

# AGENCY, CHOICE AND ACCESS

UNFPA Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality  
and the Rights of Women and Adolescent Girls

STRATEGY HIGHLIGHTS



## A NEW REALITY

The mandate of UNFPA is impacted by multiple megatrends, including climate change, increased displacement due to conflict and man-made natural hazards, demographic shifts, aging populations, inequalities and digitalization. These megatrends can intersect and overlap to create complexity, but also positive opportunities for change. COVID-19 has demonstrated that pandemics can exacerbate the negative impacts of social, economic and environmental inequity.

The Gender Equality Strategy supports the UNFPA goal of achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights in all contexts. It consists of pathways, enablers, and linkages that will catalyze change and prioritize attention to partnerships, wide-ranging advocacy and support for women's and adolescent girls' agency, choice and access. Action areas linked to each pathway, enabler and linkage framework provide strategic guidance that will influence change at the individual, community, health system and socioeconomic, and political/legal-policy levels using holistic gender-transformative programming.

The UNFPA Gender Equality Strategy will support the application of Gender Transformative Approaches (GTAs) to all UNFPA programmes with an emphasis on ensuring agency, choice and access for all women and girls, so they are able to exercise their bodily autonomy and decision-making within and outside the home and advance their well-being.

### WHAT DOES A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH MEAN?

- GTAs challenge gender inequality by transforming harmful Gender Norms, Roles and Relations through programmes and strategies that foster progressive changes in power relationships between women and men.
- GTAs are about the equal distribution of power, resources and opportunities between women and men.
- GTAs are human rights-based approaches that facilitate the agency of women and girls, strengthen the capacity of government institutions, and promote positive masculinities.

### WHY APPLY A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH?

- GTAs are more effective at achieving change and changes are more likely to be sustained.
- Applying GTAs when designing programmes can have a broader positive impact since improved gender equality contributes to SRHR and sustainable development overall.

## WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

### Agency, choice, and access

In order for gender equality to be realized and for all women and girls to exercise their rights free from violence, discrimination and harmful practices, change must happen at all levels – from structural to individual level - and that women and adolescent girls have **Agency, Choice, and Access (ACA)** in order to have greater decision making and bodily autonomy over their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

# PATHWAYS, ENABLERS AND LINKAGES TO GENDER EQUALITY

**Pathways** are core areas where structural change, enhanced gender transformative programming, and service delivery are accelerated.

**1.** Ensure gender-responsive services for sexual and reproductive health including family planning, maternal health, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and other areas for a comprehensive approach.

**2.** Reduce gender-based violence and harmful practices through safe and ethical response services, prevention, and survivor centered data collection and analysis.

**3.** Promote gender and rights based opportunities and services for adolescents and youth, while ensuring their meaningful participation, to foster sustainable generational change and gender equality

**4.** Collect, analyse and use population data and research to promote human rights and gender equality through more equitable policies and programmes

**Enablers** create environments that can support and sustain the pathways so they can catalyze change.

**1.** Strengthen accountability mechanisms through laws, policies, institutions and systems that advance women's rights and gender equality, and the empowerment of women and adolescent girls to claim their human rights.

**2.** Promote equitable social and gender norms to advance women's and adolescent girls' agency and decision-making, and positive masculinities.

**3.** Strengthen feminist movements that will lead to strong and sustainable coalitions working more strategically to advance women and adolescent girls' human rights including reproductive rights.

**Linkages** are issues and strategies that need to be addressed and leveraged, to support UNFPA in improving its adaptability and flexibility in dealing with emergent crises, environments, and trends.

**1.** Enhance synergies between women's economic and reproductive empowerment including better social protection, attention to reproductive labor, and social policies that facilitate gender equality.

**2.** Support gender responsive climate action, including through the generation of evidence on gender equality and climate change, climate adaptation, and resilience building in the context of UNFPA's mandate.

**3.** Support gender responsive innovation and technology to bring forth new interventions, approaches and partnerships, while harnessing emerging trends, and technological advances that can bring impact and scale.

## HOW WE WILL DELIVER

### TARGETED

Working with women and adolescent girls, women's organizations, and male advocates to advance gender equality



### MAINSTREAMING

Integrating gender equality considerations into thematic programming, management direction, budgeting, and administrative systems to "mainstream gender"



### PARTNERSHIPS

Through new and established partnerships with multiple stakeholders including UN Member States, civil society, UN, academia, and private sector.



We call on partners to Join us in collective action towards an equitable and just world!

## BEING FUTURE READY

Significant gains have been made on women and adolescent girls' empowerment and rights, as well as their sexual and reproductive health, across all areas of UNFPA's mandate; and in collaboration with other partners. Moving forward, UNFPA will need to be future ready, increasing the adaptability of programmes. More flexibility will enable more effective responses to existing, emerging and highly complex global challenges. These include climate change, humanitarian crises, demographic shifts, digitalization, increased conservatism, and related resistance to women and girls' human rights. UNFPA will strengthen and, where necessary, harness new types of capacities to improve its programming for gender equality. This will involve ongoing analysis of resource allocations and programme effectiveness, continued investment in human resource development, and expanded partnerships that will enable UNFPA to be 'be future ready' and capable of leading on the global transformative gender equality agenda.

