

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The health of women and girls across the globe has improved over the past half-century, but much remains to be done. The international approach has been to identify serious diseases such as smallpox, polio, malnutrition, malaria, HIV, etc. and conditions that require special care including pregnancy. These targeted programs focus on a single problem that is diagnosed, counted, and (hopefully) conquered. However, care may not be available if a person has a different problem. Most Global Health initiatives have been treating diseases and conditions, not caring for individuals.

The Institute for Women's Health (IWH) has developed the unique Women's Optimal Health Framework (WOHF) to both provide research support for health policymakers, as well as resource support for health practitioners that promotes holistic individual, family, and community wellness. "Optimal Health" includes the emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual components that complement physical health. Women are healthiest when strong relationships, opportunities, communities, and faith exist. Consequently, this health framework identifies interventions that strengthen families and communities along with essential medical and preventive healthcare.

The Women's Optimal Health Framework is the product of an exhaustive review of high-quality research articles, guidelines, and resources. Well over 900 references support the recommendations in the Framework. The recommended interventions have been reviewed by professionals in public health, psychology, nursing, nutrition, medicine, and midwifery. The IWH's International Health Council, representing Africa, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, and North America, has considered the cultural, socioeconomic, and practical applications of the Framework with the aspiration that these interventions can be applied globally.

Healthcare professionals, including front-line community health workers, clinical health providers, health administrators, and national policy leaders, can utilize the concepts and health interventions in the Framework to identify high-impact, low-cost, evidence-based activities supporting individual well-being while strengthening population health.



*"Countries that treasure children are becoming the hope for the global future. These nations seek to protect life and families in meaningful, effective ways."
-Alma Golden, M.D.*

*"The Women's Optimal Health Framework seeks to treat individuals, not just conditions. It advocates for women across the lifespan, not merely during the reproductive years."
-Alma Golden, M.D.*

The first section of the Women’s Optimal Health Framework provides public health concepts and approaches that are associated with improved health outcomes. The WOHF has clearly identified the benefits of Community Health Workers (CHWs); Community-Wide Health and Safety Initiatives; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Programs (WASH); Addressing Families and Children in Crisis; Healthy Marriage and Family Relationships; Emotional and Mental Health Support; Spiritual Wellness; Child Health and Development; and Optimal Adolescent Reproductive and Relationship Health. These brief concept papers offer evidence-based observations and interventions framing both national policy and direct patient care.

The second section of the Framework utilizes the previous section on community and population health interventions as a foundation for identifying age-specific interventions from the first 1000 days to the end of life. Physical assessment, screening, education, and management interventions are based on research and guideline recommendations from the current literature focusing on the “Optimal Health” goal identified above.

The WOHF enables nations to focus on achievable health goals consistent with their sovereign interests, laws, and culture. The Framework recognizes the dignity and worth of every life. IWH knows that countries that treasure children are the hope for the global future. These nations welcome children - both boys and girls - and they protect life, youth, and families in meaningful, effective ways. Although many of these countries are not wealthy, they are rich in community connections, faith, and tradition, consequently providing some of the most meaningful components of Optimal Health inside the fabric of their societies. These nations seek the well-being of their citizens, not simply the management of selected diseases or conditions. And that is the ultimate goal of the Women’s Optimal Health Framework.

The Honorable Alma L. Golden, M.D.
Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Former USAID Deputy Administrator,
Senate-Confirmed Official

Evidence-based practice " involves providing holistic, quality care based on the most up-to-date research and knowledge..."
(American Nurses Association, 2024)

*“The Women’s Optimal Health Framework cares for the health of women...
not just for health conditions.”*

-Alma Golden, M.D.