

U.S. STRATEGY TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE GLOBALLY & SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

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The 2012 [United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally](#) aims to strengthen the United States' global response to gender-based violence through service integration, coordination across agencies, and diplomacy. It is the country's first comprehensive, multi-sector approach to gender-based violence, calling for action from "the justice and legal, security, health (**including sexual and reproductive health**), education, economic, social services, humanitarian, and development sectors (p. 14, emphasis added)."

As the strategy recognizes through repeated references to integrating gender-based violence (GBV) in family planning and HIV programs, GBV is inherently a sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issue. GBV greatly increases a woman's risk for both HIV infection and unintended pregnancy. The strategy does not offer programmatic guarantees; it does not, for example, mandate that all SRH programs include GBV services or referrals. It does, however, commit to:

- Formation of an interagency working group that will coordinate with and complement existing intra-agency GBV working groups (such as the one that exists in USAID)
- Agency consultations "with representatives of both U.S.-based and host country civil society organizations with demonstrated experience in preventing and responding to gender-based violence, including grassroots organizations, academics, service providers, and other experts."
- Integration of GBV programs with the Global Health Initiative and other platforms
- Exploration of a potential multi-sector pilot program in selected countries

HOW WILL IT AFFECT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROGRAMMING AND POLICIES?

As a result of this strategy, sexual and reproductive health advocates and implementers should see increasing emphasis on GBV within both U.S.-funded and local government SRH programs. As part of the strategy's implementation, the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have committed to structural and programmatic changes.

The U.S. Department of State will:

- Request embassies and regional bureaus to incorporate country-specific GBV issues into their strategic planning (p. 30).
- Advocate for development and implementation of laws and policies in other countries to monitor, prevent, and respond to gender-based violence (p. 30).
- Ensure that training and skills-building on gender-based violence issues are included and integrated in relevant Department of State and Foreign Service Institute courses and curriculum (p. 32).

USAID will:

- Ensure that "senior managers and Mission Directors are accountable for ensuring that GBV is addressed strategically in their portfolios"
- Integrate gender-based violence prevention and response efforts throughout country portfolios (the strategy particularly refers to GBV integration in health programs as "essential," p. 36).
- Measure the increase in U.S.-funded GBV programming, including the increase in the number of missions addressing GBV; increase in the number of scaled-up GBV programs at the regional, national or multi-country level; and increase in the number of USAID partnerships (host government, civil society, private partnerships, other U.S. agencies, donors) working to address GBV (p.42).

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OPPORTUNITIES TO INTEGRATE SRHR INTO GBV STRATEGY

Based on this strategy, civil society and implementing organizations should consider the following actions to ensure comprehensive attention to the links between SRHR and GBV:

- Advocate with the interagency working group to ensure agencies are coordinating in the field on access to essential, comprehensive SRH services for survivors of rape and sexual assault, including emergency contraception, post-exposure prophylaxis, and safe, voluntary abortion services
- Request regular meetings with U.S. embassies and/or in-country USAID, CDC, and PEPFAR staff to get updates about U.S. strategies to combat gender-based violence in the country, and to share civil society's expertise about obstacles and opportunities
- Work with U.S. Mission staff to ensure that all U.S.-funded GBV programs – not just those in the health sector – include linkages and referrals to SRH programs

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR HEALTH AND GENDER EQUITY (CHANGE)

[The Center for Health and Gender Equity \(CHANGE\)](#) is a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization that promotes the sexual and reproductive health and human rights of women and girls worldwide through education and advocacy efforts that affect the development and implementation of U.S. policies.