



WGH | WOMEN IN  
GLOBAL HEALTH

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Calling for gender  
equity in health



**International Women's Day** is a global day celebrating the **social, economic, cultural, scientific and political achievements of women**. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating the rights of women.

This year Women in Global Health asked their network to answer the question **"How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?"**. Our chapters were also asked to send a quote about the importance of breaking stereotypes and the need to achieve gender equality in health. In this booklet, you will find answers from around the world that are a call to action for women's rights and empowerment.

### **Why do we need to break stereotypes?**

- **Women comprise 70% of the health workforce but hold only 25% leadership roles**, they are health systems experts and want an equal place in leadership.
- **Women in the health sector still earn 23% less than their male counterparts and millions of women work unpaid and grossly underpaid** in the health sector, they need fair and equal pay to protect us all.
- **Medical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is designed for men's bodies** and leaves women health workers at risk of infection and working without dignity. Women health workers must be protected by PPE designed for women
- **Women health workers are frequently subject to violence and sexual harassment at work** which causes them physical and psychological harm. Women health workers must be free to do their jobs safe from violence and sexual harassment

After two years of the pandemic, there is a 'great resignation' with significant numbers of frontline women health workers suffering burnout and planning to leave the sector. Women health workers need a new social contract with safe, decent, and equal work – the world cannot afford to lose the women health workers who have safeguarded our health in the pandemic.

**Join us to call for a new social contract for women, share and celebrate our chapters' thoughts on equality!**

**"Millennial beliefs and traditions have shaped the way societies, all around the world, perceive the role and capabilities of women, introducing entrenched bias on the way they are regarded and treated. It takes concerted efforts to un-learn discriminatory behaviors that prevent women from achieving leadership and guiding nations to be more gender-equal."**

**Dr. Magda Robalo,**  
*Global Managing Director,  
Women in Global Health*





Becca Reisdorf, WGH Chile



"Breaking stereotypes means recognizing the diversity of people's capabilities, which go way beyond what society has deemed as acceptable or desirable. We all bring different experiences, expertises and knowledge to the table, and it is this diversity that will allow us to find new and innovative ways to tackle the worlds most urgent challenges."

Marie-Claire Wangari, WGH Kenya



"Gender Equality is a fundamental rights issue that can only be tackled by having honest conversations on how to break the bias and needs an all-hands-on-deck approach."



Merette Khalil, WGH Egypt

**"The world needs gender-transformative systems that protect human rights, affirm intersectional identities, and deliver high-quality, informed, empowering, respectful, and people-centered health for everyone."**



**How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?**

**As a health systems researcher, midwife, and founder of YourEgyptianDoula, I break the bias by advocating and working for the total elimination of obstetric violence.**

**Ho Chi Minh Islam, WGH Bangladesh**



**“Demanding myself as a woman beyond biology. That’s breaking stereotypes for me as a transgender woman!”**

**How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?**

**Living a life as a transgender woman and trying to ensure the rights and dignity of life for all the transgender women in Bangladesh.**

Shweta Jindal, WGH India

**"Challenge gender stereotypes, call out sexism - subtle or overt, use your voice for yourself and others in need, and never shrink yourself to make others feel comfortable. Know your worth and know your power - always!"**



Catherine Chacha Men'ganyi, Kenya



**"Let's invite one another in so that we can begin to fear less and to make our voices heard in breaking stereotypes everywhere."**



**Rose Kamera, WGH Malawi**



**"Gender equality goes beyond setting laws. Acting according to the law and pursuit of justice is key in breaking the bias."**

**How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?**

**I report cases of gender-based violence and raise awareness on gender-related laws and justice processes. I also support survivors of gender-based violence.**

Talluri Kusumapriya, WGH India

**"Go, Grow  
& Glow"**



**How and why do you break the bias  
for gender equality?**

**I work for gender equality by creating awareness that if women are conceptualized only as homemakers, we are underlying their potential. I believe that women are not only homemakers but also world creators. We can multitask, finance manage, troubleshoot, and play a significant role in improving economy.**

Rachel Hall-Clifford, WGH Georgia USA



**"I work to fight for equality by co-designing global health programs that prioritize women-led, community-identified health goals."**

Tepwanji Mpetemoya, WGH Zambia

**"Gender equality starts with open dialogue, acknowledging that biases against women are often rooted in unfounded learned stereotypes, leading to harmful discriminatory practices. But it must not end there, we then need to collectively work towards challenging the known narrative with truths every day, till the bias is no more."**





Jocelyn Kelly, WGH Boston

**"Breaking bias means acknowledging, celebrating, and elevating the voices of women leaders at the forefront of building peace, combatting climate change, and creating more just societies. Women are creating the innovative solutions the world needs at this critical juncture - our job as a global community is to listen and learn from these change-makers."**



Rekha Anil Kumar, WGH India



**"Women-a complete army without weapons, with the courage to adapt to any challenges and win every fight, doesn't matter belongs to personal, professional, societal front.**

**Proud and feeling grateful to God for choosing me to be a woman!"**

Nicole Atchessi, WGH Benin



“Financial autonomy for women, as well as their empowerment, are key elements for breaking the social pressure that maintains a culture of gender-based violence”

How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?

I am a researcher in public health and in my research studies I take into account the gender perspectives when feasible. In everyday life, I always strongly encourage young girls and women to build their autonomy and go as far as they can in their studies. This is key for African women to be able to fight domestic violence.

**Bernadette Kumar, WGH Norway**



**"Equality means that women are heard, seen, and valued. The growth of women should not be crushed by stereotyping, development should not be stifled by prejudice and abilities should not be ignored."**

**Aleksandra Akmaikina, WGH Finland**

**"Fighting against gender inequality starts with us going out of the cage made from foisted stereotypes. Thinking critically, creatively, and looking for evidence on consumed information can help us recognize our potential. Bravery and initiative can challenge gender-based limitations in career- and life perspectives."**





**Chilombo Mukuma, WGH**



**“We need to start advocating for changes in the system in which society operates. Let’s advocate for gender-balanced policies and take up leadership roles in governance, at workplaces, and in communities. We deserve a chance at leadership!”**

**“**

**“It’s important to build a world where women can be unapologetically ambitious.”**

**Saswati Das, WGH India**



## Samiratou Ouedraogo WGH Afrique de l'Ouest Francophone

"We, French-speaking African women health leaders are fighting for gender equity in health leadership and at the same time we must fight other battles:

- To Survive without health insurance in case of illness;
- To earn our daily bread;
- To educate our children, drop them off at the school picking them up caring for them when they are sick helping them with their homework, participating in extracurricular activities...
- To keep our homes since our men complain when we have to work late at night or on weekends
- To make ourselves accepted by our community, which finds that we do not devote enough time to the "social" which occupies an important place in our societies...

We must work to remove all barriers to achieving a fair and equitable world for all!"



### How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?

I am breaking the bias for gender equality by creating and maintaining safe spaces where women can share their experiences, their fears, their needs, and benefit from advice, support, and opportunities to break through barriers and improve their personal and professional life.

**Katharina Dams, WGH Switzerland**



**“There is no workforce equity without gender and intergenerational equality.**

**We need more young women to be able to lead!”**

**How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?**

**I am breaking the bias by leading by example. As a consultant in global health, I try to always stand up for workforce equity in my projects - even if it's uncomfortable. I feel responsible for giving a voice to those who haven't got a chance for it. I am also doing it to show my gratitude to those who helped me not give up when I was being judged due to my age & gender.**



**Shabnum Sarfraz, WGH Pakistan**



**"Gender-based discrimination is omnipresent and not easily challengeable, but society doesn't change if you don't start changing yourself first. Don't just be content sitting at the table. Flip it with your voice, perspective and confidence. Be there."**

**Margaret Chaluka, WGH Malawi**

**"Be young and free they say, I say be young and lead. As an African young woman, the statistics will say am likely to be uneducated and inexperienced to lead. I choose to break the bias and lead in health equity, being the evidence that continues to turn those statistics around."**



**Tsogolo Angel Itaye, WGH Malawi**

**"Women like me should never be afraid to speak up against sexual comments in the workplace, in school, and from family members. Women like me should never be afraid to call out against any form of bias towards them!"**



**How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?**

**I mentor young, upcoming female leaders in academics to never see themselves as door-mats towards bias, discrimination, and harassment in a male-dominated world.**

**Dr. Beverly Johnson, WGH Canada**



**"Speak up against gender bias, discrimination and stereotyping each time you see it."**

**Arush Lal, WGH Board of Directors**

**"Breaking bias means intentionally elevating voices that are too often excluded -- in the spirit of allyship and solidarity. In the wake of COVID-19, this includes prioritizing gender equity in all pandemic preparedness and response strategies. It's not just the right thing to do, it's also good public health."**





**Bartholomew Kamlewe, WGH Zambia**

**“Equality for me means encouraging women to take the lead in capturing opportunities that show up. It’s not enough to advocate for women’s rights, economic justice, or gender equality. It’s also a call to action to walk the talk.”**



**How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?**

**Women have the capacity to do big things when given the opportunity as we can see in many cooperation organizations that are women-led. I break the bias in my own small way by appointing or advocating for women’s appointments when I can. Hopefully, someday, something that starts small will mature into bigger actions.**

**Dr Bridget Msolomba Malewezi, WGH Malawi**



**"I am passionate about changing this status quo by leading work not only to raise awareness of the bottlenecks that hold women back but also by establishing mentorship programs that connect emerging women leaders in health to mentors in their networks with the aim of breaking the cycle."**

**Catrina Heffernan, WGH Ireland**



**"Treat everyone with care and compassion."**

Deepika Saluja, WGH India

**"Traditional stereotypes are being broken and getting redefined, we cannot slot people, especially women in airtight boxes any longer, we are learning, growing, questioning, and challenging the status quo to lead the path for the coming generation!"**



**How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?**

**Having been confined and restricted by the patriarchal norms of the society all my years of growing up, I have been slowly breaking the norms and biases, changing the narrative with my small actions, and engaging with the older generations to help them understand why it is important.**



Tejaswy Swathi Kovuri, WGH Ireland



“Everyone has their own skills and everyone need not excel in every thing, the pressure of being good at home chores should not be on women.”

Christine Kiruthu-Kamamia, WGH Malawi

“Gender equality means eliminating the burden of being the “first” and “only” in a room full of men. All women deserve equal representation in every space they are in.”

**Flávia Virginio, WGH Brazil**



**“Quebrar o preconceito para mim como mulher cis hetero branca, é dar voz e vez para integrantes dos grupos subrepresentados.”**

**“Breaking prejudice for me as a straight white cis woman is giving voice and time to members of underrepresented groups.”**

## **How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?**

**Um dos exemplo de como nós do WGH-BR quebramos o preconceito é apoiando projetos brasileiros como o DiversiNect, um banco de dados de visibilidade para profissionais pertencentes a grupos subrepresentados.**

**One of the examples of how we at WGH-Brazil have broken down prejudice is by supporting Brazilian projects such as DiversiNect, a visibility database for professionals belonging to underrepresented groups.**

Hannah Bwanali, WGH Malawi

**"Breaking stereotypes means speaking out and acting when you observe or experience bias, by promoting social inclusion in all aspects of development and human interaction."**

**How and why do you break the bias for gender equality?**

I break the bias for gender equality by learning and acting through networking with colleagues on persisting and emerging gender issues. I also conduct and support research generating new standpoints for promoting gender equality. I break the bias to avoid leaving anyone behind in development.

Catherine Mwangi, WGH Kenya

**"Empowering the most vulnerable and marginalized girls and women among us to be effective leaders and change-makers in their communities will break the bias. They will ensure a world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive that is free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination."**





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**Join us in calling for a new  
social contract for women!**

**Join the Women in Global  
Health Movement:**

**[www.womeningh.org](http://www.womeningh.org)**

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