Pathways

Women in Leadership
International Women’s Day

SPRING 2021
Pushing for Gender Equity

For more than 60 years, Pathfinder International has led sexual and reproductive health and rights programs that support every person, no matter their gender, to make the most critical decisions about how their lives will unfold.

For millions of women and girls this has meant deciding whether or when to marry or have children. We have worked closely with our government partners around the world to enact policies and run programs that build more gender-equitable societies.

And, over the past two years, we have been working on an organization-wide Gender Equity Initiative (GEI) that will ensure the commitment to gender equity in our programs is reflected internally across the organization.

The success of Pathfinder’s mission depends on the extent to which our Pathfinder community is diverse and inclusive. As a result of this initiative, we will have a clear and inclusive organizational definition of gender. Our external programmatic commitment to gender equality will be exemplified internally within our policies, practices, and organizational culture. This initiative will also advance our overall diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. We know that having the broadest diversity of staff who bring their unique perspectives, ideas, and contributions will allow us to achieve greater impact within the communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Susan Farrell
Chief Administrative Officer
Pathfinder International
March 8th is International Women’s Day, but at Pathfinder, we celebrate the achievements of women every day.

The United Nations’ theme of this International Women’s Day is “Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world.” At Pathfinder, we take this call to action seriously.

Katia Amado, Pathfinder’s MAIS (MORE Quality, Access and Health) Project Director in Mozambique, exemplifies the way Pathfinders around the world challenge harmful gender norms that create barriers for women. Katia has strengthened our work on safe abortion and advocacy for reproductive health and rights in the country.

“It’s not easy to talk about abortion, regardless of people’s backgrounds,” she says. “We all have misconceptions. But when we refuse to see and feel the distress of our sisters, aunts, and partners, many of them die because they cannot access a safe abortion. MAIS has brought the discussion to the surface, bringing awareness, knowledge, and information about the law. More than that, it has helped promote an environment that reduces stigma, guilt, and judgement around abortion by empowering the community, and not allowing women and girls to cut their lives short due to unsafe abortion. MAIS is positive change.”

In Niger, Habsatou Amadou Sala, a Technical Coordinator, has skillfully navigated contrasting religious beliefs and cultural norms to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights. Habsatou’s ability to build strong relationships within the community has been instrumental in enabling Pathfinder’s work in Niger.

“This work has allowed me to see the real needs of my community, to feel useful, and to develop a sense of pride in the changes that have taken place,” she says. “We were able to convince men to be key players in raising their communities’ awareness about health needs and rights.” More than that, she says, “family planning is no longer a taboo subject. I won’t say that everyone agrees with us, but I firmly believe we are on the right track. I am very proud of my work.”
When Charisma*, a 16-year-old living in Maputo City, first learned that she was pregnant, she was devastated. She couldn’t believe it. She was so scared. She didn’t know what to do. She thought she had to keep the baby. Her family found out and told her she had to keep the baby because she is already old enough to have a baby.

For Charisma, Pathfinder’s MAIS project had a crucial impact. If she hadn’t been able to talk with the MAIS project team before coming to the hospital, she says, “and I see a difference because that is able abortion and postabortion care, which means that many public health facilities, including the police, are prepared to have a baby.”

Pathfinder staff are on the frontlines of efforts to help raise awareness among community members and challenge the stigma associated with abortion—that is law 35/2014, which makes abortion illegal in Mozambique.

The vast majority—85%—of women of reproductive age who have an abortion are prepared to have a baby.

Each year between 1% - 15% of maternal deaths can be attributed to unsafe abortion.

The Global Gag Rule & the Global HER Act

On January 28, 2021, the Biden-Harris administration repealed the global gag rule, a policy that has damaged the health, rights, and lives of women and girls around the world. The law has now been re-imposed through executive order—protecting women and girls around the world.

The Mary Bessman–Jonas Maunde–Pathfinder’s MAIS project, has a way of supporting community members, are more than up to the challenge. Throughout COVID-19, Pathfinder staff and community health workers, who then conduct home-based visits to support her recovery. She confided that she wanted to remove the pregnancy, but the health providers weren’t prepared to have a baby.

For Charisma, Pathfinder’s MAIS project reached her provider, the psychologist supporting Charisma, and then approached MAIS staff to see if they could help. Maunde was given a choice. And she chose to take it out when she was ready to when they are prepared to have a baby.

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**Pathfinder Legacy Society**

We are thrilled to share that we will be launching the Pathfinder Legacy Society later this year, recognizing the generosity of people like Vicki and Tom Williams, who are taking advantage of gift planning to ensure that families around the world can access sexual and reproductive health care for years to come.

The pandemic has driven each of us to reprioritize the financial and physical wellbeing of ourselves and our loved ones, and we invite you to consider the many ways that gift planning offers for you to make a gift to Pathfinder while enhancing your personal financial security.

For more information on including Pathfinder in your will or estate plans (including retirement accounts, life insurance policies, and charitable trusts) and to be recognized as a founding member of the Pathfinder Legacy Society, please contact Rayna Bagchi, Development Officer, at rbagchi@pathfinder.org.

This cause is actually part of what brought us [Vicki and Tom] together over 25 years ago. Together we have supported various pro-choice charities that prioritized reproductive health care, but over time saw some organizations with important missions falter from poor management. Ultimately we realized that no matter how good the cause can be, the way it is being implemented by the charity involved is a critical consideration.

After researching for the most effective charity in providing for reproductive rights and related health care needs in many underserved parts of the world, we decided to make Pathfinder the largest beneficiary in our will and one of our short-term charitable priorities as well. We continue to be impressed by the scope of Pathfinder’s programs, including in the way those programs have been refined to fit local situations, and in how efficiently those programs are run.

VICKI AND TOM WILLIAMS
Belmont, CA