
Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment: Addressing the pushback

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Why gender equality in and through health?

Gender equality in health

‘The condition where all people, regardless of gender norms, identity or expression, have equal conditions, opportunities, and power to realize their full right to health, contribute to health development, and benefit from the results’

Ref: Upcoming updated WHO Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit

Core commitments

- WHO Constitution (1948)
- ICPD (1994)
- Beijing Platform for Action: Commitments on Women and Health (1995)
- 2007: Resolution WHA60.25: Integrating gender analysis and actions into the work of WHO
- Sustainable Development Goals: SDGs 3 & 5
- GPW 14

Key challenges persist

- Gaps persist in SRH services,
- Urgent need to strengthen mental health services for women and girls
- Reporting and action on health needs related to older age
- Limited reporting on other health topics from BPfA commitments across the life course
- Gaps in reporting on emerging health concerns such as pandemics, AI, and climate change

Dimensions of Sex (Biological Variable) & Gender (Social and Cultural Variable)



Masculine norms restrict men from:

- jobs assumed to be feminine (e.g. caring roles, such as nurses)
- taking care of their own health (due to ideas about masculinity and strength)



Feminine norms restrict women from:

- being active in physical sports, activities or occupations
- leadership or individualistic roles, rather than care for others

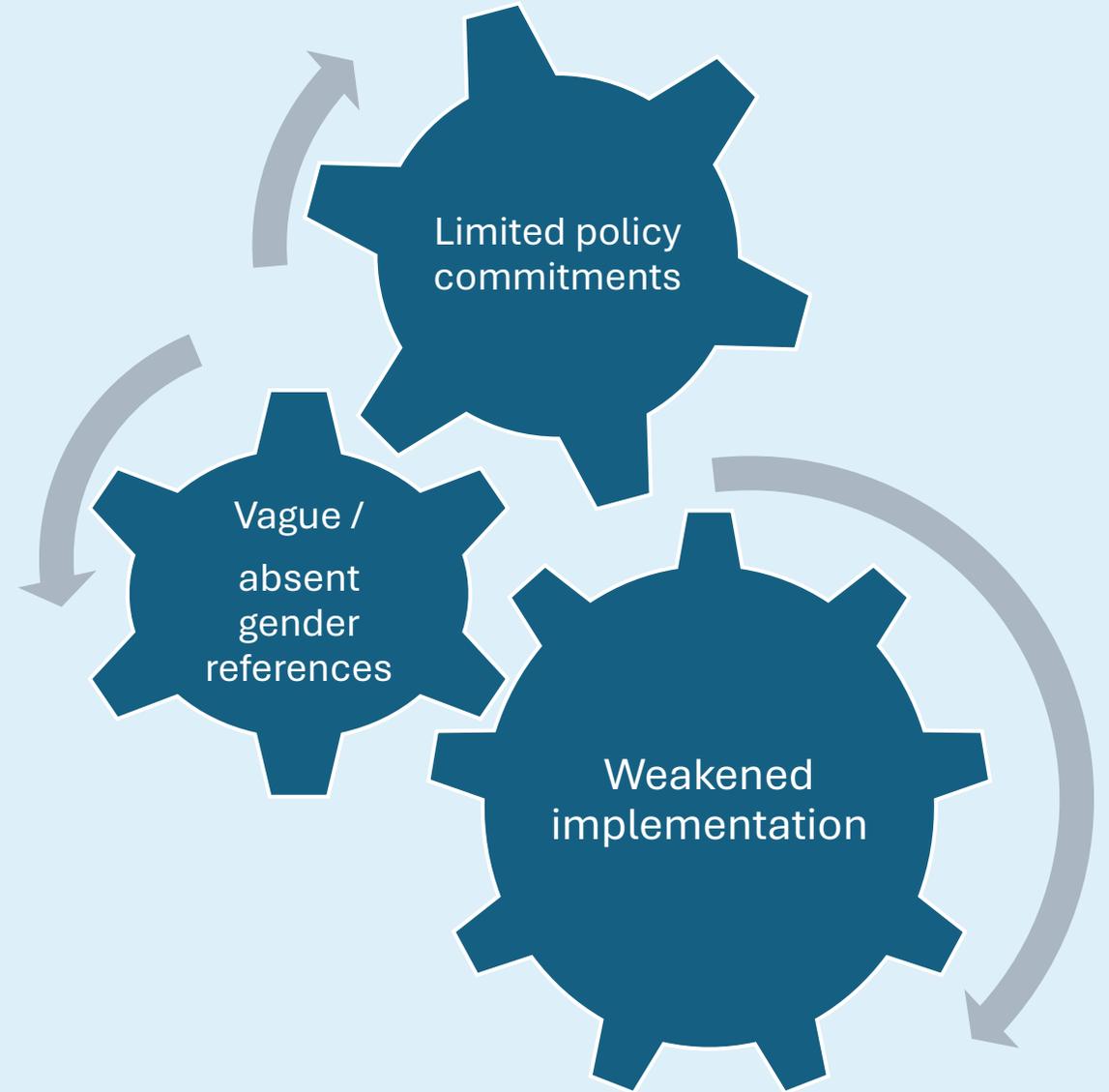
How gender norms affect health

- 1) Risk exposure & vulnerability to disease
- 2) Access to and utilization of services
- 3) Health behaviours and healthcare-seeking patterns
- 4) Prevention, treatment, and management options
- 5) Experiences within the healthcare system
- 6) Health and social implications

PLUS: Opportunities to influence health related decisionmaking within the household, the community, and the health system

Anti-gender movements

- Anti-gender rhetoric frames concept of gender as ideological (no distinction from sex)
- Movements framing “gender ideology” as a threat to traditional and family values undermine international agreements and health initiatives.
- Opposition to inclusion of gender language in international agreements, including at WHA



WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER?

1. Leadership, Accountability and Institutional Expertise
2. Invest in evidence
3. Build gender responsive, rights-based health systems
4. Protect civic space
5. Consistently reaffirm commitments and values, together

“ At a time of unprecedented pushback against women’s rights across the world, the United Nations must **lead** by example and deliver for and with women and girls.”

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, United Nations Secretary-General



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