At USAID, we believe that gender equality and ensuring that women are not left behind, is not merely a part of development. It is the core of development.

Around the world, nearly 98 million girls are not in school. Globally, 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime. In the developing world, 1 in 7 girls is married before her 15th birthday, with some child brides as young as 8 or 9. Each year more than 287,000 women, 99 percent of them in developing countries, die from pregnancy- and childbirth-related complications. While women make up more than 40 percent of the agriculture labor force only 3 to 20 percent are landholders. In Africa, women-owned enterprises make up as little as 10 percent of all businesses.

Progress cannot be delivered in a vacuum. For societies to thrive, women and girls must have access to education, healthcare, and technology. They must have control of resources, lands, and markets. And they must have equal rights and equal opportunities as breadwinners, peace-builders, and leaders.

USAID has a long history of support for women and gender equality issues. In 2012, the Agency adopted a suite of new gender equality policies and strategies; reformed budgeting and reporting requirements to capture gender equality results; and created incentive funds to promote women’s leadership, reduce gender-based violence, and accelerate investments in women peacebuilders, parliamentarians, agricultural producers, and owners of small and medium enterprises.

USAID makes investments in order to:
o Reduce gender disparities in access to, control over, and benefits from resources, wealth, opportunities, and services—economic, social, political, and cultural.
o Reduce gender-based violence and mitigate its harmful effects on individuals.
o 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 are especially important for males and females who are marginalized or excluded due to ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, lack of income, disability, or other factors.

- All too often gender inequality gets pushed aside because of competing priorities, a lack of resources, or that gender equality is a “women’s issue.”

- It is everyone’s issue. We cannot end extreme poverty without focusing on women and girls, and the barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential.

- Focusing on women and girls is the key to making our world more stable, secure, and resilient.

How can we do this?

- Educate girls: Over 60 million girls are out of school. USAID is working with communities to identify solutions to the multiple barriers too many girls encounter when trying to get the education they deserve. An education allows a girl to go to college, participate politically and get a good job. Countries that invest in girls’ education have lower maternal and infant deaths, lower rates of HIV and AIDS, and better child nutrition. When we educate girls, we save lives.

- Empower women to engage in their communities: In Senegal, USAID trained women as community facilitators to educate their communities on all aspects of nutrition, from best farming techniques to teaching about health and good sanitary habits—again, saving lives.
- **Work with men and boys:** No sustainable solution to fight gender inequality can ignore men and boys. In working with fathers, husbands, brothers, and other men, we can change harmful gender norms that lead to poor health outcomes and contribute to gender-based violence and other practices that marginalize women and girls. We can also encourage men and boys to build positive relationships and parenting skills.

- **Fill the knowledge gaps:** A lack of comprehensive, current information about women and girls hinders efforts to advance gender equality. We need to fill critical gender data gaps and better understand specific challenges women and girls face.

- **Gender norms:** Gender norms that depict men as leaders and women in supporting roles are deeply embedded. These gender norms influence the behavior of men and women in numerous ways, including by having an impact on whether women run for political office or men exercise their right to take paternity or child care leave. Gender considerations are rarely incorporated into policy discussions about such topics as economic development, post-crisis recovery, or conflict resolution. Although women now comprise a substantial proportion of the workforce, men have not assumed correspondingly greater responsibility for domestic work. Most people do not understand that addressing gender issues also means closing gender gaps that negatively affect men.

- **Often, gender equality is a formal principle and gender differences are not obvious,** making gender analysis imperative for designing projects that effectively address nuanced gender differences.

- **USAID program designs begin with an adherence to a core set of principles that ensure that the impact of assistance activities positively promote gender equality and that no one is left behind.**

- **We must ask how will the different roles and status of women and men within the community, political sphere, workplace, and household affect the work to be undertaken?** How will the anticipated results of the work affect women and men differently?

- **We must:**
- Assess the division of labor;
- Consider access to, and control over, resources and services;
- Consider men’s and women’s roles and responsibilities in relation to formal and informal employment, community participation, local/community politics, and family
- Ask what different roles do boys and girls play within the household and community? How might this affect their access to education, health care, etc.?
- In what decision-making do men and women participate?
- Look at the assets that men and women have, including human capital assets (such as, education), financial assets, natural assets (such as land), and social assets.
- Who has access to and control of resources and services?

- It is important to distinguish between the concepts of access and control when examining how resources are allocated between women and men.
  - Access means a person or group can use a resource (e.g., land to grow crops)
  - Control means that a person or group can make decisions about who uses or disposes of a resource (e.g., selling land and gaining the profits).

How has USAID put this into practice?

- Local Governance: In designing a program to improve local governance, the intervention must encourage policy makers to consider the distinct needs of male and female citizens as well as the potential differential impact of seemingly gender-neutral policies. Gender sensitive budgeting is an example of a tool that is used to build awareness of how budget allocations benefit some groups more than others and also to document women’s informal economic contributions. Gender-sensitive budgeting could be included in a program on local governance.

- Health: To improve care for HIV-positive people, it is important to note that women assume the greater burden of care for family members affected by HIV/AIDS. Even outside the family setting, women make up a disproportionate number of caregivers in nursing and hospice settings. Consideration should be given to how the programming might further burden women caregivers, the social impact of such a program, and also whether the lack of male caregivers could negatively impact the care of people living with HIV.
• Conflict Mitigation: A program that works in a post-conflict region should include a detailed analysis of the impact of conflict on the roles of men and women. A program design for a post-conflict setting should outline a clear approach to the roles that women and men may play in perpetuating conflict, in preventing conflict and in peace-building as well as the different ways in which men and women have been impacted by conflict.

• Rule of Law: In designing a program that aims to improve the rule of law by targeting judges, program planners should consider gender and the judiciary from several perspectives. Ascertain whether men and women are equally represented in the judiciary. A second consideration would be the capacity of judges to integrate principles of gender equality into their judgments and to apply the law equitably. A third consideration would be whether there are differences between men and women in accessing the court system; do women have a harder time bringing cases to court?

• We have learned that there is no assistance intervention that does not have a gender component.

• Even infrastructure projects may have unintended negative consequences. For example, increased vulnerability of girls and women in the community to gender-based sexual violence and prostitution is a reality, as rapid urbanization and the influx of a large number of male workers from outside the community occurs. Vulnerability to, and the spread of, HIV infection is also a risk under such circumstances.

• The risk of unintended consequences from development projects underscores the importance of including gender specialists in all stages of programming.

• In this region, under the Improving Case Outcomes for Gender Based Violence Pilot (ICOP) program, USAID supports efforts to strengthen the capacity of five targeted sexual offenses courts in South Africa to improve case management and adjudication outcomes in the prosecution of sexual offenses and related gender based violence.

• Also, under the Protecting Worker Rights, Building Women’s Empowerment and Increasing Extractive Industries Transparency in Swaziland, Botswana, and South Africa program, the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) established a male gender
champions program that will work in concert with the affiliate office
gender committees to promote gender mainstreaming at both the
federation and affiliate level.

- In this region, AIDS is the leading cause of death for adolescent girls who
  account for 74% of all new HIV infections. USAID implements activities
  under the PEPFAR DREAMS program which is a package of layered
  core services and activities to improve the well-being of young women
  aged 15 to 24 years.

- Gender equality and women’s empowerment are fundamental to ending
  extreme poverty and promoting resilient, democratic societies. We need
  to focus on socially constructed differences between men and women and
  the need to challenge existing gender norms. Not only because it is the
  right thing to do, but because it is also the fastest and most effective way
  to ensure that all of the right things get done.