

How do you mainstream gender into immunization programs?

[Gavi states that](#): All children deserve the right to be healthy and to fulfil their potential. Gavi is *committed to ensuring that both girls and boys benefit* from life-saving vaccines and to addressing *gender-related barriers* to accessing services. As members of the Gavi Alliance, the civil society organization (CSO) constituency makes the same commitment.

But how exactly do we, as national and sub-national level CSOs, implement that commitment in our daily work? Keep reading for some ideas and resources.

Why is gender a consideration for immunization programs?

[A comprehensive review done by the World Health Organization \(WHO\) in 2010](#) found differences in immunization coverage between girls and boys within different countries and between different socioeconomic groups. WHO also found that:

- ❑ Mothers – most often the primary caretakers of children – lack resources and *decision-making power*.
- ❑ Gender equity, women’s empowerment, and women’s education lead to *increased immunization* coverage for both girls and boys.

Therefore, if we want to meaningfully and equitably increase immunization coverage, we have to address sociocultural-based differences between women and men – or, in other words, we have to mainstream gender.

What is gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming is the *integration of a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs, processes, and institutional structures*. When we talk about immunization and health system strengthening, we mean:

- ✓ Address gender-based inequalities to health care access and outcomes
- ✓ Achieve the right to health and well-being for all girls and boys, women and men

How does Gavi mainstream gender?

Gender equity is an *overarching principle for all of Gavi’s work*, and its gender policy recognizes equal access as key to expanding vaccine coverage and making immunization more equitable. Gavi-supported countries are requested to separate data based on sex, and they are encouraged to apply for *health system strengthening funding* to address gender barriers to the access and delivery of health services. The Independent Review Committee responsible for monitoring country progress and reviewing applications for new vaccines includes a gender expert, who conducts gender analyses and provides recommendations.

How do CSOs mainstream gender into their work?

Gender mainstreaming necessitates a holistic approach. CSOs must ensure that gender sensitivity is promoted in all facets of their work. At a minimum, CSOs/CSO platforms must:

1. Allocate adequate **human and financial resources** to gender
2. Develop and adopt **organizational structures** that facilitate mainstreaming
3. Establish **monitoring and evaluation** mechanisms that promote accountability and measure mainstreaming progress over time

Here are some practical things you can do to start mainstreaming gender into your work – and as a result, contribute to improving immunization coverage and equity.

- Separate your **data** collection, analysis, and reporting by sex
- Seek to have women in 50% of **decision-making and representation roles**, such as the CSO platform steering committee, or participation in international conferences
- Include gender considerations and messages in your **advocacy**
- Train** CSOs and communities in gender and encourage them to challenge harmful gender roles and practices
- Increase recruitment and retention of **female health workers**
- Research the barriers** women face to health service access, and design a strategy for reducing those barriers (e.g. accommodating women's work schedules)
- Create behavior change campaigns aimed at increasing **men's caretaking role**
- Maintain "**gender quotas**" (a minimum number of women) for CSO platform events
- Insist on gender quotas for community events – and ensure that women are encouraged to actively participate
- Research the barriers women face to accessing resources and making decisions, and work with communities to create strategies for reducing those barriers
- Document** and share best practices in gender mainstreaming
- Seek to have women volunteers **fairly remunerated** for their work
- Engage women as **people** – not as mothers
- Seek men who are **gender champions** or "positive deviants" and have them model a masculinity that is responsible, caring, non-violent, women-promoting, health-focused, and family-centered
- Teach communities about the **gender-related rights** and responsibilities
- Conduct regular gender **assessments and audits** of CSO projects
- Hold government accountable** for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the rights of women and girls

For more information

- [Gender and immunisation: A Knowledge Stocktaking Exercise and an Independent Assessment of the GAVI Alliance](#)
- [Gavi Gender Policy](#)
- [Implementation of Gavi Gender Policy: 4th report to Gavi Board \(2012\)](#)
- [Gender Development Index](#)