

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

A teaching resource for ages 9-14



OXFAM

INTRODUCTION

International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated annually on 8 March. It was first sparked by 15,000 women workers who marched through the city of New York in the USA demanding shorter hours, better pay and the right to vote. In 1975, the United Nations adopted a resolution formally recognising IWD and since then it is celebrated across the world by women and men. It is a day when people around the world come together to recognise the achievements that women and girls have made, as well as call for further action to close the gender gap.

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Recently updated, this teaching resource could be used on IWD or on any day of the year, to introduce issues related to gender equality, support critical thinking, and encourage young people to consider possible action they might like to take in response.

These cross-curricular activities are designed to be flexible and easily adapted for use in an assembly, form time or to support more in-depth classroom learning. Depending on the availability of time and other learning taking place, the activities could be taught sequentially over a series of lessons or selected and delivered as standalone sessions. The suggested age range is 9-14 but some of the activities could be adapted to suit the needs of younger and older learners. Depending on learners' age and the context, teachers may also wish to acknowledge and discuss inequality issues connected to LGBT+.

Teaching controversial issues

Issues such as gender equality may provoke strong, varied and contradictory responses among young people, influenced by their own experiences and personal context. Oxfam's [Teaching Controversial Issues guide for teachers](#) provides strategies, guidance and activities for exploring these complex issues in the classroom.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Classroom activities and worksheets to get young people learning and thinking about gender equality and any action they might like to take in response
- A slideshow with a short quiz and useful background information — for use in an assembly or to support classroom learning
- Additional activity ideas to inspire further learning across a range of subjects
- Useful links and resources for finding out more about this issue

Cover photo: Students at a high school in a village in Nepal.
Credit: Aurélie Marrier d'Unienville/Oxfam

WOMEN AND GENDER JUSTICE

IWD and the need for greater equality between women and men is as important now as it was in 1908. Despite some important progress in tackling gender inequality in recent years, the gender divide persists. In no country have women achieved economic equality with men, and women are often more likely than men to live in poverty. Women are more likely to carry unpaid care responsibilities, such as cooking, collecting water and looking after children, that are routinely undervalued. The disproportionate effects of the coronavirus pandemic have only worsened the problem — violence against women, girls and children shot up during lockdown; women were carrying out an even greater proportion of unpaid care and domestic work than men; and women were also more likely to be out of work or have lost their job during the pandemic.

When we drill down, other identities, further add to the discrimination women experience. These include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, age, marital status, location, level of education, occupation and religion. For example, in the UK, black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities were disproportionately affected by Covid-19 with high rates of infection and death. In other countries, black and women of colour make up the majority of the workforce in certain sectors which form the backbone of local and global supply chains, from agriculture to the garment sector.

These unfair expectations and discrimination exclude women from safe and secure fairly-paid work. Oxfam is working with others to push for all women's work to be fairly valued and shared, demanding women's equal right to a life without poverty —and an economy that makes this possible.



Photo: This group of refugee women in Tripoli, Lebanon, are fighting against gender-based violence and empowering other women in their communities to do the same. This women's group was set up a decade ago with the support of Oxfam and partner organisations. Women receive training to help them provide support and advice to other women in the community.

Credit: Natheer Halawani

ACTIVITY 1 — EQUIBINGO

This is a quick activity that can be used to both engage and energise learners. It is best carried out in a large, open space where learners can move around freely. If using a classroom, it might be useful to push the desks and chairs to one side first.

Learning aim

- To explore learners' existing ideas and knowledge about the status of women and men, and the degree to which they think women and men have achieved equality.

Time

- 15 minutes

What you need

- A large, open space where learners can move around freely — if using a classroom, it might be useful to push the desks and chairs to one side first
- Copies of the [Equibingo questions](#)

What to do

1. Give each learner a copy of the [Equibingo questions](#). Explain that the aim of the game is to complete the questions on the sheet as quickly as possible. By moving around and talking to each other, learners should collect a different learner's name in response to each question and record these names on the sheet. The winner is the person who completes their sheet in the fastest time.
2. Give learners 10 minutes or so to play the game. If no one has answered all the questions in the specified time, then the 'winner' is the person with the largest number of answers.

Note: The answers to questions 10, 11 and 12 are: 1918, SDG5 and 8 March, respectively. See the slideshow for further details.

Make it easier

Ask learners to complete the questions in pairs rather than individually. The [Equibingo questions](#) could also be adapted to make them easier or more difficult, according to the ability and age of learners.

Follow-up discussion

1. Discuss learners' thoughts about whether life is equal for women and men, and boys and girls - in their community, in the UK and globally.
2. Point out that historically men and women have not been equal, and many inequalities persist today. If participants found some questions difficult to answer, this reflects the depth of these inequalities. For example, many people find it easier to think of a male sports star than a female sports star.
3. If learners offer prejudiced and stereotypical views, encourage others to challenge these and explore what evidence these ideas and assumptions are based on.

Find someone who

<p>1. Can name a famous female footballer.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>	<p>2. Can name a female prime minister or president.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>	<p>3. Can name a famous male dancer.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>
<p>4. Can name a global business or brand managed by a woman.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>	<p>5. Can name a famous female scientist.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>	<p>6. Can name a female superhero from a film or comic.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>
<p>7. Can name an important invention by a woman.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>	<p>8. Knows someone who has or had a stay-at-home dad.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>	<p>9. Can name a prominent campaigner for gender equality.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>
<p>10. Can name the year in which women first won the right to vote in the UK.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>	<p>11. Can name which one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is about gender equality.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>	<p>12. Knows when International Women's Day is.</p> <p>Learner's name:</p> <p>Answer:</p>

ACTIVITY 2 — THE LINE OF INEQUALITY

Learning aim

- To start to consider what factors (such as gender) might affect the life opportunities, power and influence that someone has

Time

- 40 minutes

What you need

- A large open space — you might like to use the playground or a sports hall
- Cut up copies of the [Role play cards](#)

What to do

1. Explain that learners are going to play a game to investigate what factors affect the life opportunities that someone has and how they are treated by others.
2. Start by asking learners what they think we need to do well in life. What rights should we all have? Briefly discuss their thoughts and ideas.
3. Ask learners to line up at one end of the room. Give each learner one of the [Role play cards](#).
4. Explain that the role play cards represent fictional people living in different countries around the world. Ask learners to spend a few minutes imagining the daily life of the person whose role they are playing. They could also think of a name for their character.
5. Read out the list of [Power statements](#), one by one. For each one, ask learners to take one step forward if they think their character would agree with the statement to take a step forward. If they think their character would disagree with the statement, they should stand still. Try to make sure everyone takes roughly the same-sized steps. It's not a race!
6. Emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers. Learners should use their best judgement to decide. Encourage those learners who are unsure how to answer to ask you for advice.
7. Eventually learners will be spaced out across the room according to how many steps they have taken forward.

Make it easier

Allocate each role to a pair of learners rather than asking them to work individually. Additional time will be needed for learners to discuss and agree a position for each statement.

Follow-up discussion

1. Once you have read out all the statements, ask learners to stay where they are and introduce their character to the rest of the class. Encourage the learners to give reasons for their decisions about how many steps they took.
2. Ask the other learners if they think that each character is correctly placed in relation to others, for example: Do you think the hedge fund manager should be further forward than the 12-year-old girl? Encourage discussions when there is disagreement. Allow learners to re-position themselves if they wish.

3. Discuss the following questions:

- How might gender affect the life opportunities that someone has or how they are treated by others?
- Why do you think this is? Do you think this is fair?
- What other factors might affect the life opportunities that someone has or how they are treated?
- Why do you think some people are treated differently to others?

4. Use this discussion to draw out the idea of intersectionality or interconnectedness: where different factors, such as race, age, gender, ethnic background and ability can overlap and amplify the discrimination and disadvantage faced by an individual.

Power statements

1. You receive or received a primary school education.
2. You can afford to meet your basic needs.
3. You are never short of food.
4. You can afford to see a doctor and buy medicine when you have health problems.
5. People will listen to your thoughts and opinions.
6. You have people who care about you and protect you.
7. You have enough money to save some for later.
8. You have enough spare time and money to enjoy leisure activities with friends.
9. You are satisfied with your life.
10. You live in a sturdy house safe from bad weather.
11. You can afford to go on holiday at least once a year.



Photo: Young people taking part in a line of inequality activity.

Credit: Andy Aitchison/Oxfam

ROLE PLAY CARDS

Activity sheet

After a successful career in business you have become a politician in Rwanda. You are the mother of two children, you have influence and can afford everything that you need.

You are a married woman living in the UK. You have four children. Your husband works and has a good salary. You would like to work, but it's difficult for you to find a job that gives you the hours you need to drop off and pick up the children.

You are a 23-year-old woman living in India. You have been visually impaired since birth. You would love to be a teacher, but you weren't able to go to school when you were younger because of having to live with this disability. You live with your family, helping with housework and looking after your younger brothers and sisters.

You are a male care worker, caring for elderly people in a residential home in the UK. Your pay works out below the minimum wage because of unpaid overtime. You often work 50 or 60 hours a week.

You are a hedge fund manager for an energy company in the USA, managing £3 billion worth of assets. You are extremely wealthy and are one of the 25 richest hedge fund managers in the world. You are the father of two small daughters.

You are a female garment worker in a factory in Bangladesh that is a supplier for a major supermarket chain. You are treated badly, often working long shifts without even a toilet break. It's not unusual for the company to 'forget' to pay you for overtime. But you must keep your job. You don't know how your family would get by without your income.

You are a female accountant working for an international travel company in the city of Mumbai in India. You have a nice apartment and live quite well on your salary. You are thinking of starting a family.

You are a single mother of three young children, living in the UK. You would like to work but can't afford the cost of childcare. You receive financial help from the government, but these benefits have been cut recently. You worry about how you will pay the bills. Sometimes you go without food so that your children have enough to eat.

ROLE PLAY CARDS

Activity sheet

You are a man working for a charity in Afghanistan. You do a dangerous job and work very long hours for a small salary. You aren't married and don't have any children.

You are a male teacher in a school in a low-income neighbourhood in the city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Your school doesn't have many resources, and you wish that there was more money available for education. You have always wanted to be a teacher, but it has been difficult to pay the bills recently. The cost of living is rising faster than people's incomes.

You are a 12-year-old girl from a farmer's family. You live in rural Ethiopia. You have been taken out of school because your mother needs help collecting water and wood. The walk to collect these is becoming longer every month.

You are the teenage son of the chief executive of a large manufacturing company in Nigeria. You go to a private school and are currently applying to go to university.

You are a married man with four children, running a food centre in a small town in Iraq. You lost an arm in a war but have a good income.

You are a female journalist for a national newspaper in the UK. You have worked hard for your position. You have a small daughter who you hope will have similar opportunities to you in the future.

You are a male farmer growing rice in Pakistan. You are only able to grow enough food for you and your family to eat. You would like your children to have an education and more opportunities in life than you have had.

You are a 31-year-old man living in Peru. You were injured in an accident three years ago and are no longer able to work. You don't receive any help from the government and must rely on begging and support from family and friends to get by.

CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER

This activity is adapted from one developed through [The Gender Respect Project \(Development Education Centre for South Yorkshire\)](#). It is also featured in Oxfam's [Teaching Controversial Issues guide](#) (p.13). As with the other activities, teachers will need to consider the risk of reinforcing stereotypes and encourage learners to challenge stereotypes.

Learning aim

- To think critically about gender, and to reflect on how and why mainstream gender stereotypes exist.

Time

- 40 minutes

What you need

- Copies of the [lists of adjectives, jobs and domestic roles](#) — these can be adapted to be more age appropriate for your learners.

What to do

1. Organise learners into pairs or groups of three. Give each group a sheet of paper and a copy of one of the [lists of words](#) (adjectives, jobs, or domestic roles).
2. Ask learners to draw a large Venn diagram on their sheet of paper. They should then cut out and place the words/phrases on the Venn diagram according to whether they perceive it to be Female, Male or Non-gender specific. They could add their own examples of adjectives, jobs and domestic roles.
3. Learners could be asked to approach this from the perspective of society in general rather than focusing on personal views. Learners may recognise that although the prevailing norm ascribes gender to these roles and characteristics, they may know many examples to the contrary.

Follow-up discussion

1. Invite learners to share and discuss their groupings.
 - How did you decide?
 - What sort of discussion was there in your group?
 - Where do your ideas about how to decide come from? With the list of domestic roles, it is likely that learners will be influenced by what happens in their family. This may cause sensitivity, for example if a learner is in a single parent family or if one or both of their parents goes out to work.
2. Ask learners' whether they think that their answers would look different if the activity was done:
 - during the period when their grandparents were children?
 - at the time when their parents were children?
 - by a child in 20 years' time?
 - by a child in another country?
 - in which countries do learners think young people might give different answers?
3. Discuss whether learners think that these gender roles should be challenged.
 - Can you think of examples that do not conform to gender specific categories?
 - Which words could be gender-neutral? Which words should be gender-neutral?
4. Finally discuss what this activity has taught learners about gender roles and their perceptions?
 - How do you think the roles of men and women are changing? How would learners like them to be?

WORD LISTS

Activity sheet

ADJECTIVES	JOBs	DOMESTIC ROLES
Strong	Nurse	Cooking
Caring	Chef	Gardening
Kind	Teacher	Doing the washing up
Tough	Pilot	DIY
Thoughtful	Soldier	Doing the shopping
Clever	Carer	Cleaning
Brave	Footballer	Paying the bills
Mean	Artist	Ironing
Sporty	Doctor	Fixing a technical problem
Noisy	Firefighter	Doing the laundry
Quiet	Headteacher	Putting the rubbish out
Bold	Dancer	Childcare
Friendly	Social worker	Cleaning the car
Confident	Inventor	Making decisions

EQUAL OR UNEQUAL IN THE FUTURE?

This activity is a mind-mapping exercise that helps learners to consider and express their ideas – both positive and negative – about the future. For further details, see p.18 of [Oxfam's Global Citizenship in the Classroom: A guide for teachers](#).

Learning aim

- To identify and discuss examples of gender inequality in our society
- To reflect on what changes learners would like to see regarding this issue in the future

Time

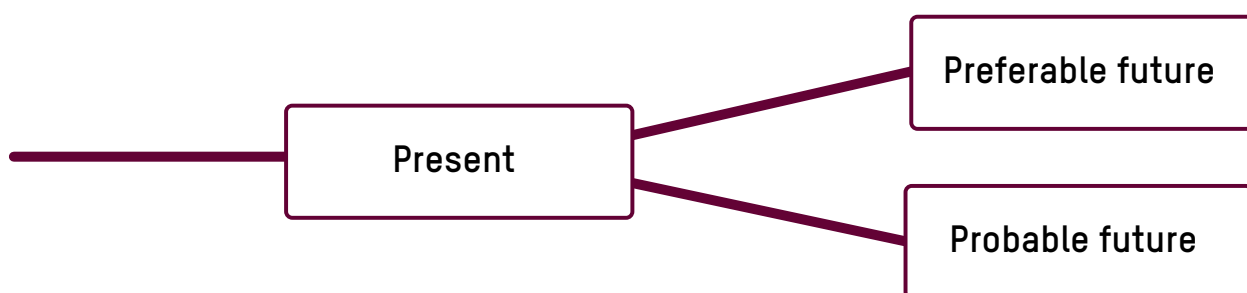
- 40 minutes

What you need

- Large sheets of paper or A3 copies of [Ideal futures](#)

What to do

1. Use the slideshow to introduce issues related to gender equality. Emphasise that although tremendous progress has been made in recent decades, there is still a long way to go before life opportunities are equal for women and men, and boys and girls.
2. Organise learners into pairs or groups of three. Give each group a large piece of paper.
3. In their groups, learners should draw a timeline on a large piece of paper (see the diagram below). Alternatively, give each group an A3 copy of the [Ideal futures](#) template.
4. On the lower timeline, learners should place the things they think will probably happen in relation to gender equality. These can be represented in a variety of ways such as words, drawings or cut-out images. Along the upper timeline, learners should add the things they would prefer to happen.



Make it easier

Ask learners to focus on a specific example of gender inequality, such as girls' education, rather than the issue in general.

Make it more difficult

Ask learners to extend the timeline to the left (as shown in the diagram), going back in time before the present. They could then annotate this line to show changes that have happened in relation to gender equality in the past.

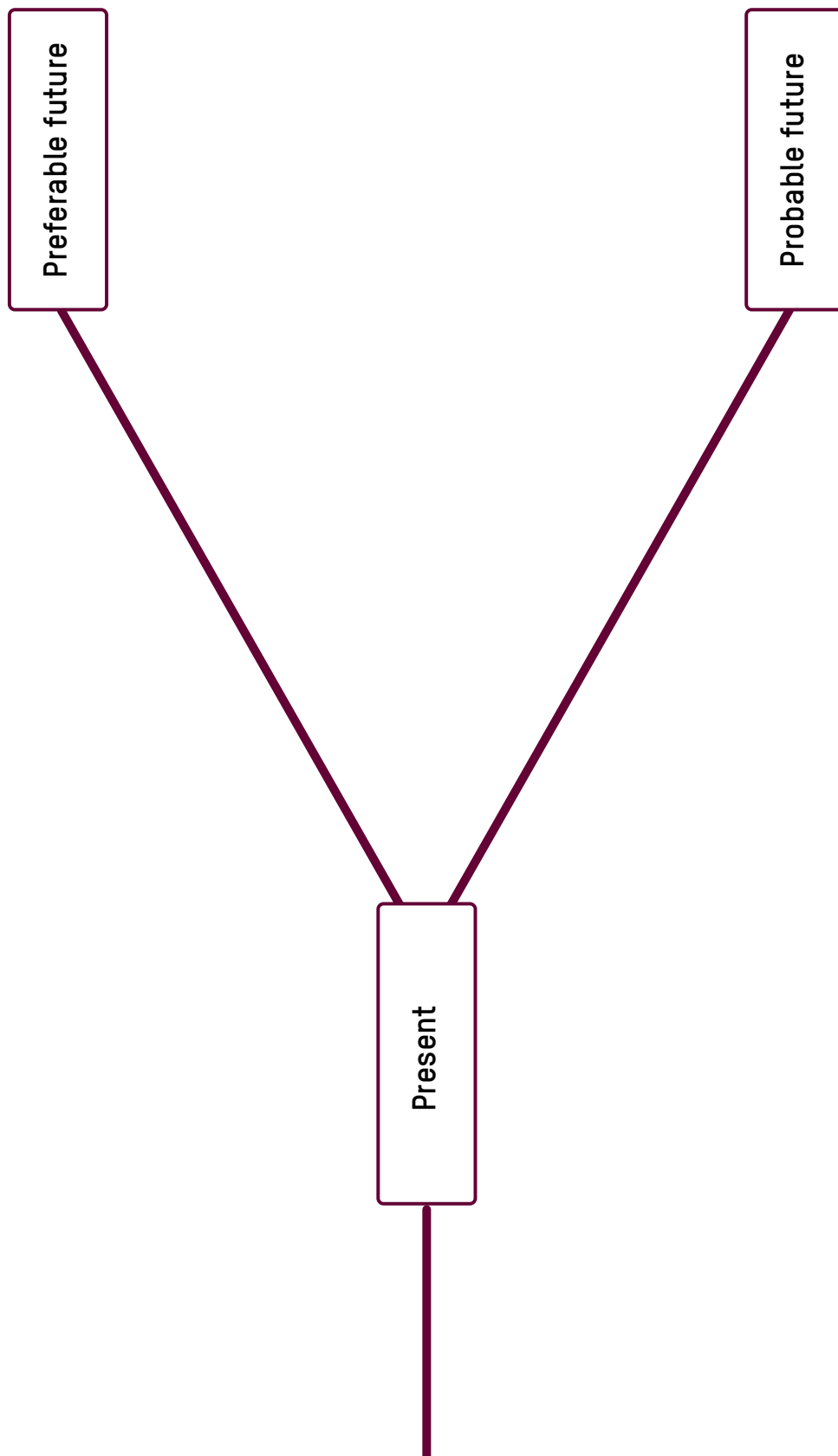
Follow-up discussion

1. Allow time for learners to share their timelines and ideas about the future with other groups.

Possible discussion questions include:

- Which changes for men and women do you think are most likely to happen?
- What changes would you prefer to see happen?
- Does anyone else share your vision of the future? If so, who? This might be someone in your class, school or community, or a famous person.
- What needs to change if your preferable future is to become reality? What challenges are there, and how could these be overcome?
- Who is taking action to create such a future? Who else should be taking action?
- How can we ourselves contribute to this preferable future?
- What will happen if no action is taken?





BREAKING DOWN THE BRICKS

This activity is adapted from a Bricks and hammers activity in [Get Global!, a teachers' guide on how to facilitate active global citizenship](#) (p.18).

Note: It is important to make it clear to learners that taking action is voluntary. Campaigning is not for everyone, and it's okay if learners just want to find out more about an issue rather than take action. However, you will probably find that learning about this issue will mean many of your learners do want to respond in active ways. Taking action can be an appropriate and empowering response to real-life global issues for young people as they experience being part of bringing about change that improves the lives of people living in poverty.

Learning aim

- To identify and discuss examples of gender inequality in learners' own school and community, before thinking critically about what action could be taken to overcome these barriers

Time

- 40 minutes

What you need

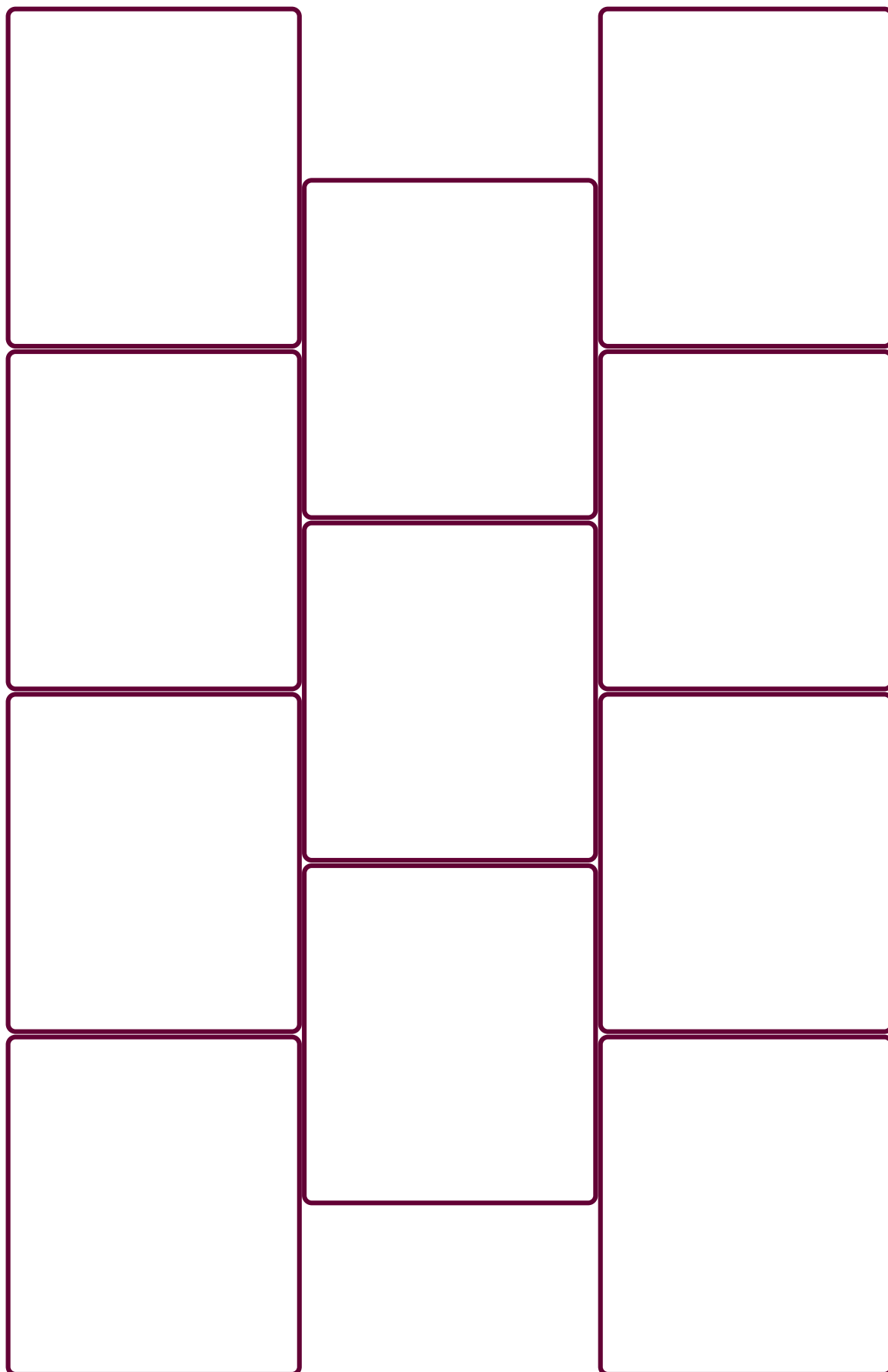
- Sheets of paper; scissors
- Copies of the [Brick wall](#) and [Hammers](#) templates; glue; string (optional)

What to do

1. Ask learners to suggest ways in which life and opportunities for girls and boys are unequal in their school (or community). For example, this might relate to access to certain sports or the proportions of males and females taking certain GCSE subjects. Or it could be more direct examples of prejudice or discrimination, for example through social media. You might like to allow time for learners to first discuss their ideas in pairs or small groups before sharing their ideas as a class.
2. Organise learners into groups of three or four. Give each group a large sheet of paper and ask them to draw the outline of a brick wall on it. Alternatively, they could use the [template](#) provided. Learners should then label each brick with one of the examples of gender inequality they identified previously.
3. Learners should then make paper hammers to knock down these bricks. They could draw their own hammers or use the [template](#) provided. On each hammer, they should write an action that could be taken to overcome this issue and make life fairer. The hammer could then be stuck or attached by string to the relevant brick(s) in their wall.

Follow-up discussion

1. Invite groups to share their ideas with others. Encourage groups to reflect on and discuss their suggested actions.
 - How effective do you think this action would be? How much of an impact might it have?
 - How easy would this action be to do? What support would you need to do it?
 - Which of these actions do you think is most important? Why?
2. If possible, support learners to select, plan and carry out some of these actions to promote gender equality in their school or community.





FURTHER ACTIVITY IDEAS

There are many ways to explore issues of gender equality in the classroom. Here are a few more suggestions.

Reflect on the meaning of inequality

- Hold an unfair egg and spoon race. Equip the class with eggs and spoons by give one or more learners ladles to carry their eggs in. Invite learners to share their feelings about the race afterwards. Alternatively, share out some cake, counters, or stickers unevenly among the class. Discuss how having more or having less made learners feel. Relate this to real life example of inequality.

Reflect on the meaning of inequality

- Ask learners to collect, analyse and present their own gender equality data. For example, they could investigate how the percentage of girls in education has changed over time, the gender pay gap in the UK, or the progress made in other indicators such as maternal mortality. Alternatively, they could research the gender distribution of the workforce in their own school. Encourage learners to create an infographic, slideshow or poster to share their findings with others.
- Useful data sources include:
 - [World Bank Open Data](#)
 - [Gapminder](#)
 - [The Global Gender Gap Report](#)
 - [Our World in Data](#)

Ask questions

Learners could use a why-why-why chain to think critically about the possible causes of specific examples of gender inequality, for example access to education, by repeatedly asking questions beginning with the word 'why'. For further details, see p.12 of Oxfam's [Global Citizenship in the Classroom: A guide for teachers](#).

Explore the power of music

Investigate the role of music in social change, such as progress towards gender equality. See Oxfam's [Raising her voice](#) teaching resource.

Find out what action is being taken

Learners could use the internet to research how some different organisations are taking action to promote gender equality. Explore the [targets and indicators for gender equality outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals](#). How well do learners think these targets will help in achieving the future they would like to see?

Use an issue tree

An issue tree is a useful mapping tool that could be used to think through the causes, effects, and solutions of an issue such as gender equality. For further details on using issue trees in the classroom, see p.13 of Oxfam's [Global Citizenship in the Classroom: A guide for teachers](#).

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

Gender Respect Project

Try other [teaching activities and ideas from the Gender Respect Project](#). Led by Development Education Centre South Yorkshire (DECSY), this project aimed to help children and young people to understand, question and challenge gender inequality and violence in both a local and a global context.

Gender Action Programme

Find out more about the [Gender Action award programme](#) which promotes and supports a whole-school approach to challenging stereotypes.

Gender Equality

These [cross-curricular materials from Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning](#) support the development of pupils' core skills such as citizenship, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and imagination through the study of gender equality.

Teaching Controversial Issues

See Oxfam's [Teaching Controversial Issues guide](#) for guidance, classroom strategies and practical teaching activities for managing controversial issues in the classroom.

Outside the Box

This [resource from EqualiTeach](#) has been developed for those working with young people ages 3-18 years, supporting them to promote gender equality and tackle sexism and sexual harassment

Redraw the Balance

This [short film](#) could be used to prompt classroom discussion about gender stereotypes.

International Women's Day

Find out more about [International Women's Day](#), this year's campaign theme and the events taking place around the world to recognise the achievements that women and girls have made, as well as call for further action to reduce the gender inequalities that exist in our society.

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