

SPRING 2021

Pathways

**Women in
Leadership**
International
Women's Day



Pathfinder
INTERNATIONAL

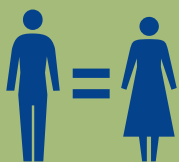
Pushing for Gender Equity

For more than 60 years, Pathfinder International has led sexual and reproductive health and rights programs that support every person, no matter their gender, to make the most critical decisions about how their lives will unfold.

For millions of women and girls this has meant deciding whether or when to marry or have children. We have worked closely with our government partners around the world to enact policies and run programs that build more gender-equitable societies.

And, over the past two years, we have been working on an organization-wide Gender Equity Initiative (GEI) that will ensure the commitment to gender equity in our programs is reflected internally across the organization.

THE STATE OF GENDER EQUITY ACROSS GLOBAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS



THE MAJORITY of organizations still **DO NOT** disaggregate their programmatic data by sex.

ONLY 35% of organizations **DEFINE** what they mean by gender.

2 IN 3 organizations fail to take a gender-responsive approach to their programs.

Data comes from Global Health 50/50, an independent, evidence-driven initiative to advance action and accountability for gender equality in global health. <https://globalhealth5050.org/>

We started the GEI by undertaking a gender assessment of our organizational culture and practices. To conduct the assessment, a group of gender experts external to Pathfinder reviewed Pathfinder's current policies and procedures, conducted a global survey of staff members, and held a series of in-depth interviews with Pathfinder staff. The findings were illuminating—while Pathfinders worldwide are deeply committed to our work to advance sexual and reproductive health, and Pathfinder staff understood the need to incorporate a gender lens into our programs, there was still more that could be done to make sure that our internal policies and practices are equitable.

So what did we do with this knowledge? In 2021, we are developing an internal strategy that affirms Pathfinder's commitment to gender equality, one inclusive and with clear accountability standards. In practice, this means applying a gender equity lens to all of Pathfinder's operations. We will undertake an internal process of clarifying our own values, and our staffs' understanding of gender. And, we will develop and manage a global gender equity training program to provide staff with the relevant knowledge and skills to allow them to effectively implement Pathfinder's GEI strategy.

Here's what we have already accomplished:

- Updated our global sexual harassment policy, as well as new policies for staff that include parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and accommodations for those who are nursing on temporary travel.
- Established gender equity requirements for inclusion in vendor, contractor, and subgrantee contracts and agreements.
- Launched a global diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative to foster a stronger and more diverse Pathfinder.

The success of Pathfinder's mission depends on the extent to which our Pathfinder community is diverse and inclusive. As a result of this initiative, we will have a clear and inclusive organizational definition of gender. Our external programmatic commitment to gender equality will be exemplified internally within our policies, practices, and organizational culture. This initiative will also advance our overall diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. We know that having the broadest diversity of staff who bring their unique perspectives, ideas, and contributions will allow us to achieve greater impact within the communities we serve.

Sincerely,



Susan Farrell
Chief Administrative Officer
Pathfinder International

Women in Leadership

International Women's Day, March 8th

March 8th is International Women's Day, but at Pathfinder, we celebrate the achievements of women every day.

The United Nations' theme of this International Women's Day is **"Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world."** At Pathfinder, we take this call to action seriously.

Katia Amado, Pathfinder's MAIS (MORE Quality, Access and Health) Project Director in Mozambique, exemplifies the way Pathfinders around the world challenge harmful gender norms that create barriers for women. Katia has strengthened our work on safe abortion and advocacy for reproductive health and rights in the country.

"It's not easy to talk about abortion, regardless of people's backgrounds," she says. "We all have misconceptions. But when we refuse to see and feel the distress of our sisters, aunts, and partners, many of them die because they cannot access a safe abortion. MAIS has brought the discussion to the surface, bringing awareness, knowledge, and information about the law. More than that, it has helped promote an environment that reduces stigma, guilt, and judgement around abortion by empowering the community, and not allowing women and girls to cut their lives short due to unsafe abortion. **MAIS is positive change.**"

In Niger, **Habsatou Amadou Sala**, a Technical Coordinator, has skillfully navigated contrasting religious beliefs and cultural norms to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights. Habsatou's ability to build strong relationships within the community has been instrumental in enabling Pathfinder's work in Niger.

"This work has allowed me to see the real needs of my community, to feel useful, and to develop a sense of pride in the changes that have taken place," she says. "We were able to convince men to be key players in raising their communities' awareness about health needs and rights." More than that, she says, "family planning is no longer a taboo subject. I won't say that everyone agrees with us, but I firmly believe we are on the right track. I am very proud of my work."



Habsatou Amadou Sala and her daughters

Pathfinder honors these women, and the women around the world that fight each day to make our world more just and equal for women and girls.



Project Manager Katia Amado with Dr. Isihaka Jossey Mwandalima.

Lina Mate works as a community health worker and activist with Pathfinder's MAIS partner Muleide

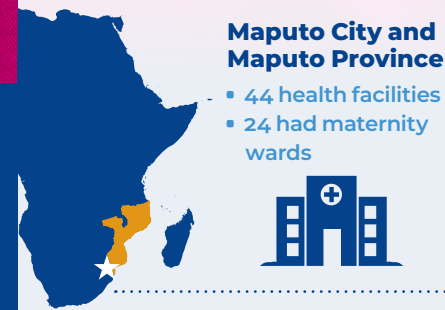
Combatting Stigma, Saving Lives

For five years, Pathfinder's MAIS (MORE Quality, Access and Health) project has worked with health facility-based providers and managers in Maputo City and Matola in Maputo Province, Mozambique. The project has provided information, education, and communication trainings and technical support to community health workers, who then conduct home-based visits to counsel and support women and girls on sexual and reproductive health, family planning, and abortion care. After counseling sessions, community health workers refer women and girls to local health facilities for contraception, abortion care, and further services based on their needs.

This work has included challenging stigmas and norms that keep women and girls from getting the care they have a right to — and through this work, has given women and girls autonomy — and saved lives.

MAIS RESULTS:

January 2015–December 2020



873,000+

new users of contraception, with more than 87,000 choosing intrauterine devices that prevent pregnancies for up to five years



1,000+

elective bilateral tubal ligations performed for women, a permanent contraceptive option



13,000

women and girls received safe abortion services



Nearly **51,000**

women and girls received postabortion care



Over **1 1/2**

of women and girls who received safe abortion and postabortion care received contraception



484

community health workers trained to provide quality counseling and referrals for sexual and reproductive health care to women and girls

Charisma's Story

When Charisma*, a 16-year-old living in Maputo City, first learned that she was pregnant, she didn't know what to do. "I was afraid to tell my mother," she says. "My sister found out (that I was pregnant) because she saw I wasn't wearing sanitary napkins anymore." Her sister then told Charisma's mother, Graciete, who knew she needed to help her daughter.



She states simply, "I do not wish that anyone went through what I went through."

Though her mother was on her side, Charisma faced numerous challenges. Upon learning of her pregnancy, Charisma's boyfriend physically assaulted her, which led her to seek help from the police, who then sent her to the Zimpeto Health Facility for care. There, Charisma was assigned a psychologist to support her recovery. She confided that she wanted to terminate her pregnancy—but the psychologist wasn't aware that abortion services were decriminalized in Mozambique.

That's where Pathfinder's MAIS project stepped in.

Though the Government of Mozambique decriminalized abortion in 2014, challenges inhibiting women's access to comprehensive abortion services—

that is, safe abortion and postabortion services—remain. In many public health facilities, stigma, bias, and a shortage of trained health providers, particularly in rural areas, continue to pose barriers to accessing quality abortion care.

Pathfinder staff are on the frontlines of this shift. Lina Mate, an *activista* with MAIS partner organization Muleide, works to educate community members and challenge the stigma associated with abortion. "The abortion work opens my mind, she says, "and I see a difference because I am able to help someone make positive decisions. I make her realize that she has the power of choice and that the law protects her, and so I can see a difference. I have a chance to inform others, and I feel good about the work I'm doing."



"We inform providers and clients about the law of decriminalization of abortion—that is law 35/2014, which also includes clinical standards of when abortion can be performed, and where," says Jonas Maunde, a Program Officer. "We disseminate this information at the community level with a view to reduce the number of women who die from illegal abortions."

For Charisma, Pathfinder's MAIS project had a direct impact. Shortly after meeting her, the psychologist supporting Charisma attended a training run by Pathfinder meant to demystify the law. She then approached MAIS staff to see if they could help with the teenager she recently met—Charisma. MAIS staff helped connect Charisma with a doctor who could manage her care, as well as educate her about her options for family planning moving forward. Because the MAIS project reached her provider, Charisma was given a choice. And she doesn't take that lightly.

"For the other girls ... I would tell them to use an IUD because it lasts for years, and they can choose to take it out when they are prepared to have a baby."

"For the other girls who have the opportunity to listen, I will tell you my experience about what I went through (having) an abortion. I would tell them not to refuse to use family planning, like I did. It's far better to protect ourselves by using family planning to avoid this choice. I would tell them to use an IUD because it lasts for years, and they can choose to take it out when they are prepared to have a baby."

Today, Charisma has returned to school, is studying to be a nurse, and is now protected

from an unplanned pregnancy. "When I left the hospital," she says, "I decided to have a new life, to be a new person. I will follow my dream of having a child—but having a life of my own, and being able to choose (when) to have children."



Charisma and her mother

- Each year between 5%–13% of maternal deaths can be attributed to unsafe abortion¹
- The vast majority—92%—of women of reproductive age (15–49) in sub-Saharan Africa live where abortion is highly or moderately restricted.²

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/preventing-unsafe-abortion>

² <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/abortion-sub-Saharan-africa>

*pseudonym

The Global Gag Rule & the Global HER Act

On January 28, 2021, the Biden-Harris administration repealed the global gag rule, a policy that has damaged the health, rights, and lives of women and girls around the world.

Today, Pathfinder is working to ensure the global gag rule is not reinstated under future administrations, by supporting the passage of the Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights (HER) Act. The Global HER Act would prevent future administrations from easily re-imposing the global gag rule through executive order—protecting women and girls and giving them the option to get the reproductive care they need.

TAKE ACTION: www.pathfinder.org/global-her-act/



Bebina Cuamba

Working



Cesaltina Mungue

During



COVID-19



Rita Armando

Cesaltina Mungue, who works with Pathfinder's MAIS project, has a way of putting Pathfinder's challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic succinctly:

"It is not enough just to have COVID information," she says. "Regardless of COVID, sexual relations happen without protection, so it is necessary to prevent both COVID-19 as well as unwanted pregnancy."

The heart of Pathfinder's challenge in the last year was just that—continuing our critical sexual and reproductive health work in an era where COVID-19 complicated nearly every decision. Lockdowns, supply shortages, and at times, a fear of going to health facilities due to COVID-19 have challenged the continued provision of sexual and reproductive health care. But our staff, and the communities they work alongside, are more than up to the challenge. Throughout COVID-19, Pathfinder staff and health system partners made adaptations to get women the care they needed. These adaptations included:

- Pathfinder supported remote and in-person technical sessions with health providers and health facility managers on topics such as COVID-19 infection prevention and control methods.
- Health facilities integrated contraception into other health wards, including those for HIV/sexually transmitted infections, immunizations, and adult outpatient wards, to reach more women.
- Pathfinder's 'mCenas' mobile platform regularly delivers information and stories about sexual health, contraception, and abortion to youth. During the pandemic, users could access information about screening, prevention, and testing.
- Health providers personally followed up with women through phone calls after medical abortions, checking on any complications, confirming the success of procedures, and providing referrals as needed.

Pathfinder Legacy Society

We are thrilled to share that we will be launching the Pathfinder Legacy Society later this year, recognizing the generosity of people like Vicki and Tom Williams, who are taking advantage of gift planning to ensure that families around the world can access sexual and reproductive health care for years to come.

The pandemic has driven each of us to reprioritize the financial and physical wellbeing of ourselves and our loved ones, and we invite you to consider the many ways that gift planning offers for you to make a gift to Pathfinder while enhancing your personal financial security.

For more information on including Pathfinder in your will or estate plans (including retirement accounts, life insurance policies, and charitable trusts) and to be recognized as a founding member of the Pathfinder Legacy Society, please contact Rayna Bagchi, Development Officer, at rbagchi@pathfinder.org.

This cause is actually part of what brought us [Vicki and Tom] together over 25 years ago. Together we have supported various pro-choice charities that prioritized reproductive health care, but over time saw some organizations with important missions falter from poor management. Ultimately we realized that no matter how good the cause can be, the way it is being implemented by the charity involved is a critical consideration.

After researching for the most effective charity in providing for reproductive rights and related health care needs in many underserved parts of the world, we decided to make Pathfinder the largest beneficiary in our will and one of our short-term charitable priorities as well. We continue to be impressed by the scope of Pathfinder's programs, including in the way those programs have been refined to fit local situations, and in how efficiently those programs are run.

VICKI AND TOM WILLIAMS
Belmont, CA



Vicki and Tom Williams

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