



Health, Wellness, and Bodily Integrity

From birth to old age, gender differences play a significant role in shaping the health of women and girls.¹ Biological differences and their interplay with women’s social and economic conditions produce different healthcare needs and outcomes across the lifespan. In many societies, women face unequal access to education, employment, and resources. They also experience increased threats of violence and risk based on their unequal social and economic status.²

Worldwide, HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality are the two leading causes of death for women ages 15-44 years old. Unequal power in sexual relationships, gender-based discrimination, and lack of access to health resources, including HIV prevention and contraceptive methods, have a devastating impact on women’s health, particularly in resource-poor settings.³ More than a third of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence.⁴ Violence against women has widespread public health impacts, including physical injury; poor sexual, reproductive, and mental health outcomes; disability; or even death.⁵

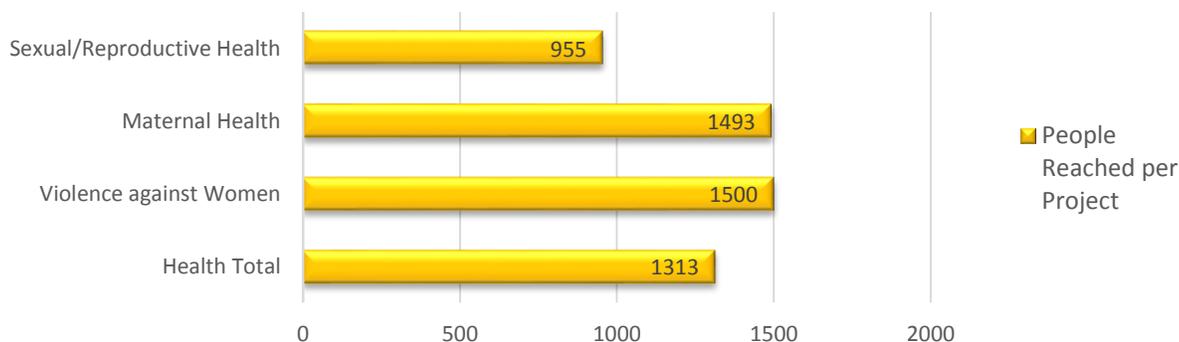
From 1970-2013, VGIF invested more than 600,000 USD to support 129 health projects across East Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. These projects reached more than 92,000 women and 5,600 girls.

VGIF grantees used a range of strategies to improve women’s and girls’ health including:

- Educating communities about nutrition, infectious disease prevention, and other health topics;
- Raising public awareness about violence against women and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/FGC) as public health and rights issues and providing support services for women and girls affected by them;
- Supporting reproductive, sexual health, and HIV/AIDS education and treatment for women and adolescents;
- Training and equipping birth attendants and health providers to improve maternal and infant health outcomes.

The right to health is a fundamental right of every human being, “extending not only to timely and appropriate health care but also to the underlying determinants of health, such as access to safe and potable water...an adequate supply of safe food, healthy occupational and environmental conditions and access to health-related education and information....”⁶

Health, Wellness Bodily Integrity: Average People Reached per Project



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Improving Maternity Center Infrastructure



The “Hardware and Electrification for Zina Health Center” Project by Developpement Agropastoral et Sanitaire (DAGROPASS) was funded by VGIF in 2012-2013 to equip a maternity clinic with exam tables, beds, cribs, and solar electrification to improve maternal and infant care and improve birth outcomes in a health center in Burundi. Over the course of the project, DAGROPASS furnished the clinic facility and installed solar panels, which improved labor and delivery care and also enabled staff to properly store and refrigerate pediatric vaccines to begin offering childhood vaccinations for the first time.

In the first year, the project served more than 3,600 people, and provided a safer, better-equipped facility for close to 1,000 women and girls seeking maternal, sexual, and reproductive healthcare services. The

project succeeded in effectively engaging the community at all stages of design and implementation. Community members helped DAGROPASS staff to install the solar panels and build a much-needed road to transport materials up Mt. Zina to improve access to the health center. **In 2014, DAGROPASS was awarded a multi-year grant from VGIF to build upon its vital work to improve the health of women and girls in this community.**

VGIF ACHIEVEMENTS: Health, Wellness, and Bodily Integrity

From 1970-2013, VGIF funded **129 projects** that included a health component. The projects reached approximately **97,690** women and girls and **168,970** people overall, including men and boys. Additionally, a project focused on mass media education to raise awareness and change attitudes around FGM/FGC in Burkina Faso reached an estimated 300,000 through radio broadcasts.

Projects focused on individual-level efforts, including health education and psychological support, as well as on community-level strategies to improve health systems and conditions for good health. **Mass media outreach and well-organized public education campaigns** to raise awareness about issues such as violence against women, FGM/FGC, and maternal mortality accounted for the high numbers of people impacted by projects in this category.

1 Flavia Bustreo, Isabelle de Zoysab, Islene Araujo de Carvalho, “Policy Directions to Improve Women’s Health Beyond Reproduction.” *Bull World Health Organ* 91 (2013): 712–714.

2 World Health Organization, *Women and Health: Today’s Evidence, Tomorrow’s Agenda*. (WHO, 2009).

3 World Health Organization, “Women’s Health.” (WHO, 2013), available at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs334/en/>.

4 UN Women, “Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women.” available at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>. See also World Health Organization, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-partner Sexual Violence*. (WHO, 2013).

5 Ibid.

6 United Nations Office for the High Commission for Human Rights, “Toolkit on the Right to Health”, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/ESCR/Pages/Health.aspx#key>.