ‘Applied Theatre and related tools’) – to enable participants to examine the values, attitudes, behaviours and arrangements that we take for granted, and explore what steps we can take to change these.

Drawing and writing techniques are ways of drawing out understandings, meanings and words. For instance:

- One variation involves giving training participants large pieces of flipchart paper with a series of words on them. These could include words like ‘masculine’, ‘feminine’, ‘woman’, ‘man’, etc. Facilitators then ask participants to unpack all of these words, asking ‘what are all the associations that we have with these words?’ and ‘what do these associations tell us about what it means to be gendered?’ This enables reflections about how we classify women and men into artificial categories, assuming that ‘women and men can either be like this or like that’. The technique is especially useful for exploring limited oppositional thinking around the gender binary, highlighting how limiting and problematic this can be. In this way, it can help to challenge homophobic, transphobic or heteronormative assumptions, as well as delving deeper into the assumptions that limit our thinking about women and men.
- Another exercise is to write ‘women should...’, ‘women shouldn’t...’, ‘men should...’, ‘men shouldn’t...’ on a series of flip charts. Using these charts as a form of graffiti board, participants write out the messages that they have heard about what men and women should or should not do – from their workplaces, schools, families, friends, neighbours, acquaintances, the media, people on the street religious institutions, etc. The group then reads out all of the ‘should nots’ and ‘shoulds’, and discusses the jumble of contradictory messages that

“In one of the trainings, I asked the women to read out the list to the men, of all the injunctions for men – ‘men should’, ‘men shouldn’t’ – and then to ask, ‘how does that make you feel to hear that list?’ ‘How hard is it, to be all those things?’ ‘What does it mean for those people who have constantly been chastised or been reminded that this is what they’re supposed to live up to?’”

– Dr Andrea Cornwall,
Webinar panellist

we are exposed to. This acts as a powerful ‘reality check’, raising consciousness about how problematic these messages are. This is an important exercise for analysing narrow assumptions about what it means to be gendered, in order to move away from stereotypes about men and women, as well as the relations between them. It is especially useful for discussing the cultural, social baggage we carry with us, in terms of how we are expected to behave, and how difficult it can be to break with these expectations when messages are ingrained within us and continually reinforced.

- Another technique involves diving participants into two groups, and giving each group a series of cards. They should write every single gendered category, stereotype and insult that they can think of on these cards. All of the cards should then be spread out on the floor, so that the groups can discuss pairs of different kinds of people – in terms of how they might view each other, and the ways in which our own limited thinking and contribute to gender inequality. This exercise is about looking at power, empowerment, categorization and stereotyping, especially the ways in which power works through discourse to make us feel that we must behave in certain ways. It enables us to move beyond a narrow account of gender as being about male dominance and the oppression of women by men.

Instead, the exercise enables participants to analyse how power can work between women, between men, and how power intersects with other forms of difference – including status and class differences. This is a powerful intersectional device to examine different dimensions of difference, and we are associated with different dimensions of privilege. This is a stepping stone for discussions on how we may be blind to the benefits of that privilege gives us, as well as how we can use our privileges to change inequalities.

“We can use training methods, like theatre, to engage people in a process of reflection – to think differently about the things that they take for granted. In this way, we can work with people around their privilege – and also around the ways in which they engage with other people’s privilege, to disrupt it and to make it visible.”

– Dr Andrea Cornwall,
Webinar panellist

APPLIED THEATRE

Dr Lucy Ferguson recommended using techniques from Applied Theatre in training for gender equality. These include tools from Hidden Theatre, Forum Theatre, Narrative Theatre and Image Theatre – many of which are included in the book, *Applied Theatre Reader* – can be very useful for gender training scenarios. By activating empathy in new ways, such tools move us further away from the stereotypes that the word ‘gender’ can conjure up in participants’ minds, and give us exciting ways of engaging people who have particular power to further transformative change.

Dr Andrea Cornwall also pointed to theatre as a powerful tool in training for gender equality. Acting outs scenarios that we take for granted can create a form of ‘liminal space’ – a space ‘in between’, where we can rehearse for reality in a relatively safe way.

“[With Applied Theatre] we’re moving beyond trying to persuade, we’re moving beyond trying to justify, moving beyond trying to convince. What we’re trying to do is activate empathy and activate different ways of engaging the privileged in working towards gender equality in institutions [...] I think these are ways we can work to get to people in power, to engage them in a more meaningful way – which will hopefully have stronger powers to lead to transformation.”

– Dr Lucy Ferguson,
Webinar panellist

HIDDEN THEATRE, RECOMMENDED BY WEBINAR PANELLIST, DR LUCY FERGUSON

Henneman’s *Teatro di Nascosto* (Hidden Theatre) is an example of how theatre can be applied to the powerful – an approach that could be applied in training for gender equality. In Henneman’s original, members of national and European parliaments recited, verbatim, stories of asylum seekers alongside actors and refugees. This was an example of how *“the theatrical force of empathy is let loose upon those who have the power to make and unmake the legal framework.”*¹⁴

¹⁴ Prentki, T. and Preston, S. (Eds.) (2009) *The Applied Theatre Reader*. London and New York: Routledge.

INVISIBLE THEATRE, FORUM THEATRE AND LEGISLATIVE THEATRE , RECOMMENDED BY WEBINAR PANELLIST, DR ANDREA CORNWALL

Several techniques from the work of Augusto Boal¹⁵ and the Theatre of the Oppressed are useful for training for gender equality. For example:

Forum Theatre involves staging a short skit in which a character is progressively oppressed, before running it differently and changing different elements of it. Participants can start and stop the action in different places, asking the characters what they are thinking and feeling, and changing elements so that the principle character acts differently and other characters behave differently towards them. This is a powerful means of showing how we can change a situation through our own agency.

Invisible Theatre involves acting out dramatic actions in a public space – such as in a meeting, or in the street – where people are not expecting a scenario to be acted out. The scenario should be one that attracts attention, prompts people to think and act differently or, potentially, causes some form of friction. This can be a form of guerrilla theatre, where people are suddenly forced to challenge themselves about their assumptions.

Legislative Theatre is a way of acting out policy situations and then considering what kinds of elements could change the action. It involves asking, ‘What kinds of legal frameworks or what kind of interventions could change the actions?’

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP COURSE AND THE GENDER AT WORK FRAMEWORK

The UN Women Training Centre’s ‘Transformative Leadership for Gender Equality’ course, developed by Dr Joanne Sandler and Dr Aruna Rao, prioritizes analysis of power and privilege as it supports participants to advance gender equality across their organizations, communities and social movements. Feminist transformative leadership is about working with a feminist vision of social justice to individually and collectively transform yourself, your organizations, movements and societal norms to pay close attention to gender power structures and discriminatory practices – both formal and informal – in order to advance gender equality.

During the Virtual Dialogue Webinar, Dr Sandler discussed the course’s three modules, all of which are structured to give participants ample time for reflection. Participants work in cohorts of four, constantly discussing and getting feedback

“We start with helping people to understand their own power and privilege, and making the point that it’s not bad to have power and privilege. It’s how you use your power and privilege that is the issue.”

– Dr Joanne Sandler,
Webinar panellist

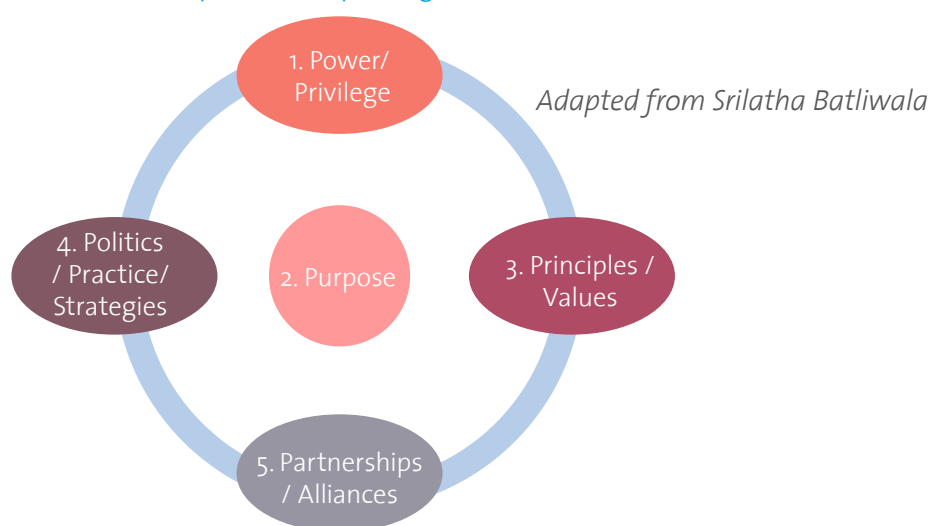
from one another. The participatory, participant-centred course integrates a focus on intersectional discrimination and intersectional analysis. In terms of tools, the workshop uses simulations and participation, mind-body work, active listening, journaling or free writing, and participant cohorts.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Boal, A. (2002) *Games for Actors and Non-actors*. London and New York: Routledge. Available: <https://books.google.es/book?id=AE2aBAQZKkYC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

- Module 1 'Power of Purpose' is a space for participants to deal with their own power and privilege. It enables reflection on key concepts, lenses and aspirations for leadership on gender equality.
- Module 2 'Inspiring and Enabling Others to Act' focuses on strategies, organizational diagnosis, outcomes and alliances, transforming resistances, and devising plans.
- Module 3 'Priorities for Transformative Action' is about taking action, centering on presenting participants' plans, peer feedback and support, accountability and measurement, and follow-up on the workshop.

Module 1 is framed by the five 'P's' – five pathways to bringing power and privilege into capacity development for gender equality – from the work of Srilatha Batliwala. Thus, first, the module provides a space for individual reflection on participants' own power and privilege. It then moves on to 'purpose', which offers a space for participants to explore the values that underpin their actions, before looking at politics and practice, and, finally, partnerships.

Figure 3: Unequal distribution of power and privilege between the sexes



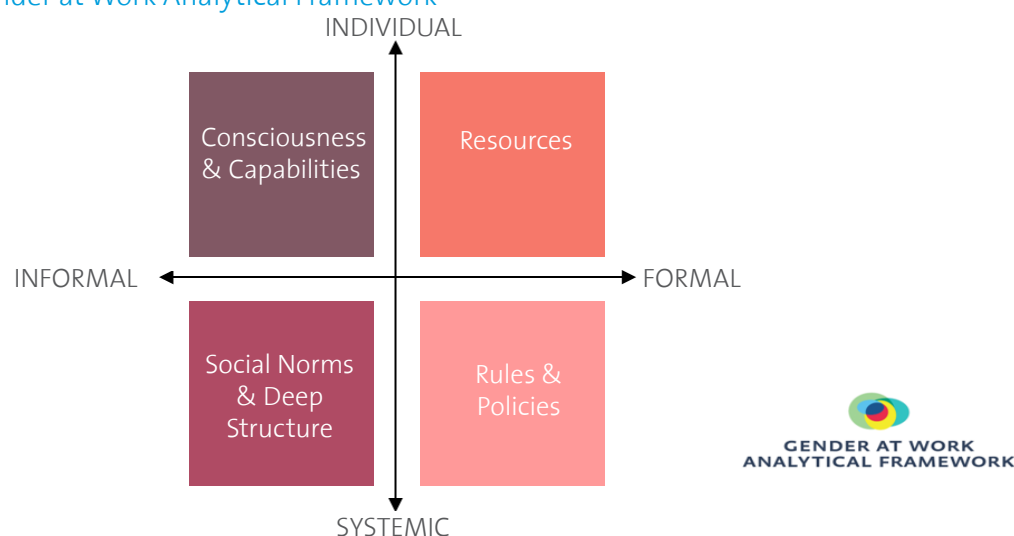
Source: Diagram from the Webinar presentation by panellist Dr Joanne Sandler.

The course also uses the lens of the Gender at Work Analytical Framework, developed by Aruna Rao and David Kelleher. This four quadrant framework can be used to map opportunities, challenges, change strategies and results or outcomes. Its vertical axis goes from individual to systemic, while the horizontal axis goes from formal to informal, or visible to invisible. The framework views organizational change as being multifaceted and holistic. It is based on an analysis of the role of social institutions or rules, both formal and informal, in maintaining and reproducing inequality in society.

“Often, we focus on the right side [quadrant of the Gender at Work Analytical Framework] – on what’s visible, what can be counted. What we’re trying to do in this training is to really focus on what is less seen. That is, individual attitudes and deep structures that hold gender inequality in place, or as we say, the power to make the rules, to set priorities, to allocate resources. This is what we’re all dealing with and what we see happening in practice, but often don’t name.”

**– Dr Joanne Sandler,
Webinar panellist**

Figure 4: Gender at Work Analytical Framework



Source: Diagram from the Webinar presentation by panellist Dr Joanne Sandler.

The bottom right quadrant encompasses formal visible gender equality strategies, laws, policies and rules. The upper right quadrant is about resources. Several laws, policies and strategies are intended to free up resources to be used for gender equality. The upper left quadrant concerns the informal attitudes and consciousness that individuals carry with them. The bottom left quadrant deals with deep structures – that is, the social norms and structures that hold gender inequality in place. Often ‘invisible’, these deep structures vary by context. This is aligned with the discussions (above) on looking at what is underneath the surface, unmasking the familiar and making it strange.

Change needs to take places in all four domains, especially in the lower left quadrant. In the Transformative Leadership workshop, participants are supported to analyse the left-hand quadrants, particularly the lower left-hand quadrant of the Gender at Work Analytical Framework. This supports the process of participants thinking about how they use their power and privilege. The workshops try to make the point that everyone has some type of privilege. Identifying this privilege and power is important, as is examining how we can each use these privileges and power to advance women’s right, gender equality and inclusion.

The course also uses the ‘wheel of privilege’ to examine how each individual can use their

“Everybody has some type of privilege. Figuring out what your privilege and power is, is important. Then the question of how you use your privilege and power to advance women’s rights, gender equality, inclusion and human rights is really what we want to talk about. We don’t want to demonize people for having privilege and power, we want them to use it for good outcomes, and for a more inclusive society.”

– Dr Joanne Sandler,
Webinar panellist

power and privilege to unseat or unstick deep structures. Before we can start to call for, or work towards, change, it is vital to understand the deep structures that underlie inequality. Once we address deep structure, only then can we move on to effective policies and resource allocations.

IV. ISSUES FOR FURTHER DEBATE

The Virtual Dialogue participants raised several issues for further debate on addressing privilege and power through, and within, training for gender equality. These included:

- Adapting models of feminist pedagogies across different cultures (raised by Emilie Carol Adjomo Ela and Öykü Kaçan)
- The importance of moving beyond binaries as the model for analysing gender (raised by Anand Pawar)
- The use of gender-transformative change (GTC) models in training (raised by Susanne Bauer)
- Using a stakeholder management model with privilege on one side, and power on the other, to examine how these two variables affect gender equality (raised by Chris Hook)
- Further integrating intersectionality into training for gender equality (raised by Debbie Gray)
- The need for trainers to announce their pronouns and address their own privilege before beginning a training intervention, in line with the focus on reflexivity (raised by Chris Hook)
- Expanding notions of gender to include issues around LGBTQI identity in training (raised by Adriana Greenblatt)
- Exploring ways to safely address issues of gender and sexuality in contexts where certain issues – such as LGBTI rights – are considered taboo (raised by Ilot Muthaka)
- Tackling the cultural and social baggage internalized by women, as well as by men (raised by Gloria Khamkar), particularly in religious or conservative societies and families (raised by Hadeel Qazzaz and Alcívar Bravo, María José)
- Ways of engaging with traditions – rather than only challenging them – through training (raised by Neha Zaidka)
- Avenues for engaging religious stakeholders (raised by Emilie Adjomo) and male gatekeepers (raised by Shriya Das)
- Addressing the fears that underpin patriarchy through training (raised by Vivian Valimbe)
- Exploring how privileged groups can contribute to oppression inadvertently (raised by Christia Guevara)
- The need to train persons of all ages, since understandings of power and privilege are instilled within us from a young age (raised by Nathalie Reynaud and Laurene Huffman)
- The importance of education in challenging patriarchal power dynamics and gender discrimination (raised by Suhail Kamran)
- Expanding training opportunities for gender advocates around the world, such as in the Caribbean (raised by Cynthia Williams)

V. PARTICIPANTS

Participants' engagement made the 14th Virtual Dialogue a success. This report is based on the contributions of our expert Webinar panellists, Webinar audience's insightful questions and forum discussion contributors. Both the Webinar and forum were moderated by Ruya Leghari, Community of Practice Consultant, with support from Leticia Berrizbeitia, Capacity Development Analyst. The UN Women Training Centre would especially like to thank the following participants:



250
participants
in the Virtual
Dialogue Webinar
and forum

| NAME | COUNTRY |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Adjomo Ela, Emilie Carol | Cameroon |
| Alcívar Bravo, María José | Ecuador |
| Bauer, Susanne | Germany/South Africa |
| Belbase, Laxman | United States of America/Nepal |
| Cornwall, Andrea | United Kingdom |
| Das, Shriya | N/A |
| Ferguson, Lucy J. | United Kingdom/Spain |
| Gray, Debbie | N/A |
| Greenblatt, Adriana | Canada |
| Guevara, Christia | N/A |
| Hook, Christopher (Promundo) | United States of America |
| Huffman, Laurene | United States of America |
| Kaçan, Öykü | N/A |
| Kamran, Suhail | N/A |
| Khamkar, Gloria | N/A |
| Muthaka, Ilot (COMEN) | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| Pawar, Anand (SAMYAK) | India |
| Qazzaz, Hadeel (Oxfam) | Canada/MENA |
| Reynaud, Nathalie | N/A |
| Sandler, Joanne | United States of America |
| Skourlis, Margaret (UN) | N/A |
| Valimbe, Vivian | N/A |
| Williams, Cynthia | N/A |
| Zaidka, Neha | N/A |

WEBINAR PANELLISTS

25 JUNE 2019



Laxman Belbase, MenEngage Alliance
Global Networks Manager, Global MenEngage Secretariat

Laxman is a social worker and gender justice activist, with over 12 years of experience in programme development, implementation and advocacy. He has worked for organizations like Save the Children Sweden, and is a founding core group member of MenEngage Alliance in Nepal. He brings his multi-cultural experiences to the areas of gender equality, child protection, violence prevention, engaging boys and men for social justice, fatherhood, sexual and reproductive health & rights, comprehensive sexuality education and human rights advocacy across Asia, Africa and the Middle East.



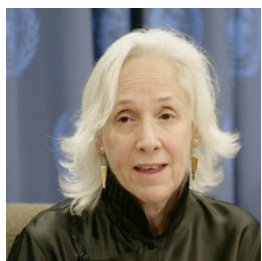
Dr Andrea Cornwall, University of London
Pro-Director Research & Enterprise, SOAS, University of London

Andrea is a political anthropologist who specializes in the anthropology of participation and democracy, participatory research, masculinities, women's empowerment and women's rights, gender and sexuality. She has written extensively on making visible the dynamics of gendered power in organisations, as part of strategies for change to advance greater equality. She works on topics ranging from understanding women's perspectives on family planning in Nigeria and Zimbabwe, public engagement in UK regeneration programmes, domestic workers' rights activism and democratic deliberation in Brazil, the use and abuse of participatory appraisal in Kenya, and sex workers' rights activism in India.



Dr Lucy Ferguson, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies
Research Associate and International Consultant

Lucy is a specialist in gender equality and women's empowerment. She has written extensively on engaging with privilege in order to facilitate lasting transformation through training for gender equality, using feminist pedagogical principles and working towards training that is reflexive, focused on process and grounded in the transformative potential of participatory training encounters. She has worked with several international organisations, including UN Women Training Centre, UN Volunteers, the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNDP and UNWTO. Her most recent book is Gender Training: a Transformative Tool for Gender Equality.



Dr Joanne Sandler
Senior Associate, Gender at Work

Joanne is an independent consultant focused on women's human rights and organizational change strategies. A senior associate of Gender at Work, she has collaborated with international organizations, private foundations, academic institutions and women's organizations and networks for the past 30 years. From 2001 to 2010 Joanne served as Deputy Executive Director for Programmes for the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), guiding its support to programmes that advance women's empowerment and rights throughout the developing world. She then served on the transition team for the establishment of UN Women and currently serves on the boards of directors of Breakthrough and of Women Win.

VI. SEE ALSO

[Recording of the Webinar](#) on Privilege, Power and Training for Gender Equality (25 June 2019)



[Concept Note](#) of the Virtual Dialogue on Privilege, Power and Training for Gender Equality



USEFUL RESOURCES & TOOLS



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UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.