

# Breakthrough ACTION Leads National Level Training on the Integration of Gender into Development Programs

Breakthrough ACTION's overarching goal is to increase the uptake of priority health behaviors and enable social norms for improved health and development outcomes, specifically in the domains of family planning/reproductive health (FP/RH), maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH), malaria, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), Zika, and the Global Health Security Agenda (GHS). These results will be achieved through the implementation of creative and sustainable social and behavior change (SBC) programming, nurturing of SBC champions, mainstreaming new techniques and technologies, and advocating for strategic and sustained investment in SBC.

There is a mounting base of evidence that shows significant barriers in accessing and practicing healthy behaviors due to multiple gender-related factors. In order to better understand, raise awareness about, and address these barriers, Breakthrough ACTION held a regional training in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire in February of this year. Whether at the social or cultural level, gender has an impact on our daily lives; this impact can sometimes translate into barriers. These gender-related barriers are not just found in public health; they transcend every aspect of our lives. In Guinea as elsewhere, social norms and dynamics exert powerful influence over many levels including individual, interpersonal, social networks, community (cultural values and norms), and public policy. Upon returning to Conakry, the two staff members who



attended the regional training sought to immediately put into action what they had learned. As such, they held a two-day workshop for nearly 40 participants coming mostly from different ministries, including but not limited to the Ministry of Industry, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, the Ministry of Youth and Youth Employment, the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the

Ministry of Tourism, Hotels and Handicrafts, as well as some of our local partner organizations such as Childfund and StopPalu +.

The purpose of the training was to encourage participants to think about gender and how to integrate it into their activities and projects while giving them concrete examples and tools in which to do so. Breakthrough ACTION believes that everyone involved in development projects should be intentionally involved in considering how gender impacts their work, both in internal organizational practices as well as in programmatic work.

The specific objectives of the training were as follows:

- Be familiar with gender-related terminology
- Analyze whether program activities are gender blind/aware and accommodating, exploitative, or transformative
- Identify opportunities to integrate gender throughout the program cycle
- Use strategies to purposefully integrate gender considerations during the program cycle
- Share learning with colleagues and partners

Soufiana Kaba (Program Manager for Integrated Health), Fatoumatou Hann (Program Assistant for GHSA), and Antonia Morzenti (Program Officer for Breakthrough ACTION Guinea) facilitated the two-day training in Conakry, Guinea. Mrs. Marie TOURE, National Director of Gender and Women's Promotion, opened the workshop with an impassioned speech highlighting the timeliness of this workshop and the urgent need of gender integration into all development programs.

During the two-day training, through a participatory approach, participants were able to familiarize themselves with gender terminology and assess the level of gender awareness and mainstreaming in their activities. Participants first analyzed the social and cultural norms for men and women in their communities and how those norms can influence their values and therefore their work. Throughout the workshop, participants were walked through a typical activity or program cycle (defining, design/test, apply) and discussed not only the importance of integrating gender throughout all phases of the activity,

but also how to practically and meaningfully do so. Quality tools, such as the Gender Equality Check-In (a tool to assess gender integration and gender transformative programming), served as a practical support to measure the degree in which gender had been taken into consideration throughout the program cycle. Throughout the workshop, participants used the Gender Equality Continuum Tool to discuss whether certain interventions were gender sensitive or not, and whether the intervention was exploitative, compromising, or transformative. At the end of the training, the group spent time discussing obstacles and barriers to truly integrating gender in their programs. This



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was followed by an interactive activity that allowed participants, who were now experts, brainstorm ways to overcome these challenges.

As a result of the training, participants are now equipped to work in their respective departments and organizations to plan how to best address gender norms and barriers where appropriate, with an aim to alleviate socio-economic and political barriers due to gender-related factors. In the post evaluation, a participant expressed, "I feel confident to integrate gender in our programs and strategies by respecting all phases (definition, design and application)." The Breakthrough ACTION team received multiple requests by participants to conduct this training with their departments and ministries.

An analysis of pre and post evaluations showed significant increases in participant's abilities. At the end of the workshop, 71% of participants felt completely confident in analyzing whether the activities of their institution/department were gender-responsive/gender-sensitive, and in using strategies to integrate gender into the program cycle, compared to 23% and 46% respectively before the training. Participants feeling totally confident in explaining how to integrate gender into their work increased from 58% to 82%.

In relation to these newly acquired skills and knowledge one participant said, "This gender workshop has shown us the importance of integrating the gender aspect in the definition and development of our programs." Another stated, "Now I know that gender must be integrated into activities from the design of projects in order to achieve objectives."

When asked how participants would use the skills from the training in their work, some responses were:

- "This training will enable us to monitor and evaluate the projects implemented with a gender lens in order to achieve the expected results."
- "I will use the gender equality continuum in the development phase of projects/activities to ensure we have transformative activities"
- "Organize a series of training and feedback sessions for our staff."
- "I will certainly organize information and awareness raising sessions on the gender concept in my department so that my colleagues can benefit from the training I received."
- "Integrate effectively and efficiently all aspects of gender in our programs, strategies, monitoring and evaluation to achieve our objectives."

Breakthrough ACTION Guinea will continue to address social influences, including gender norms and dynamics, as they pertain to FP/RH, maternal and child health, malaria and PDZs. The project will apply best practices in gender integration for SBC programming and gender transformative and synchronized programming to address behavioral and normative challenges to health outcomes in complex socio-cultural settings. The team will work with other national actors, such as those that participated in the training, and support them in the integration of gender in their programs so that the consideration of gender aspects in all programming has as wide an impact as possible.



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