



Family Planning/Reproductive Health Equity Working Group

2022 - 2023 Charter

I. Background

The right to health was first articulated in the 1946 Constitution for the World Health Organization, emphasizing equity by noting that “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.”¹ The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reiterated the right to health, and included attention to equity.²

Building on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, WHO, FP2020, and now FP2030 have further articulated equity as it relates to family planning (FP). According to FP2030, equity is defined as “Individuals have the ability to access quality, comprehensive contraceptive information and services free from discrimination, coercion and violence. Quality, accessibility and availability of contraceptive information and services should not vary by nonmedically indicated characteristics, such as age, geographic location, language, ethnicity, disability, HIV status, sexual orientation, wealth, marital or other status.”³ These nonmedical characteristics are also known as social determinants of health. Disparities based on social determinants can be masked when considering national, regional, or global averages of health-related indicators, such as contraceptive prevalence rate or unmet need for

“Equity is the absence of avoidable, unfair, or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically or by other means of stratification. ‘Health equity’ or ‘equity in health’ implies that ideally everyone should have a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential and that no one should be disadvantaged from achieving this potential.”⁹

¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); World Health Organization (WHO). The Right to Health. Geneva: OHCHR; 2008. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Factsheet31.pdf>.

² Hardee, K., E. Houghtaling, S. Stratton, I. Askew, I., C. Venkatraman, et al. 2019. “Discussion Paper on Equity for the High Impact Practices Partnership.” Available at: <https://www.fphighimpactpractices.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/HIP-Equity-Discussion-Paper.pdf>

³ Family Planning 2030. Rights and empowerment principles for family planning. Available from: <https://commitments.fp2030.org/principles>.

contraception.⁴ To ensure disadvantaged groups can overcome the extra barriers they face, programs must examine the data and, based on the findings, design programs that deliver services as equitably as possible. To this end, a growing number of countries and entities are working to strengthen the measurement of equity. The FP2030 partnership, for example, updated its measurement framework in 2021 and cites improving measurement of equity in FP as an area of continued focus.⁵ Relatedly in 2022, WHO published a step-by-step manual for monitoring inequalities in sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health.⁶

The call for equity in FP dates back to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo. As stated in Paragraph 7.3 of the ICPD Programme of Action, “all couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so”.⁷ The call was taken up again by the Millennium Development Goals, and more recently by the Sustainable Development Goals, through the health target (3.7) for universal access to reproductive health care and the gender target (5.6) for universal access to reproductive rights and health in accordance with ICPD and the Beijing Platform for Action. Despite gains over recent decades, far too many people are still left behind and do not enjoy access to the FP and reproductive health care they want and need. Equity in FP/ RH does not mean that all groups use contraception – or specific methods of contraception – at the same rates. Rather, voluntary FP/RH programs move closer to equity when they respond to the values and preferences of all individuals and ensure access to high-quality reproductive health information, method and product choice, and contraceptive services for those who want it.⁸

In 2020, USAID and the Research for Scalable Solutions (R4S) Project coordinated a group of FP practitioners to develop a Strategic Planning Guide on Equity in FP, building off of recommendations made by the HIP Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and a discussion paper commissioned by the TAG.² Based on the findings from a landscape analysis conducted in April 2021 with several communities of practice (COP) working in the field of FP/RH, as well as the emergence of several national-level equity task groups, R4S and USAID determined there was an opportunity to establish a working group that could provide resources and a space for FP stakeholders to coordinate and collaborate around equity in FP/RH programs. The working group shall be called the Family Planning/Reproductive Health Equity Working Group (hereafter referred to as the FP/RH Equity Working Group).

⁴ Nuriye Ortayli and Shawn Malarcher, “Equity Analysis: Identifying Who Benefits from Family Planning Programs” *Studies in Family Planning* 2010; 41[2]: 101–108

⁵ Family Planning 2030. FP2030 Measurement Framework. Available from: <https://fp2030.org/sites/default/files/Data-Hub/Framework-20220603-EXTERNAL.pdf>.

⁶ World Health Organization. “Inequality monitoring in sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health: a step-by-step manual.” Geneva: 2022. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240042438>

⁷ United Nations Population Fund. Programme of Action Adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, September 5–13, 1994. Available from: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/programme_of_action_Web%20ENGLISH.pdf

⁸ Creating equitable access to high-quality family planning information and services: a strategic planning guide. Washington, DC: High Impact Practices Initiative; 2021. Available from: https://www.fphighimpactpractices.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Equity_SPG_Final-Aug-16.pdf

⁹ World Health Organization. “Health equity”. Available at: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health>.

II. Purpose of the FP/RH Equity Working Group

The FP/RH Equity Working Group will serve as a hub for equity in FP/RH to advance thought leadership, and foster collaboration and peer-to-peer learning and exchange. This group is not intended to duplicate the work of country-level working groups, but rather collate information at a global level and serve as a resource for country-level teams. The performance and continuation of the FP/RH Equity Working Group will be assessed every two years. Priorities of the FP/RH Equity Working Group include:

1. Develop consensus around, and advance and promote a mutual and universal understanding of equity in FP/RH by establishing and sharing common definitions and measures.
2. Identify gaps in the equity in FP/RH knowledge base and seek to fill those gaps by facilitating knowledge sharing between organizations and governments, including Ministries of Health, and by synthesizing and broadly disseminating research, program evaluations, lessons learned, evidence-based approaches, and other tools and resources as they emerge.
3. Develop new resources and practical tools to guide the uptake of evidence-based approaches in both routine and non-standard data collection, to advance equity in FP/RH around the globe.

The FP/RH Equity Working Group is guided by an appointed Steering Committee (see below for details) that proposes key goals and strategies for the working group. The Steering Committee (SC), or designated subcommittee, will develop a two-year action plan outlining the goals and milestones the FP/RH Equity Working Group will achieve.

III. Guiding Principles

The FP/RH Equity Working Group will adhere to the following guiding principles.

- Prioritize country-level perspectives and needs.
- Hold meetings virtually, or with a virtual option, to promote broad participation.
- Give particular attention to local solutions and local interventions.
- Encourage participation by socially excluded groups, including representatives of youth-focused organizations.
- Encourage “South-to-South” exchange of knowledge, learning, and experiences.

IV. Governance

The EWG is governed by a Steering Committee of up to 11 members, 2 of whom shall serve as co-chairs. The EWG is also supported by a Secretariat, primarily responsible for ensuring the day-to-day administrative functioning of the EWG.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee serves as the leadership and oversight body of the FP/RH Equity Working Group. The Steering Committee establishes the long-term vision of the FP/RH Equity Working Group and provides guidance, recommendations, and stewardship to FP/RH Equity Working Group activities. Additional responsibilities include engagement and recruitment of new members, evaluation and

oversight of working group activities, revising and updating this charter, developing action plans and ensuring inclusivity and transparency in the working group.

At the inception of the FP/RH Equity Working Group, the Steering Committee will develop the Charter and a two-year action plan outlining the goals and milestones the FP/RH Equity Working Group will achieve. A maximum of 11 members will comprise the Steering Committee. At least half of the members will be representatives of the global south (low, lower middle, and upper middle income countries as classified by the [World Bank](#)), with at least one representing a country with a national-level equity task group. Additionally, socially excluded groups will be represented including at least one youth representative. USAID and the Secretariat will invite members to join the Steering Committee based on (1) experience with FP/RH programming, policy, and research, (2) experience and/or demonstrated interest in questions of equity, (3) direct experience implementing or supporting FP/RH programs in the global South, (4) experience working with youth on reproductive health, rights and equity (preferred, but not required). Steering Committee members will serve two-year terms with the option to extend for an additional two years. At Steering Committee meetings, a quorum for decision-making shall be two-thirds of the Steering Committee. Presuming a quorum is present, decisions require a simple majority vote of Steering Committee Members present at the meeting.

Co-chairs

Two SC members will serve as co-chairs. The primary responsibilities of the co-chairs include developing meeting agendas, chairing meetings, facilitating consensus-building across the EWG, and providing overall leadership. For additional details about co-chair responsibilities, selection, and terms, please see Annex 1.

Secretariat

The Secretariat is primarily responsible for supporting the SC, co-chairs and the day-to-day administrative functioning of the EWG. For additional details about Secretariat responsibilities, selection, and terms, please see Annex 1.

V. FP/RH Equity Working Group Membership Composition

Broad representation and inclusivity are core elements of the FP/RH Equity Working Group. As such, the FP/RH Equity Working Group is intended to represent a diverse range of knowledge, experience, perspectives and countries. FP/RH Equity Working Group membership will be open to anyone interested in joining. It is anticipated that membership will be comprised of a multi-disciplinary group of implementers, researchers, donors, and community actors within the global public health and international development sectors.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities of FP/RH Equity Working Group Members

The responsibilities of all members include:

- Participating in FP/RH Equity Working Group meetings and events, either virtually or in-person.
- Contributing to technical areas, tasks, and deliverables for the FP/RH Equity Working Group.
- Providing representation and endorsement on behalf of his/her/their organization.

VII. Resources

Each member of the FP/RH Equity Working Group will be responsible for covering their own or their representative's time, efforts and expenses related to their participation in teleconferences, in-person meetings, and other activities unless otherwise agreed upon. Steering Committee members and general members actively participating in a subcommittee may be eligible for compensation from the Secretariat. Compensation may be offered in two categories: "time" and "operating expenses." Recipients of compensation would largely be participants who are with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) located in the global south. Participants from international NGOs are not eligible for compensation when their time can be billed to a funded project. USAID and the Secretariat will assess the stipend level based on the frequency of the meetings for the steering committee and the anticipated workload outside of meeting times. The maximum stipend would be 200 USD/month per eligible participant--100 USD for their time and 100 USD for operating expenses (taxis, phone charges etc.). Invoices are not required. USAID and the Secretariat will use the World Bank classification of high-, middle-, and low-income countries to structure a tiered approach for compensation.

VIII. Communications

The FP/RH Equity Working Group will communicate by email, video and/or teleconference, with in-person meetings held as appropriate. The preferred platform for virtual meetings is Zoom. Simultaneous translation to French and other languages as needed will be provided for teleconferences, as well as translation of key documents. A listserv and document sharing space will be established and managed by the Secretariat to promote communication.

IX. Review

This Charter will undergo review at a minimum annually, or more often as needed. Steering Committee criteria, membership criteria, guiding principles, resources, communications and other sections shall be reviewed as needed.

X. Funding

Aspects of the FP/RH Equity Working Group—including the Secretariat function and stipends for participation-- is funded by USAID through the R4S project. This charter will be edited to reflect future funding as appropriate.

Annex 1: Co-chair and Secretariat Terms of Reference 2022-2023

I. Introduction

The FP/RH Equity Working Group (EWG) is governed by a Steering Committee (SC) of up to 11 members, 2 of whom shall serve as co-chairs. The primary responsibilities of the co-chairs include developing meeting agendas, chairing meetings, facilitating consensus-building across the EWG, and providing overall leadership. The EWG is also supported by a Secretariat. The Secretariat is primarily responsible for supporting the SC, co-chairs and the day-to-day administrative functioning of the EWG.

II. Co-chairs

Co-chair Responsibilities

The two co-chairs will agree together on how to divide the following responsibilities. They may do so according to their skillsets, interests and/or availability. Co-chairs are expected to dedicate a minimum of 6 days per year to the EWG. They are asked to outline the allocation of responsibilities and share the outline with the SC, and EWG if appropriate. All responsibilities will be undertaken with the support of the Secretariat.

1. Develop SC and EWG meeting agendas with input from SC members and the Secretariat
2. Chair SC and EWG meetings
3. Facilitate information sharing between the SC and EWG members
4. Provide technical direction to task teams within the EWG as needed
5. Facilitate external communication and engagement to promote the EWG's objectives
6. Foster and guide consensus-based decision making of the SC and EWG
7. Coordinate with the Secretariat on administrative duties
8. Support the election process for new Secretariats and the process for recruiting new SC members
9. Ensure all work and functioning of the EWG is conducted in accordance with the charter

Appointment of Co-chairs

Any EWG SC member is eligible to become a co-chair. Co-chairs will be appointed through an election process. SC members can self-nominate or nominate another member of their choice. The Secretariat will tally the votes. Only SC members will be eligible to vote for the Co-chairs, and every SC member shall have one vote.

Terms and Resignations

Once appointed, Co-chairs will serve two-year terms. Co-chairs will be permitted run for a second, 2-year term. Co-chairs may resign at any time. To resign, they must send a written resignation letter to the Secretariat.

III. Secretariat

Secretariat Responsibilities

The Secretariat is responsible for the overall administrative functioning of the EWG. The responsibilities of the Secretariat include:

1. Support the Co-chairs to develop meeting agendas, with input from SC members
2. Coordinate meeting logistics (e.g., send invitations, secure Zoom links and hosting, arrange for interpretation services, prepare meeting documents, take meeting minutes, and provide other operational support as needed)
3. Facilitate the recruitment and tracking of general membership
4. Support internal and external communication and knowledge exchange by establishing a listserv and other platforms as needed
5. Support the election and orientation of Co-chairs
6. Track timelines for EWG tasks and outputs

Appointment of the Secretariat

FHI 360 will serve as the inaugural Secretariat. Thereafter, the Secretariat will be appointed through an election process. Due to the nature of the responsibilities and the resource requirements of the role, Secretariats shall be organizations, not individuals. The organization serving as Secretariat must have at least one representative within the EWG. EWG members can nominate their own organization or another organization of their choice. The Co-chairs will tally the votes.

Terms and Resignations

Once appointed, the Secretariat will serve a maximum of a three-year term. The Secretariat may resign at any time. However, in the interest of maintaining the smooth functioning of the EWG, it is requested that a minimum 60-day notice is given. To resign, a representative of the Secretariat must send a written resignation letter to both Co-chairs.