Data for Health at Vital Strategies
Advancing Gender Equity

The Challenge

Governments need high-quality, comprehensive data to plan effective health policies and programs. Without accurate, inclusive data, it is impossible to identify health priorities, develop targeted policies and strategies, and allocate resources strategically and equitably. Entrenched system inefficiencies in national government data infrastructure and data utilization leave many governments without this critical data. The data gap is even more pronounced for hard-to-reach populations, hiding the disproportionate burden of health needs in key sub-populations that have often experienced limited access to health systems, resources, and power. Females and people with other gender identities form a significant proportion of this sub-population.

Globally, nearly 45 million deaths and over 50 million births go unrecorded each year, with the majority occurring in low- and middle-income countries. Forty-five percent of women in low-income countries cannot prove their legal identity and one quarter of all births of children under the age of five have not been registered. People with diverse gender identities and other groups are often excluded from data collection efforts. By strengthening registration systems and enhancing data use to inform policy recommendations we can ensure that everyone is counted.

Data for Health Initiative

The Data for Health (D4H) Initiative supports governments to turn high-quality data into action. D4H is a global effort that provides technical and financial assistance to low- and middle-income countries to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and cancer registry data systems and to support the use of data for planning and policy making. Gender equity is a cross-cutting priority woven into the four D4H programs: CRVS, Data Impact (DIP), Cancer Registries, and the Global Grants Program (GGP). Each program partners with governments to mainstream gender into health systems and data use, promoting gender transformative policies.

Program Overview

The D4H Initiative at Vital Strategies currently implements 60 gender equity projects across 36 countries worldwide.

The CRVS and Data Impact Programs provide assistance to a portfolio of 'focus' countries, offering a menu of technical support that is designed to be complementary, with the goal of ensuring that data collected by CRVS systems are of high-quality data and are effectively analyzed, used, and disseminated by governments to develop targeted health policies.

The **CRVS program** takes a holistic approach to CRVS improvement supporting efforts across key areas that include governance and coordination, notification and registration, facility and community deaths, mortality coding and the production of vital statistics. Gender-specific interventions include strengthening the link between the medico-legal death investigation system and the health sector to identify and prevent previously hidden cases of gender-based violence; developing gender-relevant CRVS indicators for monitoring and evaluation of system performance; and ensuring data collection processes and pathways allow for sex and gender disaggregated data recording.

The **Data Impact Program** collaborates with governments to expand the use of CRVS, routine health and other data to enhance public health policymaking. Over the years, the program has supported a variety of gender equity projects. The flagship Data to Policy (D2P) program has supported numerous country teams to develop policy briefs on priority topics identified by government partners, to turn data to policy actions that improve the health of women and girls and address health inequities. Examples include technical assistance to institutionalize the collection and use of gender statistics to monitor equity and improve the development of gender-sensitive policies as well as a focus on the use of data to advocate for the reduction of gender-based violence.

The **D4H Cancer Registry Program** supports a range of cancer surveillance efforts and south-to-south capacity building initiatives that aim to reduce gender disparities and address sex-specific cancers. While supporting governments to establish population-based cancer registries, the Program sheds light on gender differentials in disease burden and mortality outcomes.

The **D4H Global Grants Program** provides a channel to expand D4H support beyond 'focus' countries to pursue broader equity projects. The GGP offers technical support in CRVS, DIP and Cancer Registry topics but also provides an opportunity for countries to identify and improve gender equity areas of national priority that may fall out of the traditional areas of focus of the other D4H programs. Over the years the GGP has supported a range of areas including the improvement of data information systems to track child malnutrition, the analysis of motor vehicle crash and violence data for targeted prevention strategies for sub-populations, assistance with data quality assessments of sexual and reproductive health indicators to strengthening of gender inclusivity in CRVS legal and regulatory frameworks.

Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative

Today, approximately half of all deaths in the world go unrecorded; accordingly, health policy decisions are often based on inadequate information. Data for Health, funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies and The Gates Foundation, partners with low- and middle-income countries to improve public health data and use of data for policymaking.

Championing Gender Equity

We believe that a focus on gender equity must be intentional and targeted. The D4H Initiative at Vital Strategies recognizes that equity is the cornerstone for building resilient and effective public health systems. Equity, encompassing both social and gender dimensions, is an ethical imperative but also a strategic necessity for fostering inclusivity, addressing systemic inequalities, and ensuring sustainable public health outcomes.

Relevant References of Our Work

Cross Program
https://www.vitalstrategies.org/using-data-to-uncover-the-truth-about-gender-based-violence/

https://www.vitalstrategies.org/global-health-depends-on-gender-equality/

Data Impact
https://www.d4hdataimpact.org/

https://www.vitalstrategies.org/gender-data-analysis-for-policy-development-asia-pacific-program-new-delhi-india/

GGP
https://www.d4hglobalgrantsprogram.org/completed-projects

https://www.vitalstrategies.org/vital-stories-the-power-of-data-to-reveal-and-address-health-inequities/

https://www.vitalstrategies.org/vital-stories-funding-for-the-future-investments-in-data-illuminate-child-malnutrition-mortality-in-remote-areas-deaths-from-car-crashes-and-more/

https://www.vitalstrategies.org/from-finding-hidden-homicides-to-addressing-regional-health-disparities-vital-strategies-global-grants-program-is-improving-health-data-around-the-globe/

CRVS
https://www.vitalstrategies.org/making-sure-everyone-counts-by-counting-everyone/

https://crvssystems.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/CRVS_Gender_2.4_Empower_e.pdf

https://www.vitalstrategies.org/its-time-for-every-person-to-count/

https://theaseanpost.com/article/its-time-start-counting-everyone

https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-counting-everyone-to-leave-no-one-behind-100547