STRATEGIES FOR INCREASED FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN GLOBAL HEALTH EQUITY

The Johns Hopkins Alliance for a Healthier World (AHW) promotes female engagement and leadership in pursuit of solutions to the world’s most pressing global health equity challenges. In countries around the world, from sub-Saharan Africa to North America, investment in female empowerment and leadership improves the health of communities and creates more equitable societies. Though research shows that societies benefit overall when females have equal rights, girls still encounter social and structural disadvantages from the earliest age—and these hurdles and ceilings persist throughout their lives.

By working to dismantle barriers for women, from early childhood development to the attainment of equitable education and leadership positions, AHW demonstrates its commitment to female-led and female-engaged innovation around the world.

ABOUT OUR APPROACH

To promote female leadership and engagement, AHW will:

• Compile, distill, and disseminate best-practices and evidence-based strategies in female-led and female-engaged innovation.
• Create a resource hub for young women innovators and leaders.
• Invest in evidence-based strategies to promote and sustain female-led and female-engaged enterprise and entrepreneurship—from design to doing—drawing on all available JHU divisions and resources.
• Facilitate knowledge-to-practice linkages for young women at JHU and around the world by building new leadership networks and collaborating with existing leaders in this space (e.g. Women Deliver and Women Leaders in Global Health).
• Build the evidence base to sharpen our understanding of the most effective strategies for enhancing women’s embrace of STEM education and leadership in STEM careers.
• Collaborate with existing innovation labs and idea incubators (e.g. Social Innovation Lab, FastForward, Office of Tech Ventures, and JHU Bootcamp for Technology Entrepreneurs) to promote technologies, business, and leadership approaches with an emphasis on advancing gender equity.
WHO IS INVOLVED?

The Alliance connects researchers, implementors, thought leaders, and students at JHU with counterparts across the globe, with a particular focus on low-resource settings. Women leaders will be at the helm of this initiative, driving the agenda and forging partnerships.

AHW thematic leaders in the areas of food & nutrition, the environment, transformative technologies, and gender equity & justice will collaborate to better understand the roles and intersections of these spaces in perpetuating well-known inequities for young women and, conversely, how to create virtuous cycles of female leadership and growth within these sectors.

NEXT STEPS

Join us in supporting female-led innovation by addressing barriers across the lifespan and creating innovative spaces for young women, please contact us with your ideas at ahealthierworld@jhu.edu.

BACKGROUND

The capacity of women to lead and shape their communities is undeniable. When women are empowered to make decisions for the health of the family, manage household finances, start businesses, and advocate for change, the outcomes are far-reaching and transformative. Yet globally, women continue to be underrepresented in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

When women do complete STEM training, their output is valued less than that of male counterparts. Today, women make up 70 percent of the healthcare workforce globally, yet, according to the World Health Organization, half of women’s contribution to global health is unpaid.

Female leaders develop from young girls who have been supported and encouraged to pursue goals, innovate, and take on leadership roles. Barriers along the leadership pathway often start early in life, particularly when gender disparities in nutrition, health, and education are prominent.

Consider communities where young girls are fed last at mealtimes and do not receive the nutrition they need to fully develop. Often this is compounded with unequal distribution of household work and decreased opportunity to attend school when parents cannot afford school fees. Once girls do reach school, they are less likely than boys to be encouraged to pursue STEM studies and even less likely to climb the leadership ladder in these fields.

LEARNING RESOURCES

• JHU Alliance for a Healthier World www.ahealthierworld.jhu.edu
• Social Innovations Lab ventures.jhu.edu/sil
• Fast Forward ventures.jhu.edu/fastforward
• JHU Office of Tech Ventures ventures.jhu.edu

ABOUT JOHNS HOPKINS ALLIANCE FOR A HEALTHIER WORLD

The Alliance is an initiative integrating diverse expertise and perspectives to unlock groundbreaking knowledge and resolve the most complex global health equity challenges of our time. Scholars, researchers, and leaders from all disciplines—medicine, nursing, public health, international relations, engineering, education, business, the social sciences, creative arts, and bioethics—work side-by-side with partners and disadvantaged communities around the world to create a healthier, more equitable, and more just world.