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**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

Approaches that Work

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

GBV Regional Strategy in East, Central, and Southern Africa

Through the POLICY Project (predecessor to the Health Policy Initiative), we coordinated the formulation of a strategy to direct USAID's and UNICEF's activities around GBV in East, Central, and Southern Africa. The multi-donor strategy—co-authored by POLICY and vetted with representatives from UN agencies and various government sectors and NGOs working on GBV—presents a coordinated donor response to reduce GBV in the region. The strategy is available online at:
[http://eastafrica.usaid.gov/\(S\(pmx5eu3ieiwrln45ewgkaqqq\)\)/proxy/Document.1012.aspx](http://eastafrica.usaid.gov/(S(pmx5eu3ieiwrln45ewgkaqqq))/proxy/Document.1012.aspx)

**TASK ORDER I
AUGUST 2007**

The Interagency Standing Committee on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance defines gender-based violence (GBV) as “any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will, and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females.” GBV is linked with a wide range of health problems, including injuries and long-term physical and mental health issues. In particular, GBV limits a woman’s ability to negotiate contraceptive and condom use, increasing her risk for HIV, other sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancies. Moreover, in developing countries, anywhere from 4 to 20 percent of women report experiencing violence during pregnancy—threatening the health of mothers and infants.

The USAID | Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1, is committed to working to eliminate GBV and its root cause of gender inequity. The project carries out GBV-focused interventions that range from the formulation and implementation of global, regional, and national policies and strategies, to advocacy and community mobilization to combat GBV, to coordination of activities among stakeholders at multiple levels.

OUR APPROACH

Some of the key aspects of our approach to reducing GBV include:

- **Facilitating policy formulation processes** to guide programs to address GBV in the health sector, such as a providing assistance in drafting a multi-donor strategic framework in Africa (see box) and developing a GBV guide for health sector program officers. The GBV guide will be available in English, French, and Spanish.
- **Designing tools to advocate for improved responses to GBV.** We prepared a toolkit, “Responding to Gender-based Violence: A Focus on Policy Change,” that focuses on using data to advocate for improved GBV responses. The toolkit provides guidance on designing country-specific approaches and is intended for use by local NGOs and public sector partners. We also assessed GBV and HIV in the Mekong Region, identifying interventions, program gaps, and recommendations based on key informant interviews in three focus countries.
- **Identifying and removing barriers to implementation** of health policies, including barriers to effectively responding to GBV.
- **Working with multisectoral partners** to raise awareness of GBV and take steps to address it in their communities. We are working with religious leaders from various faiths in Africa to support the creation and

Related Skills and Capacity

The Health Policy Initiative also brings experience working across a range of multisectoral policy implementation contexts that are critical to effective GBV responses, including:

- Strengthening the judicial sector to enforce laws and policies
- Building capacity of NGO, community-based, and public sector partners to advocate for and monitor implementation of laws and policies
- Promoting gender-equitable male involvement approaches
- Supporting multisectoral collaboration through task forces and working groups
- Facilitating sector-specific strategic planning processes for coordinated responses to health issues, such as developing an HIV strategic plan and training curriculum for police

For More Information

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implementation of plans to address GBV/HIV. The project is also encouraging senior religious leaders to make public commitments to reduce GBV in their communities.

- **Facilitating community mobilization and participation** to advocate for improved responses to GBV, particularly within the reproductive health system. The project is piloting a community-based advocacy intervention in Bolivia to improve the implementation of GBV policies and protocols in public health facilities and civil society organizations, including building capacity of NGOs to develop and use monitoring and accountability systems in partnership with local government agencies.
- **Improving the response to GBV among health providers.** The project is working in Thailand and Mexico to design a tool to help healthcare providers screen for GBV among populations most at-risk for HIV. The screening tool and an accompanying training manual will teach providers of HIV voluntary counseling and testing and other services to screen for GBV and to offer appropriate referrals and services to survivors.
- **Building capacity** of USAID and its partners to understand how GBV operates and how health programs can prevent and respond to violence. For example, through the USAID Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG), we conducted a workshop and provided follow-up technical assistance for the Peruvian Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Women and Social Development to help draft a six-month strategic plan on implementing GBV services in three districts. In addition, the team assisted the Ministry of Women and Social Development in identifying priority communication activities to reduce GBV in border regions. The strategy is being implemented country-wide by Peruvian partners, representing a significant national policy response to GBV.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *Addressing Gender-based Violence through USAID's Health Programs: A Guide for Health Sector Program Officers* (IGWG)
- "Discrimination and Gender-Based Violence: A Review of Evidence-based Challenges and Opportunities for HIV/AIDS Health Programs." *Forthcoming*. (USAID | Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1)
- "Gender-based Violence and Reproductive Health" Training Module (IGWG)
- "Linking Gender-based Violence Research to Practice in East, Central, and Southern Africa: A Review of Risk Factors and Promising Interventions" (POLICY Project)
- "Responding to Gender-based Violence: A Focus on Policy Change" Toolkit (POLICY Project) (Includes a PowerPoint presentation, Companion Guide, and Annotated Bibliography)