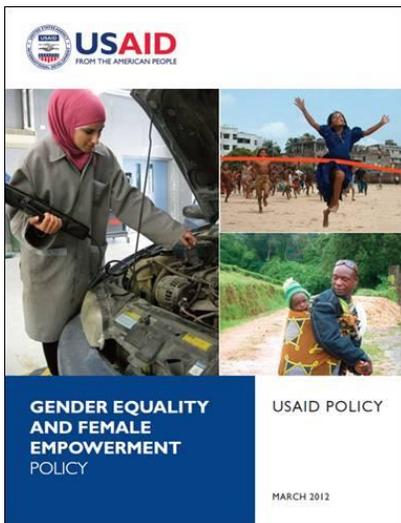


## Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning

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# Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy



*“We know that long-term, sustainable development will only be possible when women and men enjoy equal opportunity to rise to their potential. But today, women and girls continue to face disadvantages in every sector in which we work, and in other cases, boys are falling behind. With this policy, we can ensure our values and commitments are reflected in durable, meaningful results for all.”*

- USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah

## BACKGROUND

Gender equality and female empowerment are fundamental to the realization of human rights and key to effective and sustainable development outcomes. Although many gender gaps have narrowed over the past two decades, substantial inequalities remain across every development priority worldwide – from political participation to economic inclusion – and remain a significant challenge across all sectors in which USAID works, particularly in low-income and conflict-affected countries and among disadvantaged groups.

Building on the Agency’s decades of experience, the new policy provides guidance on pursuing more effective, evidence-based investments in gender equality and female empowerment and incorporating these efforts into our core development programming.

## GOAL

The goal of this policy is to improve the lives of citizens around the world by advancing equality between females and males, and empowering women and girls to participate fully in and benefit from the development of their societies.

## OUTCOMES

In order to achieve this goal, USAID investments are aimed at three overarching outcomes:

- Reduce gender disparities in access to, control over and benefit from resources, wealth, opportunities and services - economic, social, political, and cultural;
- Reduce gender-based violence and mitigate its harmful effects on individuals; and
- Increase capability of women and girls to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes, and influence decision-making in households, communities, and societies.

These outcomes will be adapted and translated into specific results with associated targets and indicators in strategic planning at the country and project level.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Seven guiding principles underpin this policy, reflecting key features of USAID’s Policy Framework 2011-2015, and the parameters of the *USAID Forward* reform agenda:

<b>Integrate gender equality and female empowerment into USAID’s work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•The policy will be implemented by integrating approaches and actions to advance gender equality and female empowerment throughout the Agency’s Program Cycle. USAID will also make strategic investments to promote gender equality and female empowerment.</li></ul>
<b>Pursue an inclusive approach to foster equality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•This policy is inclusive of all women and men, girls and boys, regardless of age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic area, migratory status, forced displacement or HIV/AIDS status.</li></ul>
<b>Build partnerships across a wide range of stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•USAID will partner with host governments, civil society, private sector and other donors to ensure that our efforts are coordinated and non-duplicative, build on the skills and initiatives of local actors, and reflect country priorities.</li></ul>
<b>Harness science, technology, and innovation to reduce gender gaps and empower women and girls</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•USAID investments should make bold and imaginative use of new technologies to change discriminatory social norms and stereotypes, and empower women and girls to wield greater influence in society.</li></ul>
<b>Address the unique challenges in crisis and conflict-affected environments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•USAID’s work in conflict-affected and fragile states should promote women’s participation in all efforts to prevent, resolve and rebuild following conflict; prevent and respond to sexual and gender based violence; and ensure that relief and recovery efforts address the different needs and priorities of women and men.</li></ul>
<b>Serve as a thought-leader and learning community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•The Agency will measure performance in closing key gender gaps and empowering women and girls, learn from successes and failures and disseminate best practices on gender integration throughout the Agency.</li></ul>

The policy includes detailed descriptions of organizational roles and responsibilities to institutionalize it in USAID missions, bureaus, and offices in Washington and the field. The policy involves the collective commitment of all staff, with a special emphasis on senior managers. Realizing the policy will help to bring to fruition USAID’s development vision.

*“Achieving our objectives for global development will demand accelerated efforts to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment. Otherwise, peace and prosperity will have their own glass ceiling.”*

- Hillary Clinton, January 2012