

Focusing on Women, Girls, and Gender Equity

The Global Health Initiative (GHI) seeks to achieve significant health improvements and foster sustainable, effective, and efficient public health programs that deliver essential care. A key component of this initiative is the Women, Girls, and Gender Equity Principle, which aims to redress gender imbalances related to health, promote the empowerment of women and girls, and improve health outcomes for individuals, families, and communities. The Women, Girls, and Gender Equity Principle is one of the seven core GHI principles.

Why Women, Girls, and Gender Equity Is Important

Ultimately, the Women, Girls, and Gender Equity Principle aims to address gender-related inequalities and disparities that disproportionately compromise the health of women and girls and, in turn, affect families and communities. GHI focuses on women and girls – including adolescent and pre-adolescent girls – in the planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of health and development programs and policies.

Measuring Progress

Work is under way to establish potential indicators and a results framework for the Women, Girls, and Gender Equity 10 program elements in order to measure progress and evaluate program impacts.

U.S. Government Approach to Women, Girls, and Gender Equity: 10 Key Program Elements

1. Ensure equitable access to essential health services at the facility and community levels.
2. Increase the meaningful participation of women and girls in the planning, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of health programs.
3. Monitor, prevent, and respond to gender-based violence.
4. Empower adolescent and pre-adolescent girls by fostering and strengthening their social networks, educational opportunities, and economic assets.
5. Engage men and boys as clients, supportive partners, and role models for gender equality.
6. Promote policies and laws that will improve gender equality and health status and/or increase access to health and social services.
7. Address social, economic, legal, and cultural determinants of health through a multisectoral approach.
8. Utilize multiple community-based approaches, such as behavior change communication, community mobilization, advocacy, and engagement of community leaders/role models, to improve health for women and girls.
9. Build the capacity of individuals – with a deliberate emphasis on women – as health care providers, caregivers, and decision makers throughout the health systems, from the community to the national level.
10. Strengthen the capacity of institutions to improve health outcomes for women and girls and promote gender equality.

Achieving GHI Health Goals and Principle on Women, Girls, and Gender Equity

1. Each country strategy conducts a gender analysis to assess the needs of women and girls and inform the design of projects and activities.

2. Each country team provides a short narrative describing how it will implement the principle.

3. Each country collects appropriate sex- and age-disaggregated data to monitor and evaluate progress.

Women, Girls, and Gender Equity Principle in Kenya: Success Spotlight

The APHIA program (the AIDS, Population and Health Integrated Assistance program) in Kenya has strategized innovative ways to bring together large amounts of HIV/AIDS funding with small amounts of family planning funding – a merge that represented a critical advancement toward integrating Kenya's health goals in maternal and child health, family planning, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis. Guided by the Women, Girls, and Gender Equity Principle, Kenya's APHIA program addressed the underlying social determinants of health that affect women's and girls' access to health services, such as long waiting lines, stigma associated with HIV services, transportation to clinics with siloed provisions of services, and loss of proper follow-up processes. Incorporating these social, cultural, and economic barriers into Kenya's health strategy resulted in an integration of services so that, for instance, a woman could receive information and services for family planning, maternal health, and HIV at the same clinic, on the same day. As a result, the APHIA program saw increases in HIV testing and treatment and maternal health visits, including facility deliveries. GHI's focus on integrating services and encouraging countries to respond to the underlying factors preventing access to health services for women proves to be an effective step toward better health outcomes for all.