

# A Provider Self-Assessment Tool to Measure Gender Competency for Family Planning Services



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## **Abbreviations**

D4I	Data for Impact
FP	Family Planning
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Introduction

Family Planning (FP) providers can play an important role in ensuring that their clients reach their reproductive health goals despite barriers they may face because of their gender. Gender competency is the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that can help providers reduce gender-related barriers for their clients. With increased gender competency, providers can be more responsive to the diverse needs of their clients and deliver high-quality FP services.

There are six domains of gender competency outlined in the *Gender Competency Framework for Family Planning Providers* (USAID and HRH2030, September 2018). These domains include gender-sensitive communication, promoting individual agency, supporting legal rights and status related to family planning, engaging men and boys as partners and users, facilitating positive couples' communication and cooperative decision-making, and addressing gender-based violence. Providers can strengthen their competency in each domain by completing a publicly available eLearning course online at <https://chemonics.com/resource/defining-and-advancing-gender-competent-family-planning-service-providers/>. This training is designed to be completed by individual providers in a self-paced format. It includes in-depth information about each domain of gender competency and practical exercises to demonstrate how to apply the related skills during FP service provision.

The *Gender Competency Self-Assessment Tool for Family Planning Providers* (from now onward referred to as the “tool”) presented in this document provides a method for measuring the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of individual providers in each of the six domains of gender competency. By completing this self-assessment, providers can determine their current level of gender competency, and thereby identify areas of strength and weakness that can be improved by completing the eLearning course.

Throughout this tool, the term “provider” and “services” refers to providers and services specific to family planning in clinical and community settings. As defined in the *Gender Competency Framework for Family Planning Providers*, the term “gender” refers to “the economic, social, political, and cultural attributes, constraints, and opportunities associated with being male or female in a society. It includes the roles, behaviors, activities, rights, and responsibilities that a society considers appropriate for women, men, girls, and boys. Definitions of what it means to be a woman, or a man vary within and between cultures and change over time.”<sup>1,2</sup>

## How to use the tool

The tool provides a quantitative assessment of an individual provider's gender competency. It can be used to inform individual learning plans for providers, or as part of group-level assessments. Knowing a providers' current level of gender competency can help individual providers and program implementers identify areas for additional support and training, and design-related

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<sup>1</sup> United States Agency for International Development and HRH2030. (September 2018). *Defining and Advancing Gender-Competent Family Planning Service Providers: A Competency Framework and Technical Brief*. Available at URL: <https://hrh2030program.org/gender-competency-tech-brief/>

<sup>2</sup> While this tool focuses on gender as a binary construction (male/female), it is important to note that not all clients may identify within these categories. This tool also mainly refers to heterosexual relationships. However, it is also important to provide gender-sensitive and respectful family planning services to LGBTQIA+ clients.

quality improvement activities. This can include completion of the self-paced eLearning course on gender competency. It can also be used to inform the development of other in-person training, mentoring, and supportive supervision activities for individual providers and groups of providers. The tool can also be used for pre/post-test assessments in these initiatives to identify changes in gender competency among participants.

The tool can be used in several ways<sup>3</sup>:

- 1. Self-assessment:** Individual providers can use the tool to self-assess their strengths and weakness in the six domains of gender competency. Providers can complete and score the assessment on their own. The provider's score on each module, and the self-reflection questions, prepares providers to complete the eLearning course on gender competency.
- 2. Group assessments:** The tool can be administered to groups of providers (for example, all midwives working in a district, or all nurses in one facility). Each provider would complete the assessment on their own. Individual scores can be calculated for each provider, and then averaged for the group. After completing the assessment, providers can use the group discussion questions to reflect on their responses and have an open dialogue about how the team can work together to increase gender competency and what barriers they face related to gender in their service provision. Providers can use the knowledge of their areas of strength and weakness to inform their completion of the eLearning course on gender competency.
- 3. Integration with other quality assessments:** Gender competency is one component of providing quality family planning services. The tool can be used as part of larger quality assessments including facility assessments.

## Background on tool development

The steps for tool development included a literature review, expert review, and piloting with FP providers in Ghana (n=25) and Uganda (n=31). In Ghana three of the providers were male, and in Uganda six of the providers were male. The literature review included a search of peer-reviewed and grey literature for similar instruments. None were identified that appropriately captured the size domains. Therefore, new statements were developed to capture provider knowledge, attitude, and skills outlined in the *Gender Competency Framework for Family Planning Providers*. These statements were reviewed by FP and measure development experts working in academia and non-governmental organization settings (n=5), as well as by FP and gender experts at USAID and the developers of the *Gender Competency Framework for Family Planning Providers* at HRH2030. Next, iterative cognitive interviews were conducted with a diverse cadre of FP providers working in public and private facilities (e.g., midwives, nurses, community health workers) in three regions of Ghana (Ashanti, Eastern, and Accra). These interviews used a cognitive interviewing approach to examine the face and content validity of each module. The revised tool was then piloted in Uganda, again using cognitive interviews with a diverse cadre of FP providers in public and private facilities in the Kibaale and Buliisa districts of the Albertine region. Ethics approval for the

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<sup>3</sup> The tool is intended to be used to support monitoring and evaluation for learning purposes. To create a safe space for providers to advance their skills, scores should be kept private, and should not be used to influence employment.



piloting was provided by the University of Ghana Ethics Board, the Mildmay Uganda Research and Ethics Committee, and the Tulane University Biomedical Institutional Review Board. Additional details about tool development are available upon request.

## Structure of the modules

The tool includes six modules (A–F), each related to one domain of gender competency. In each module, providers respond to statements that represent knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the domain. For each statement, providers indicate if they “Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree” with the statement. Select modules can be administered on their own, or as part of a holistic assessment. The tool includes 71 statements in total, with a range of 7–15 statements per module (see Table 1). The modules are packaged as separate documents available for download on the Data for Impact website here:

<https://www.data4impactproject.org/publications/gender-competency-tool-guidance/>

**Table 1. Gender competency modules and number of statements**

Gender Competency Module	Number of statements
A. Gender-sensitive communication	13
B. Promoting individual agency	15
C. Supporting legal rights and status related to family planning	10
D. Engaging men and boys as partners and users	13
E. Facilitating couples’ positive communication and cooperative decision-making	7
F. Addressing gender-based violence	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>

Each module includes three sections as follows:

- The first section is the **Statement and Response Form**. This is the form used by providers to document their responses to each statement. The form includes the statements that relate to the domain, and the response options (strongly agree—strongly disagree). Providers review the statement and select one response for each statement.
- The second section is the **Answer Key**, which shows the ideal response for each statement and a point value for each response. Providers write the point value for their response in the “Your Score” column of the answer key and sum their score for the module.
- The third section is a **Discussion Guide**, which provides a brief explanation about why certain responses demonstrate gender competency. It also summarizes main points about the domains and includes self-reflection and group discussion questions.

Because the tool is designed primarily to be used as a self-assessment for providers, individual background characteristics are not included as questions. However, for teams that will use the tool for monitoring and evaluation, suggested background characteristics to collect are included in Appendix A.

## Scoring instructions

After completing the Statement and Response Form, providers should use the Answer Key Form to score their assessment. Each response option has a point value between 1–4. The response options that more closely align with the gender-competent response for the statement have a higher point value. In most cases this means that “strongly agree” and “agree” options are awarded 4 points and 3 points respectively, while “disagree” and “strongly disagree” options are awarded 2 points and 1 point respectively. However, in a few cases, statements are worded in the opposite direction of gender competency, so that the “strongly disagree” and “disagree” responses have a higher point value. To draw attention to these reverse-scored statements, these statements are highlighted in blue (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Point-value illustration depending on direction of statement wording**

Response	Point value for most statements	Point value for statements worded in the opposite direction of gender competency
Strongly Agree	4	1
Agree	3	2
Disagree	2	3
Strongly Disagree	1	4

Statements highlighted in blue on the scoring sheet are worded in the opposite direction of gender competency. For these statements “strongly disagree” and “disagree” have higher point values than “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Modules have different numbers of statements. Therefore, the highest score possible is also different for each module. Table 3 shows the ranges for “high, medium, and low” levels of gender competency for the domain.

**Table 3. Maximum possible score, and high, medium, and low score ranges for gender competency per module**

Module	Maximum possible score	High gender competency	Medium gender competency	Low gender competency
A. Gender-Sensitive Communication	52	47–52	42–46	Equal to or less than 41
B. Promoting Individual Agency	60	54–60	48–53	Equal to or less than 47
C. Supporting Legal Rights and Status Related to Family Planning	40	36–40	32–35	Equal to or less than 31
D. Engaging Men and Boys as Partners	52	47–52	42–46	Equal to or less than 41
E. Facilitating Positive Couples' Communication and Cooperative Decision Making	28	25–28	22–24	Equal to or less than 21
F. Addressing Gender-Based Violence	52	47–52	42–46	Equal to or less than 41

Cutoff values are at 90% of highest score for "high" and 80% of highest score for "medium".

The six modules for each domain of gender competency can be accessed from the Data for Impact website as follows:

- Module A: Gender Sensitive Communication:  
<https://www.data4impactproject.org/publications/gender-competency-tool-module-a/>
- Module B: Promoting Individual Agency:  
<https://www.data4impactproject.org/publications/gender-competency-tool-module-b/>
- Module C: Supporting Legal Rights and Status Related to Family Planning:  
<https://www.data4impactproject.org/publications/gender-competency-tool-module-c/>
- Module D: Engaging Men and Boys as Partners:  
<https://www.data4impactproject.org/publications/gender-competency-tool-module-d/>
- Module E: Facilitating Positive Couples Communication and Cooperative Decision Making:  
<https://www.data4impactproject.org/publications/gender-competency-tool-module-e/>
- Module F: Addressing Gender-Based Violence:  
<https://www.data4impactproject.org/publications/gender-competency-tool-module-f/>

Once you have downloaded the forms and discussion guide, complete the following steps:

**Step 1:** Use the answer key to find the point value for your response. Write the value in the “your score” column for that statement.

**Step 2:** Add up the points for each item to get a total score.

**Step 3:** Compare your total score value with the ranges for high, medium, and low values.

**Step 4:** Review the discussion guide which explains the ideal response for each statement. To strengthen competency in this area, complete the eLearning course:

<https://chemonics.com/resource/defining-and-advancing-gender-competent-family-planning-service-providers/>

## Appendix A. Supplemental Background Questions

Provider background characteristics	
<p>What is your current work classification? [Choose one]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nurse</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Midwife/Traditional Birth Attendant</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community Health Officer/Worker</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community Volunteer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Health Educator</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clinician</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Physician</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacist</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Facility Staff</li> </ul>
<p>Do you work in the public or private sector?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Public sector</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Private sector</li> </ul>
<p>What is the highest level of formal education you completed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Primary school</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Secondary school</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nursing College</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Midwifery School</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medical School</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary school—Other</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Technical training</li> </ul>
<p>What is your gender?</p>	
<p>How many years have you worked as a family planning provider?</p>	
<p>How long have you been in your current post and position?</p>	

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