



Gender Equity's Contribution to Child Well-being

Integrating gender in programming can be the key to catalysing transformation in a community. Applying gender equity across the life cycle can break cycles of poverty and deprivation, allowing boys and girls to enjoy life in all its fullness. Because gender norms are so deeply entrenched in communities and often a source of injustice and systemic poverty, failing to understand and address these negative norms can inhibit the success of World Vision's contribution to the well-being of girls and boys.

Child Well-being Aspirations:

1. Children Enjoy Good Health

- When mothers have access to quality health care and receive good maternal and pre-natal care, girls and boys receive a "healthy start" and are more likely to survive.
- Traditional gender norms and roles can inhibit women and girls' access to resources, information and services and limit their decision-making power.
- Negative practices like early marriage, rape and gender-based violence, and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) act as contributing factors to the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR).
- Where gender inequities exist, girls might not receive adequate nutrition or protection from disease and infection through immunisation, and they may be at greater risk of gender-based violence, leading to sexually transmitted diseases and injury.
- Programming that integrates gender is key in preventing some of the negative effects of harmful traditional practices and working to ensure all children have adequate nutrition, are protected from infection, disease and injury before birth and throughout their childhood, and have access, along with their caregivers, to essential health services.

2. Children Are Educated for Life

- There is no more effective investment in development than to educate a girl, and the greatest rewards are seen at the secondary level of education.
- Gender inequity can cut both ways, negatively affecting the education of boys and girls, men and women.
- A gender sensitive lens in education programming is critical for identifying equity in learning and barriers to access from safety to attitudes, which may keep girls and boys from completing basic education and gaining essential literacy, numeracy and life skills.
- By analysing the different barriers and needs of girls and boys, educational programming can keep children in school, prevent early marriage, and prepare them for economic opportunities that will enable them to provide for themselves and future families.
- Life skills programming that empowers boys and girls whilst addressing gender issues helps children gain the self-confidence they need to make good judgments, manage emotions, form respectful relationships, and protect themselves.



"We now know that young girls must be educated both in the family and at school... We know, for example, that we need to give up female genital mutilation," said a male community member in World Vision Senegal's programme to promote the health and well-being of girls.

One in five girls in the developing world never finishes primary school, but each extra year of education reduces the risk that her children will die in infancy by 5-10%, and increase her income by 10-20% (ActionAid and Plan).

Gender and Development



3. Children Experience the Love of God and Their Neighbours

- Gender-mainstreaming raises awareness of the value and equal worth of all people which fosters caring, positive relationships, especially in the family and the community.
- In focus group discussions facilitated by World Vision, children identified that their faith is expressed in the relationships that they have with others, and parents and persons of influence play an integral role in how children perceive and understand God's character.
- When children are nurtured, loved, and treated with equal dignity, justice, and respect, regardless of their gender, they experience this as an extension of God's love, and this love becomes the driving force behind their actions, behaviours and relationships with others.
- By examining the Bible through a gender lens, Christians can become more aware of God's equal love for every boy and girl, man and woman, and the value and innate worth He has given each individual.
- When children feel valued for who God has created them to be, whether female or male, they are better able to care for others, fully contribute to the Kingdom, and envision a brighter future for themselves and their community.

When women and girls earn money, they **reinvest 90%** of it **into their families** (men average 30-40%). Women's economic participation, ownership and control over productive assets speeds up development, reduces inequalities, and improves children's nutrition, health, and school attendance. (UNICEF & UNFPA 2011).

4. Children are Cared for, Protected and Participating

- Cultural preferences for boys not only prevent many girls from ever being born but also keep many girls from being celebrated at birth and thus registered and properly cared for and loved by their parents or caregivers.
- Harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence, such as FGM and unsafe male circumcision, child marriage, exploitive/harmful sexual initiation traditions/ rites, human trafficking, honour killings, and acid burnings, threaten girls' and boys' well-being as well as their mothers'. This impacts a mother and father's ability to care, protect and provide well for their children.
- Many societies and cultures also need transformed norms and attitudes around masculinity, fatherhood and being a good husband, in order to help boys grow up to be supportive men in their households and communities.
- Examination of gender equity and norms in a systems approach to protection, in both emergency and more stable contexts, takes into account the different needs, constraints and vulnerabilities for both boys and girls, and strengthens work to uphold all children's rights and well-being.
- Many girls, boys and women do not get the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives. World Vision can learn from our experiences of empowering women to participate in decision making to help ensure communities respect children's opinions as well, and support children to speak up about the decisions that affect their lives.

Did you know? 64 million women aged 20-24 from the developing world reported being forced to marry before the age of 18 (UNICEF 2009) and an estimated 12.5 million girls between the ages of 10-14 in Africa have experienced FGM (WHO 2009).

World Vision cannot fully contribute to child well-being without intentionally addressing the barriers of gender injustice and promoting gender mainstreaming.

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