

Discrimination Terms

Discrimination contradicts a basic principle of human rights: that all people are equal in dignity and entitled to the same fundamental rights.

Discrimination is often based on ignorance, prejudices and negative stereotypes.

Segregation, a form of separation of ethnical groups imposed by law or by custom, is an extreme form of discrimination. There have been official forms of segregation in Europe; for example, Jews were once isolated in ghettos.

Discrimination may be practised overtly as direct discrimination, which is characterized by intentional discrimination against a person or a group. Examples of direct discrimination could be when a child of a certain ethnicity is not admitted to a school or a housing company that does not let flats to immigrants. Indirect discrimination focuses on the effect of a policy or measure, which may appear neutral but in fact systematically puts people of a particular minority at a disadvantage compared with others. For example, a fire department that sets a minimum height for fire fighters automatically excludes many female and immigrant applicants, as does a department store that does not hire persons with long skirts or covered heads.

To fight discrimination, particularly that which is more indirect and hidden, some countries have adopted measures of positive discrimination, which is also known as affirmative action. In some situations positive discrimination means deliberately favouring a certain group or groups who have experienced historic and pervasive discrimination (e.g. giving preference to candidates from groups who seldom attend university, or establishing quotas from minorities, such as women or rural people, for certain public offices).

Racism

- Racism can be defined as a conscious or unconscious belief in the superiority of one race over other another. This definition presupposes the existence of different biologic 'races', a supposition now dispelled by recent research, especially the human genome project.
- Racism of any kind is related to power, with people who hold power determining what is 'superior' and discriminating against people with less power.
- Ethnocentrism, believing that some cultures, usually their own, are superior or that other cultures, traditions, customs and histories are incompatible with theirs
- The consequences of racism, both today and in the past, are devastating both for individuals and for society as a whole. Racism has led to mass extermination, genocide and oppression. It has ensured the subjugation of majorities to the whims of tiny minorities who hold wealth and power.

Xenophobia

- Xenophobia, a fear or aversion to foreigners or foreign countries
- In most cases the concept of 'foreign' is based on socially constructed images and ideas about in groups and out groups

Sexism

- Many institutions of society, such as the media, family, childcare institutions or schools, preserve and transmit stereotypes about men and women.
- Traditional gender traits in Western societies often relate to power
 - Men and their typical activities are characterized as outgoing, strong, productive, brave, important, public-oriented, influential and having high financial rewards and social recognition and value.
 - Women's key characteristics reflect powerlessness: dependent, caring, passive and family oriented. Women often hold subordinate positions, their work is less valued and it receives less recognition and remuneration.

Homophobia

- Homophobia is an aversion to or hatred of gay, lesbian or homosexual people, or generally of people with a different sexual orientation

Ableism

- The term 'person with a disability' may refer to many different conditions: a disability may be physical, intellectual, sensory or psycho-social, temporary or permanent, and result from illness, injury or genetics.
- In keeping with this social model of disability, children with disabilities are now considered as children 'with special needs'. Social institutions are obliged to take these needs into account and adjust to them. A large proportion of disabled children attend the regular school system today.
- On December 2006 the UN General Assembly adopted the first international treaty addressing the human rights of people with disabilities, the Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
 - The long term goal of this Convention is to change the way the public perceives persons with disabilities, thus ultimately changing society as a whole.