policy

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HEALTH POLICY PROJECT

Photo by: Health Policy Project

Health Equity

Overview

All people have a fundamental need for high-quality healthcare, yet inequalities in health status and access to health services persist. These disparities mirror broader social and economic divisions. Those who are vulnerable or marginalized because of poverty, gender, ethnicity, social norms, or stigma and discrimination are often in most need of health services, while having the least access to those services.

Putting the right policies in place can address this disconnect and lay the foundation for more equitable health systems. To design effective policy solutions and successfully target resources to those most in need, health disparities must be quantified and their root causes understood. Health financing policies and systems must be scrutinized to ensure they support equitable access to services, particularly for underserved and marginalized groups. Engaging these groups is also vital to improving health equity. Giving vulnerable groups a voice in decision making empowers them, helps get equity issues on the policy agenda, and helps hold governments accountable for achieving health equity goals.

What We Do

The Health Policy Project (HPP) works to strengthen the policy foundations for health equity in the realm of HIV, maternal health, and family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH). We

- Champion participatory policy processes that help groups hold governments accountable for meeting the health needs of all people, including marginalized groups

- Help bring disadvantaged groups to the table and build their capacity to engage in the policy process

- Work with local partners to quantify inequities and identify barriers that affect access to HIV, maternal health, and FP/RH services

- Reform policies to address the larger structural conditions—such as poverty, gender-based violence, stigma, or low male partner involvement—that contribute to poor health outcomes

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- Improve the use of strategic information and push for evidence-based policies to address health inequities

- Employ economic analysis and revise health financing policies to promote efficient and equitable use of resources

- Strive to reduce barriers posed by stigma and discrimination

- Foster policy responses to empower women and girls, promote gender equality, and strengthen implementation of gender policy

Building Capacity

Our work in capacity development helps ensure that those most in need—women and girls and the poor and other marginalized and vulnerable populations—have a voice in the policy process to improve their access to health services. We build the capacity of underserved

Photo by: Health Policy Project/Guatemala

A network of indigenous women in Quiché, Guatemala meets with local leaders to advocate for increased access to basic health services. The Health Policy and Education Project (HEPP) supports the development of political dialogue among civil society and multiple sectors on issues in health, nutrition, and education.

groups to engage in advocacy and policy dialogue and hold governments accountable. We also develop host-country capacity to identify barriers to access and design evidence-driven policies and guidelines to address those barriers. Our partners include networks of indigenous women, people living with HIV (PLHIV), men who have sex with men (MSM), and other key populations.

Reducing Stigma

Stigma and discrimination are formidable barriers to health equity. They keep individuals from seeking out services that can improve their health, or, in some cases, save their lives. HPP is committed to reducing stigma and discrimination. We help build the evidence base on stigma and discrimination and work to strengthen stigma reduction efforts in healthcare settings.

Addressing Gender Inequalities

Through our gender portfolio, we work to ensure that women and girls have the same prospect to lead healthy lives as men and boys, as well as the same access to the health services they need. Our gender work also focuses on transgender persons, MSM, and other sexual minorities, whose access to healthcare is affected by gender norms and gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination.

How to Work with Us

For over 40 years, Futures Group has managed large and complex international health and development projects for a range of major development players, achieving significant results on the ground in more than 100 countries. Host-country partners with interest in receiving project assistance should contact their USAID Mission. All Missions may participate through field support. For information on how to work with the Health Policy Project please contact:

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