

Seva Foundation

Women and Girls Initiative



All Seva's programs around the world include a focus on promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls.

The Problem:

Seva's programs work within communities in which the effects of poverty are disproportionately felt by women.

Avoidable Blindness: Globally, women comprise two-thirds of the total cases of blindness. The gender and blindness inequity is 90% due to social causes.

Native American Community Health: Native American women have the highest age-adjusted death rate for diabetes. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for American Indian women.

Seva's Strategies:

Sight:

Women's barriers to accessing eye care services include cost, transportation, knowledge and perceived value of services, and fear of poor surgical outcome. Seva addresses these barriers by:

- Establishing eye care facilities closer to communities where women and girls live
- Offering free or low-cost eye care services
- Providing transportation assistance
- Supporting community outreach programs
- Publicizing services through radio, brochures, and videos
- Addressing fears through education

Native American Community Health:

Indigenous peoples experience disproportionately high levels of maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition, cardiovascular diseases, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. Indigenous **women** experience these health problems with **particular severity**. Seva addresses this issue by:

- Supporting Native women-led health projects focused on reversing the cycle of diabetes and other chronic disease by promoting access to and recovery of healthy foods
- Enabling women to serve in decision-making roles that affect community health
- Upholding the principle of self-determination and self-development as outlined by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Providing technical assistance trainings, network opportunities, and organizational capacity-building support for community health programs

The Problem:

- Women are disproportionately affected by community health issues
- 2 out of 3 blind people in the world are female
- In Native American tribes, over 50% of women over 55 have diabetes

Seva's Goal:

Promote gender equality and empower women and girls through community health.

Highlights:

Sight

- Educate national prevention of blindness committees about the importance of gender in eye care
- Across its programs in Tibet, Cambodia, and Nepal, over **50%** of patients who receive surgery are female
- Focus on training female eye care providers

Native American Health

- All programs under the direct supervision of women
- One program partner has an all-female board
- Another partner project is guided by a *Kunsi* (Grandmother's Circle).
- Sponsored a project leader to address 300+ women at a Women and Girls Wellness Conference.
- Coming of Age ceremony enabled more than 130 Ilnktonwan women to share garden-grown foods and teach about sacredness of food.

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