

At A Glance

Gender & Gender-Based Violence



Pathfinder envisions a world where people of all gender identities have equitable access and agency to use resources and make decisions; can lead lives free from violence; and enjoy their right to full bodily autonomy and reproductive agency—achieving their full potential in society.

Yet in many Pathfinder contexts, gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) restrict women’s and girls’ mobility, access to resources, and limit their decision-making power—all of which impact their ability to act on their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Inequitable gender norms impact men’s and boys’ SRHR as well, resulting in increased risk-taking and general stigma against accessing health services. Advancing gender equality and eliminating GBV is critical to sustainable gains in SRHR.

Strategies

Increase the agency of women and girls to make decisions about their SRHR by dismantling systemic barriers to gender equity.

Use gender-synchronized approaches that engage all genders in transforming gender norms and balancing power within families.

Strengthen health services and systems, as well as the health work force, to be more gender responsive and equitable to better meet the needs of clients and communities.

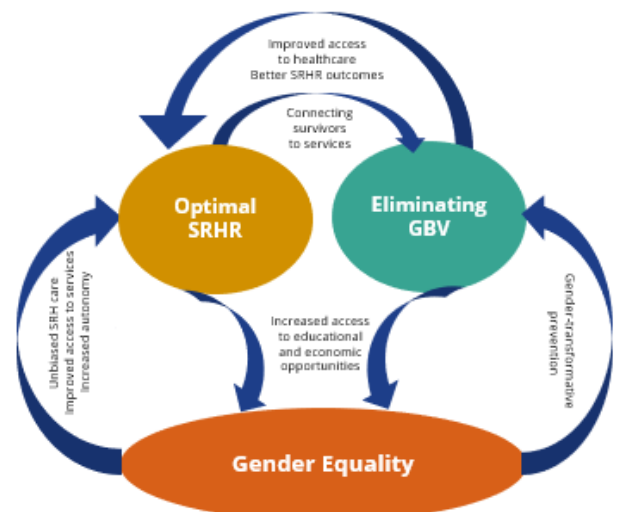
Maximize the SRHR sector’s capacity to provide first-line response and secondary prevention of GBV through integration of services and improved referral systems.

Advocate to transform laws and policies that perpetuate gender inequalities; promote policies that support the agency and rights of women, girls, and marginalized groups; and ensure health and key equity measures are disaggregated by sex and age.

Above: Supriya Vitthal Patil and husband Vitthal Patil bring sexual and reproductive health information to their community through Pathfinder’s YUVAA program in India. Photo Credit: Sarah Peck

Pathfinder’s Definition of Gender:

Gender refers to the roles, responsibilities, characteristics, and behaviors that a given society associates with our identities as women, girls, men, boys, or non-binary people. Gender is socially and culturally constructed, so our understandings of gender differ across contexts and over time. Gender influences what is expected of each of us, the power we have in society, how we relate to others, and the norms to which we are expected to conform. Gender is a distinct concept and not the same as sex classification, which is typically assigned at birth.



Women's and Girls' Agency

Pathfinder strategically challenges gender norms that reinforce inequitable power dynamics, particularly those that serve as barriers to SRHR. We partner with and support local women's and gender-aware organizations to increase women's and girls' participation and influence within communities, health systems, civil society, and policy dialogues.

Highlight: Impacto Project, Mozambique

Impacto is working to improve gender equality so adolescent girls and young women are better able to exercise their rights to bodily integrity, live free from GBV, choose when and whom to marry, and access rights-based contraceptive and safe and legal abortion services.

In Mozambique, 38% of young women (aged 20-24) experience physical violence and 17.5% report having suffered sexual violence since age 15.

Impacto is improving sociocultural norms and transforming beliefs that limit adolescents' SRH decision making, positive sexuality, and bodily autonomy. Impacto works with community leaders and social influencers to catalyze meaningful transformation toward gender equality.

In the first half (2.5 years) of the program, the percentage of men who agree that a woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together decreased from 39% to 22%.

Engagement of Men and Boys

Pathfinder ensures interventions address the unique needs of men and boys. Our programs promote positive norms of masculinities and the constructive role that men and boys can play in promoting gender equality and reducing GBV.

Highlight: YUVAA, India

Combining social entrepreneurship and innovative communication approaches, Yuvaa improves access to contraceptive choices and positively shifts gender and social norms by delivering customized family planning messages to young couples in Bihar and Maharashtra.

Enable Gender-Responsive Service Delivery

Pathfinder recognizes that health systems are not 'gender neutral'. Our programs support public and private health systems to integrate gender-transformative interventions and build knowledge and skills among administrators, policymakers, and service providers alike. We work alongside service delivery points to ensure evidence-based integration of gender and GBV-responsive SRH services for all people, including adolescents and youth.

Highlight: Tubiteho, Burundi

Tubiteho works with local partners to accelerate the delivery and uptake of family planning, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, nutrition, malaria, and gender-based violence prevention and treatment services.

Seeks to reduce GBV by conducting gender sensitization trainings with project and partner staff, enabling them to integrate what they learn into project interventions.

From July 2021-22, Tubiteho supported provision of clinical GBV response to 742 survivors.

Engages couple entrepreneurs as change agents in the community to facilitate engagement of young women and men in family planning and gender equality, creating opportunities for dialogue and reflection.

Leverages men as agents of change for gender equality and equity by stimulating conversations about the negative impacts of rigid gender roles, actively addressing impacts of gender inequalities on all genders, and skills and tools to live as a supportive partner.

Pathfinder International is driven by the conviction that all people, regardless of where they live, have the right to decide whether and when to have children, to exist free from fear and stigma, and to lead the lives they choose. As a global health organization with locally led, community-driven programs, we support women to make their own reproductive health decisions. We work with local partners to advance contraceptive services, comprehensive abortion care, and young people's sexual and reproductive rights in communities around the world—including those affected by poverty, conflict, climate change, and natural disasters. Taken together, our programs enable millions of people to choose their own paths forward.

Transform lives with us. pathfinder.org

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