

# **ROLL BACK**

**AND**

# **RESIS TANCE**

**HOW US-BASED GLOBAL HEALTH ORGANISATIONS  
ARE RESPONDING TO THE  
GENDER AND DIVERSITY CRACKDOWN**



**GLOBAL 50  
HEALTH 50**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States (US) is the world's biggest provider of global health assistance and holds 40% of the board seats on global health organisations managing that funding.<sup>1</sup> The recent changes introduced by the new US administration – attempting to dismantle the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and freezing disbursements, pausing development assistance, leaving the World Health Organization (WHO) – have already caused distress and uncertainty for millions worldwide. In addition, new decrees which effectively cancel or threaten diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives in the US Federal Government and the organisations it funds are unravelling decades of social justice progress in the workplace and removing protection for the most vulnerable and marginalised communities.

Since 2017, GH5050 has tracked gender equality and wider aspects of DEI for a growing sample of organisations active in global health. Our annual reports have found an increase in commitments, policies and initiatives for DEI and gender equality. Considering President Trump's recent executive directives, and to gain clarity in a fast-moving context, GH5050 has assessed changes in DEI and gender equality commitments among 72 global health organisations in our sample headquartered in the US. Data were collected between 7-14 February 2025 and compared to previous years' findings, including a round of data collected between 23 September 2024 and 5 January 2025.

Compared to the end of 2024, by mid-February 2025, over a quarter of organisations (20/72) had removed language relating to DEI and/or gender equality from their websites. Changes included the removal of policies, text or pages, or walking back from previous commitments. Nearly all organisations that had made such changes had received US federal grants or contracts in 2024/2025.

Despite the concern raised by our findings, our message remains one of hope. The case for DEI can be clearly and convincingly made, including by monitoring and documenting organisational experiences and the human cost of reversing these policies and commitments. We can collaborate to promote workplace policies and cultures that foster DEI. We can counter-attack with facts and success stories of individuals. Working together, we can maintain the pressure against further rollback and call for the reinstatement of DEI and gender equality policies, for the benefit of all.

**BETWEEN THE END OF 2024  
AND MID-FEBRUARY 2025:**

**16/63**

**ORGANISATIONS REMOVED  
THEIR DEI POLICIES FROM  
THEIR WEBSITES**

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*"They can (executive) order policies off our website, but they cannot change our values. If taking our DEI policies off our website is the price we pay to continue our work, I'll pay it. We will still be a diverse team that ensures equity and creates an inclusive workplace environment."*

**President & CEO of consistently high-performing organisation in annual GH5050 reports**



## **IT'S NOT A MOVIE. STAND UP!**

*Milan, Italy - 2023. Gaia Giongo*

Men, seated on director's chairs, turn back to gaze at us from behind a shoulder, while graveyards loom in the background. The graves refer to the victims of gender-based violence but the men are looking in the other direction. This evocative artwork symbolises the gender injustice surrounding the discourse on gender-based violence, which society often portrays as a women's issue, with women positioned as victims and fighters against it. However, this artwork challenges this narrative by highlighting that gender-based violence is predominantly perpetrated by men.

# **1. UNDOING INCLUSION**

## **A ROLLBACK ON GENDER AND DEI IN GLOBAL HEALTH ORGANISATIONS**



**SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE  
WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA  
USING**

**#ROLLBACKANDRESISTANCE**

A period of profound global transformation is underway, one that challenges longstanding ideals of justice, equity, and solidarity. The world order, already shaped by entrenched inequalities and power structures that have historically undermined the rights of much of the world's population, is undergoing significant reconfiguration. Populist, nationalist, and right-wing governments, alongside wealthy elites are reshaping how societies engage with critical institutions and ideas, including democracy, multilateralism, women's rights and societal well-being.

The return of Donald Trump as US President in 2025 is a stark illustration of the global trend in populist political leaders whose mandates threaten the pursuit of justice and equality nationally and internationally. Recent history offers countless examples of strongmen seizing and holding power by openly undermining gender and racial justice, reproductive rights, and inclusive governance. The early directives of the incoming US administration are many and profoundly disruptive (see Box 1), and it is hard to predict what even the near-term future will look like.

At the heart of the political and social struggle over gender equality and DEIA are competing visions of fairness, meritocracy, and social progress. With shifting demographics in the US and globally, widening economic disparities and deepening political and ideological polarisation, these struggles will continue, underscoring the urgent need for strategic, collective action for social justice.<sup>2</sup>

The US wields unmatched influence as the largest provider of global health funding to date. The US also has significant weight through its leadership of global health organisations: GH5050 analysis in 2024 found that 40% of global health board seats in 150 of the organisations in our sample are held by Americans.<sup>3</sup> Shifts in US policy therefore have far-reaching effects on global health policy, including which health priorities and implementing organisations are funded and how those organisations operate. This has immediate consequences for people's health and livelihoods around the world.

Since 2017, GH5050 has tracked gender equality commitments and policies in 138 organisations. In 2020, GH5050 began monitoring workplace commitments and policies addressing DEI and expanded the sample by an additional 62 organisations – bringing the total to 200 organisations. Amidst a rapidly changing context, this report explores how new US government policies and the financial and other risks of non-compliance, as well as public pressure, are reshaping gender and DEI policies at US-based organisations active in global health.

While our findings hold true for now, they represent a snapshot in time that could change significantly in the near future.

## **BOX 1.**

### **U.S. Executive Orders related to DEIA, gender ideology and aid funding pause**

Within 48 hours of his inauguration, President Trump issued a series of executive orders on DEIA initiatives, gender, and foreign aid assistance across federal agencies and private employers receiving federal funding.

#### **This included:**

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Terminating “illegal” DEI and DEIA mandates, policies, programmes, preferences, and activities in the federal government, under whatever name they appear and “directs all departments and agencies to take strong action to end private sector DEI discrimination.”<sup>4</sup>

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Halting DEI programmes and requiring federal contractors and grants “to certify” they do not “operate any programmes promoting DEI that violate any applicable federal anti-discrimination laws.” The order deems that DEI policies “undermine the traditional American values of hard work, excellence, and individual achievement in favor of an unlawful, corrosive, and pernicious identity-based spoils system.”<sup>5</sup>

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Instructing federal government agencies to pause all grants and loans until mid-February to ensure alignment with the administration’s agenda.<sup>6</sup>

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A 90-day pause in US foreign development assistance for assessment of programmatic efficiencies and consistency with US foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> While this action is currently on hold, the potential for funding withdrawal remains.

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Asserting that the US recognises only two biological sexes: male and female. Definitions are provided for “sex,” “woman,” “man,” “female,” and “male”.<sup>8</sup>

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Requiring that when administering or enforcing sex-based distinctions, every federal agency and all federal employees acting in an official capacity use the term “sex” and not “gender” in all applicable federal policies and documents.

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Instructing agencies to remove all statements, communications, or any other messages that “promote or otherwise inculcate gender ideology,” and to cease issuing such statements.<sup>9</sup>

#### **As a result, in the first few weeks following the directives:**

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Thousands of webpages across more than a dozen US government websites were taken down, limiting access to critical health information, including studies, guidelines, and vaccine recommendations related to these topics on DEIA and gender.<sup>10</sup>

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Data essential for research, policy making, transparency, and accountability were removed, including sex-disaggregated health data and data on people’s gender identity and sexual orientation,<sup>11</sup> racial disparities, social vulnerability, and environmental justice.<sup>12</sup>

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Mass retractions and revisions of submitted research in scientific and medical publications, requiring the removal of “forbidden terms” including “gender, transgender, pregnant person, pregnant people, LGBT, transsexual, non-binary, nonbinary, assigned male at birth, assigned female at birth, biologically male, biologically female”<sup>13</sup> from every federal agency.

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Federal workers were instructed to remove any reference to their identifying pronouns from their email signatures and other forms, while agency and department leaders work to scrub all references to gender ideology in official government materials.<sup>14</sup>

# METHODOLOGY

In preparation for its 8<sup>th</sup> annual report, from 23 September 2024 to 5 January 2025, GH5050 reviewed organisations' websites to determine the public availability of workplace-related commitments to equity<sup>i</sup> (read more about our Methods [here](#)).

However, following US government directives on DEI, the data was collected again in February 2025 (from 7-14) to assess changes in four gender and DEI related variables:

- Public commitment to gender equality published on organisation's website
- Definition of gender that is consistent with international norms set by the World Health Organization (WHO) published on organisation's website
- Policy to advance gender equality or women's leadership in the workplace on organisation's website
- Policy to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace on organisation's website

Data originally collected between September and January, including website links and text from webpages and online documents, were checked for their continued online presence and to determine whether any language had been modified. Researchers used [USAspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov) to determine which organisations have active grants or contracts with the federal government (not accounting for recent funding freezes under the current administration).

All data, while collected against named organisations, is presented anonymously.

## THE 72 US-BASED ORGANISATIONS IN THIS REVIEW INCLUDE:

# 37

**NON-PROFIT NGOS,  
PUBLIC-PRIVATE  
PARTNERSHIPS  
AND FOUNDATIONS**

# 26

**PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT  
COMPANIES AND  
CONSULTING FIRMS**

# 6

**UN AND MULTILATERAL  
AGENCIES HEADQUARTERED  
IN THE US**

# 3

**US FEDERAL AGENCIES**

<sup>i</sup> GH5050 does not review the implementation of those policies or internal practices.



## **GENDER IS RESISTANCE**

*Washington, DC, USA - 2020. Danielle Agyemang*

A young girl, dressed for her quinceañera in a tiara and blue ball gown, raises her violet gloved fist in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter protest in Washington DC. Here, among thousands of others gathered on the streets of Washington DC, this young girl marks her coming of age through exercising her right to protest police brutality and other racial and social injustices.

# **2. DEI IN THE AMERICAN WORKPLACE**

## **TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK?**



Modern DEI initiatives are rooted in racial equality, feminist, labour, and disability movements, many of which have been actively demanding social justice, including workplace equity, for over a century. In the US, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a pivotal moment, prohibiting employment discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, and national origin.<sup>15</sup> This led to Affirmative Action policies aimed at increasing opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), established to enforce federal anti-discrimination laws.

Changes in the law have not meant an end to institutionalised racism. The murder of black American George Floyd by a white police officer in 2020 sparked national and international protest, calling on leaders and institutions to identify and tackle racism. In response, many organisations and companies in the US re-evaluated practices, setting voluntary DEI goals aimed at increasing representation of marginalised groups and tying executive compensation to DEI achievements.

DEI initiatives in the US however have faced criticism. Some argue that these policies lead to “reverse discrimination” against white Americans, particularly men.<sup>16</sup> In 2023, the US Supreme Court overturned affirmative action in higher education, which has opened space to legal pushback against DEI practices in the workplace. Conservative groups, such as America First Legal, have filed numerous lawsuits challenging DEI-related practices as discriminatory.<sup>17</sup>

**AMPLIFY THE EVIDENCE.**

**SHARE THESE FINDINGS  
AND SPARK THE  
CONVERSATION USING**

**#ROLLBACKANDRESISTANCE**

Some on the political left have also expressed scepticism of DEI programmes. Certain politicians advocate for focusing on class struggles rather than identity-based issues, seeing labour unions as more effective in reducing wage gaps and promoting worker solidarity.<sup>18</sup> Others view DEI initiatives, such as anti-racism and implicit bias training, as having only short-lived benefits, or even being counter-productive, given mandatory training can trigger resistance if people feel coerced.<sup>19</sup>

The backlash against DEI initiatives in the US is part of a broader global movement that sees interest groups promoting authoritarian nationalism, a return to the so-called “traditional family,”<sup>20</sup> and a whittling away of states’ capacities and trust in public institutions. These well-funded and conservative movements seek to dismantle rights related to equality and inclusion in general, and gender equality (including in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights) in particular.<sup>21</sup>

## **BOX 2.**

### **Debunking DEI Myths**

DEI opponents rely on several myths to sow distrust, division and to undermine equity initiatives. **Four common myths include:**

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#### **MYTH**

**DEI initiatives are reverse discrimination.**

#### **REALITY**

DEI initiatives aim to promote fairness by ensuring equitable access to resources. They focus on addressing systemic imbalances and enabling equal opportunities to succeed, regardless of class, race, gender, or background. Studies show that diversity boosts overall productivity and fosters innovation, which, rather than discriminating against particular employees, benefits all employees and the organisation.<sup>22</sup>

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#### **MYTH**

**DEI is about representation, not merit.**

#### **REALITY**

DEI initiatives do not disregard merit but instead work to ensure that talent from diverse backgrounds is recognised and included. Without DEI initiatives, qualified candidates from underrepresented backgrounds may face biases in hiring and promotions. Studies show that bias in hiring and promotions disproportionately disadvantage women and minorities, even when they have equal or better qualifications.<sup>23</sup> A meta-analysis of hiring discrimination found that ethnic minority candidates receive, on average, nearly one-third fewer positive responses to job applications than their majority candidates.<sup>24</sup>

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#### **MYTH**

**DEI reinforces rather than reduces race, gender, or identity divisions.**

#### **REALITY**

The weight of evidence suggests that DEI efforts reduce racial and gender divisions by fostering fairness, trust, and opportunity. Research from McKinsey<sup>25</sup> and Deloitte<sup>26</sup> shows that diverse and inclusive teams report higher levels of psychological safety, collaboration, and lower turnover rates. A 2021 study by Stanford University found that when organisations actively promote DEI through mentoring and inclusion efforts, intergroup trust and cooperation improve significantly.<sup>27</sup>

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#### **MYTH**

**DEI dilutes expertise and reduces the effectiveness of the workforce.**

#### **REALITY**

Evidence shows that diverse teams consistently outperform groups of like-minded experts,<sup>28</sup> facilitating innovation by combining different knowledge systems and creating new opportunities for problem-solving.<sup>29</sup> McKinsey has produced multiple reports demonstrating the links between diversity on executive teams and improved financial performance.<sup>30</sup> A scoping review of 137 studies highlights the positive effects of women's leadership across organisational performance, including financial performance, innovation, ethical practices, organisational culture, and the career outcomes of other women.<sup>31</sup>



### **A MAN'S WORLD**

*Liverpool, UK - 2022. Seldjan Behari*

A woman sits in the middle of a painting and looks directly at us, her face without a mark of expression. She finds herself encircled by men, each wearing a smirk. The woman appears almost statue-like, frozen in time. The artwork seeks to shed light on the challenges that women encounter within male-dominated work environments. It is a visual representation of the obstacles and hardships that women often confront, emphasising the need for equality and inclusivity in the workplace.

## **3. FINDINGS**

### **ROLLBACK AND RESISTANCE AT US-BASED ORGANISATIONS**

Of the 72 US-based organisations we reviewed:

- **20 had made significant changes to language related to gender and/or DEI** between September 2024 and February 2025.
- The six UN and multilateral agencies in the sample **do not appear to have changed language on their websites** regarding gender or DEI.
- Among the **three federal US agencies**,
  - The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) did not have an active website at the time of analysis,
  - Pages referencing gender, diversity and inclusion on the website of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) had been removed,
  - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website previously displayed a banner stating it was being updated, which remained in place until February 14, 2024. After our study (22 February 2025), several pages (such as those on Adolescent and School Health and

**EVIDENCE-BASED ACTION STARTS WITH AWARENESS.**

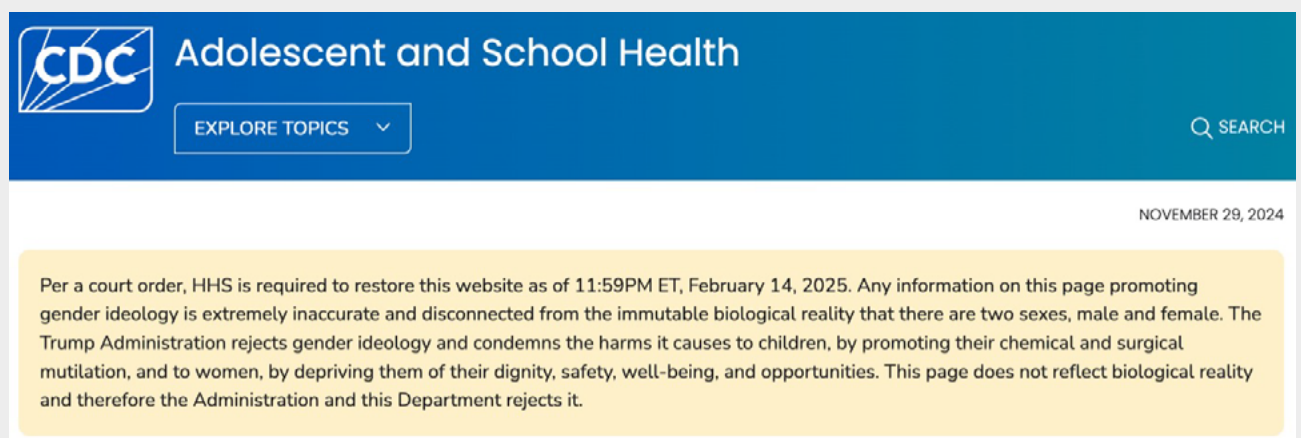
**SHARE THIS KEY FINDING AND BE PART OF THE SHIFT.**

**#ROLLBACKANDRESISTANCE**

Health Disparities in HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STDs, and Tuberculosis) featured a banner expressing the US Administration's rejection of language promoting "gender ideology" (Figure 1). While CDC webpages containing information on gender and DEI policies remain active due to judicial orders, our analysis, categorises the CDC as among the organisations that have removed language related to each of the four variables we review. This categorisation is due to the presence of this banner at the top of the relevant pages.

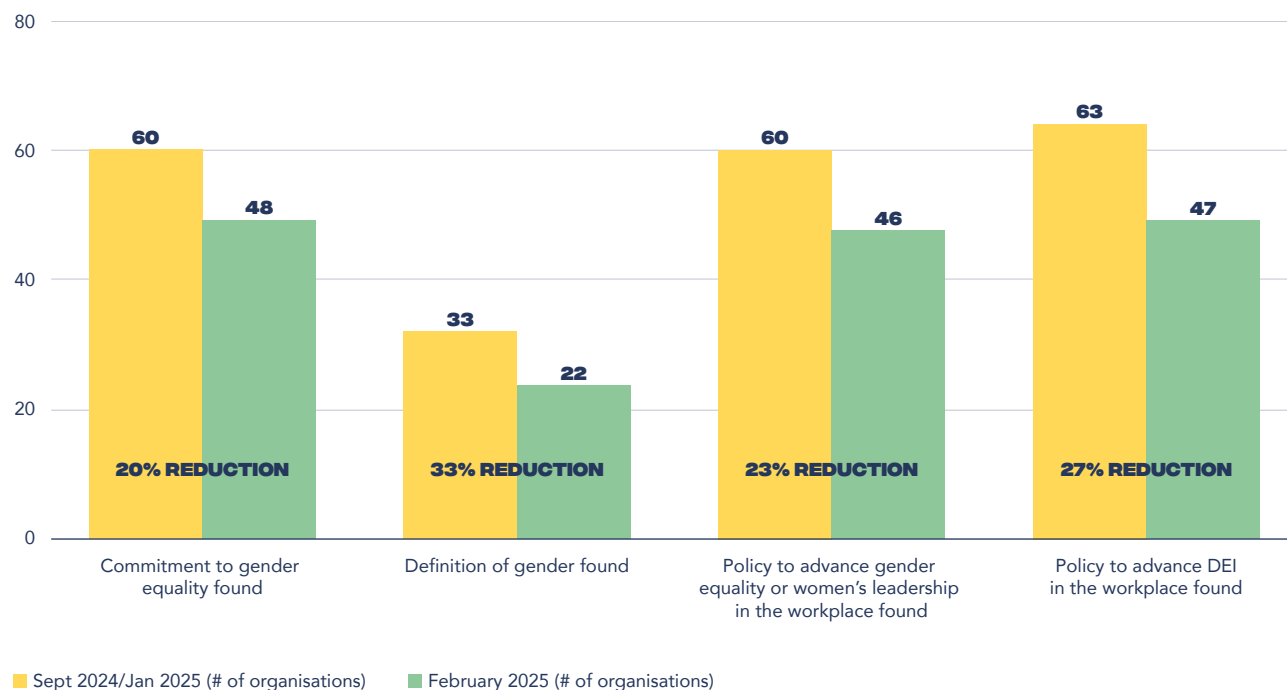
These findings are summarised in Figures 2 and 3, followed by a more detailed analysis of each variable.

**FIGURE 1.**  
**Banner at the top of several CDC webpages, as of 22 February 2025**



**FIGURE 2.**

Change in language on organisations' websites between September 2024 and February 2025 (n=72)



**FIGURE 3.**

Change in organisational commitments and policies, 2020-2025



# DETAILED FINDINGS ON EACH VARIABLE

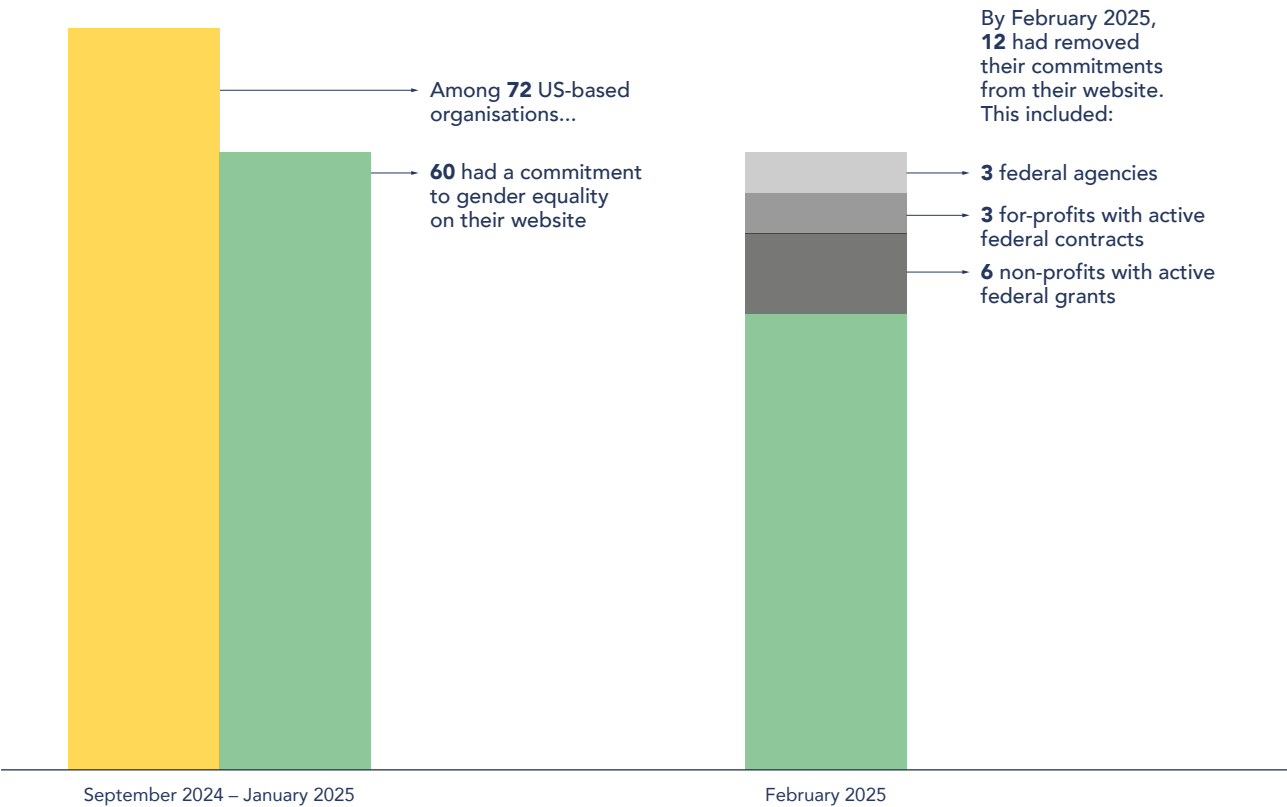
## VARIABLE 1: PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

Among the 72 organisations:

- **60** organisations had a public commitment to gender equality published on their websites as of January 2025, including **43** with active federal funding (Figure 4).
- By February 2025, **12** had removed those commitments, all of which receive funding from the US government. This includes **6** from the non-profit sector and **3** from the for-profit sector, as well as **3** federal agencies.

GH5050 was informed by some organisations in the sample that publishing language in this report that has since been removed from websites, even without attribution, may not be safe for those organisations. Hence, we have chosen to summarise some examples only. Language that was removed included, for example, reference to organisations’ work to promote women’s and girls’ empowerment and equality, to transform harmful gender norms that inhibit people from accessing health information and services, and to advance gender equality by delivering safe abortion services.

**FIGURE 4.**  
Reduction in public commitments to gender equality



VARIABLE 2: PUBLIC DEFINITION OF GENDER CONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL NORMS

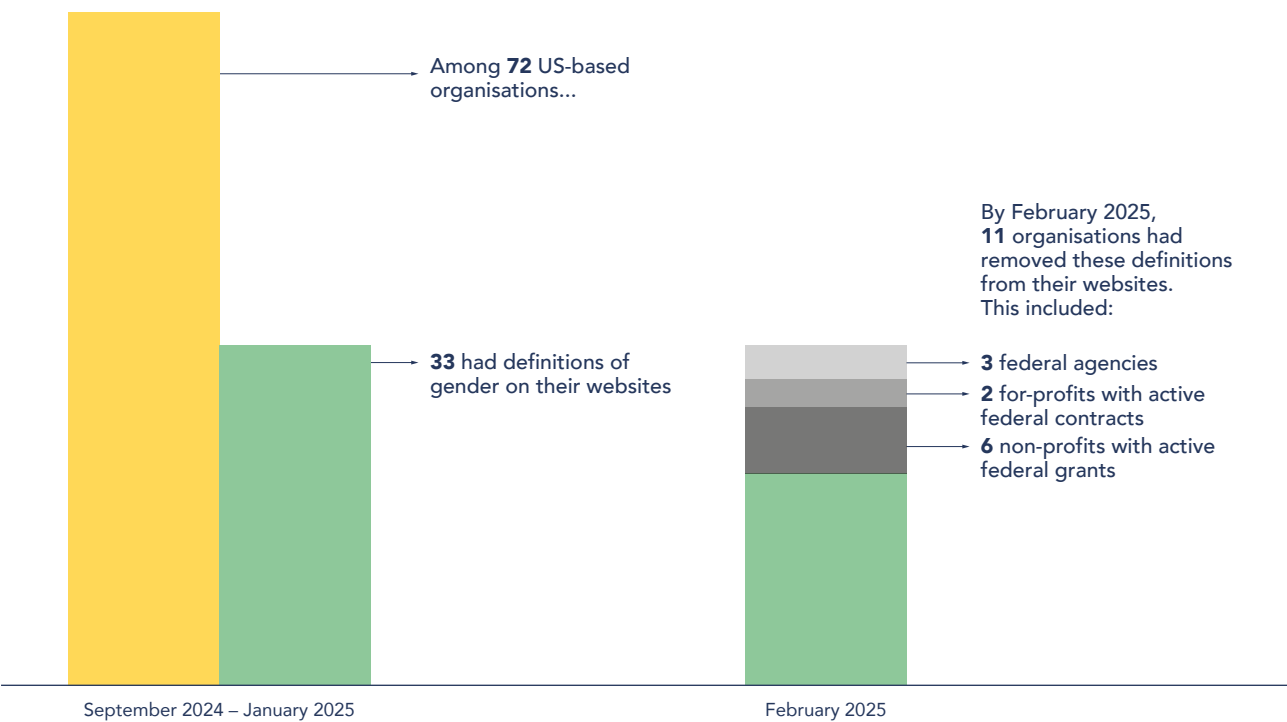
Among the 72 organisations in the sample:

- 33 had a published definition of gender as of January 2025 that aligned with definitions set forth by WHO (see box 3), including 26 with active federal funding (Figure 5).
- By February 2025, 11 had removed definitions of gender from their websites, all receive funding from the US government. This includes 6 organisations

from the non-profit sector and 2 from the for-profit sector, as well as 3 federal agencies.

These organisations had explicitly defined gender as a complex social construct (see box 3) influencing how roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes are considered appropriate for men and women in any given society. Gender identity refers to an individual's internal experience of gender.

FIGURE 5.  
Reduction in public definitions of gender



BOX 3.  
The World Health Organization’s definition of Gender (excerpt)

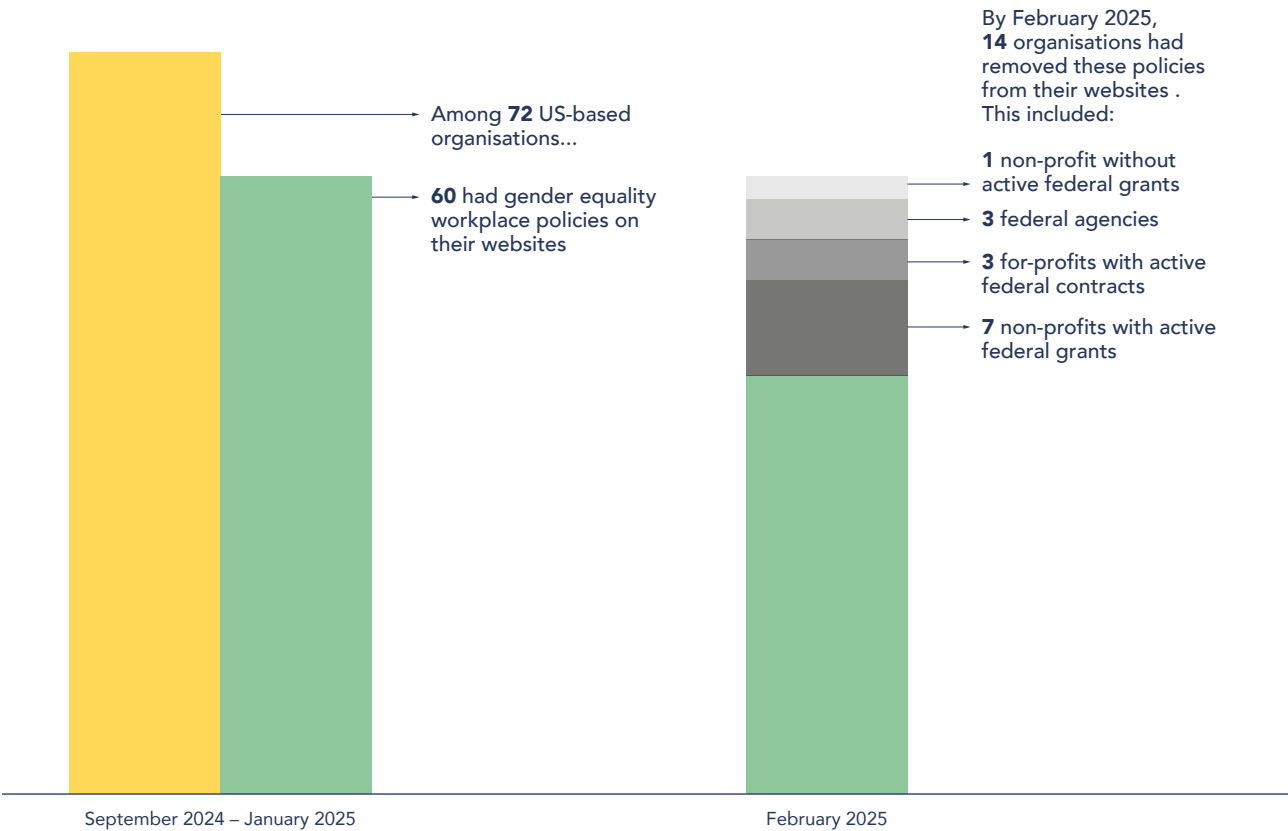
Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. Gender interacts with but is different from sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs.<sup>32</sup>

# VARIABLE 3: POLICY TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY OR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE

## Among the 72 organisations in the sample:

- As of January 2025, **60** had a policy on their websites regarding their commitment to advancing gender equality or women's leadership in the workplace, 40 of which published specific strategies or measures to advance that policy. Such measures included professional development programmes, the monitoring and reporting of gender-disaggregated workforce data, and quotas to promote gender parity in leadership positions.
- 43** of these 60 organisations with gender equality policies have active US federal funding.
- By February 2025, the number of organisations with a workplace gender equality policy had dropped to **46**, including 31 with specific measures or strategies (Figure 6).
- Of the **14** organisations that removed language regarding gender equality in the workplace from their websites, **13** currently receive US federal funding. This includes **7** non-profit organisations and **3** for-profit companies, as well as **3** federal agencies.
- One organisation removed reference to being an Equal Opportunity Employer.

**FIGURE 6.**  
Reduction in published gender equality workplace policies



# VARIABLE 4: POLICY TO ADVANCE DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

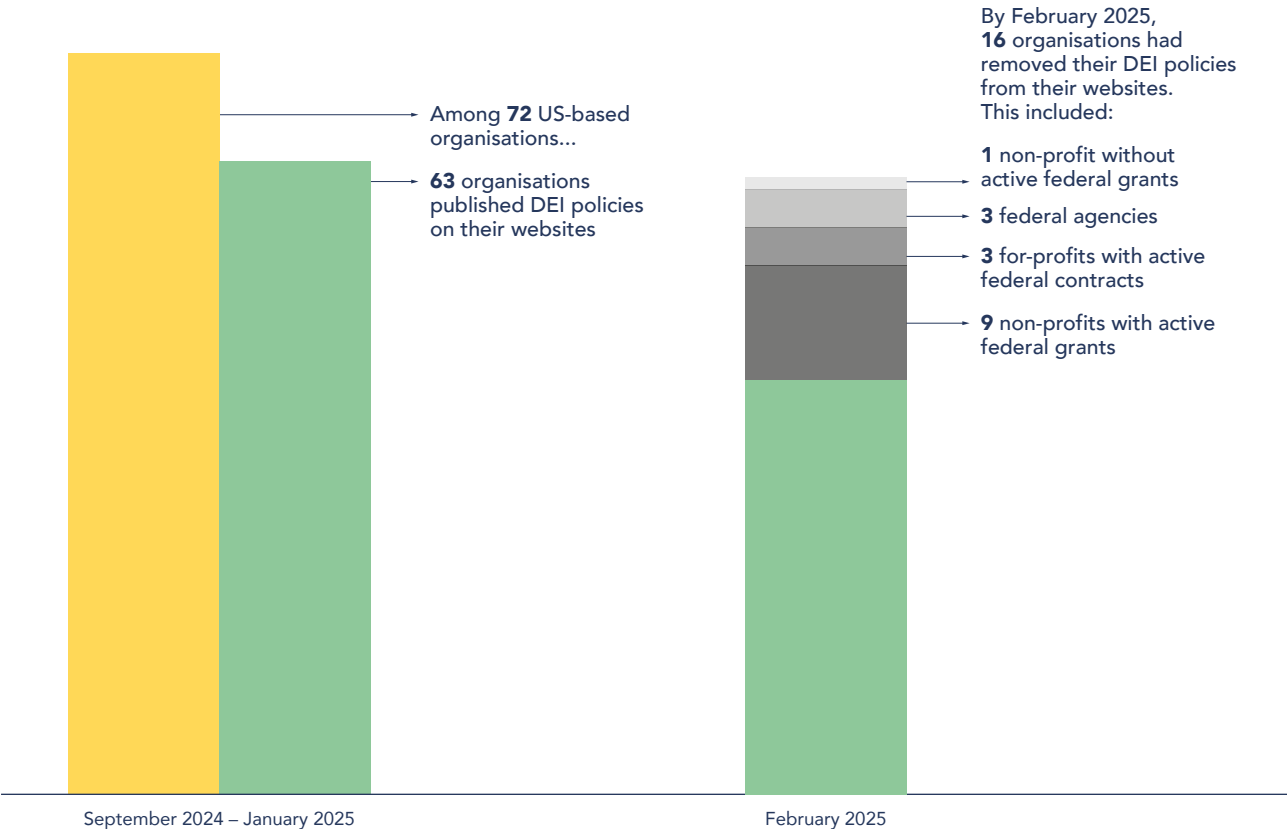
## Among the 72 organisations in the sample:

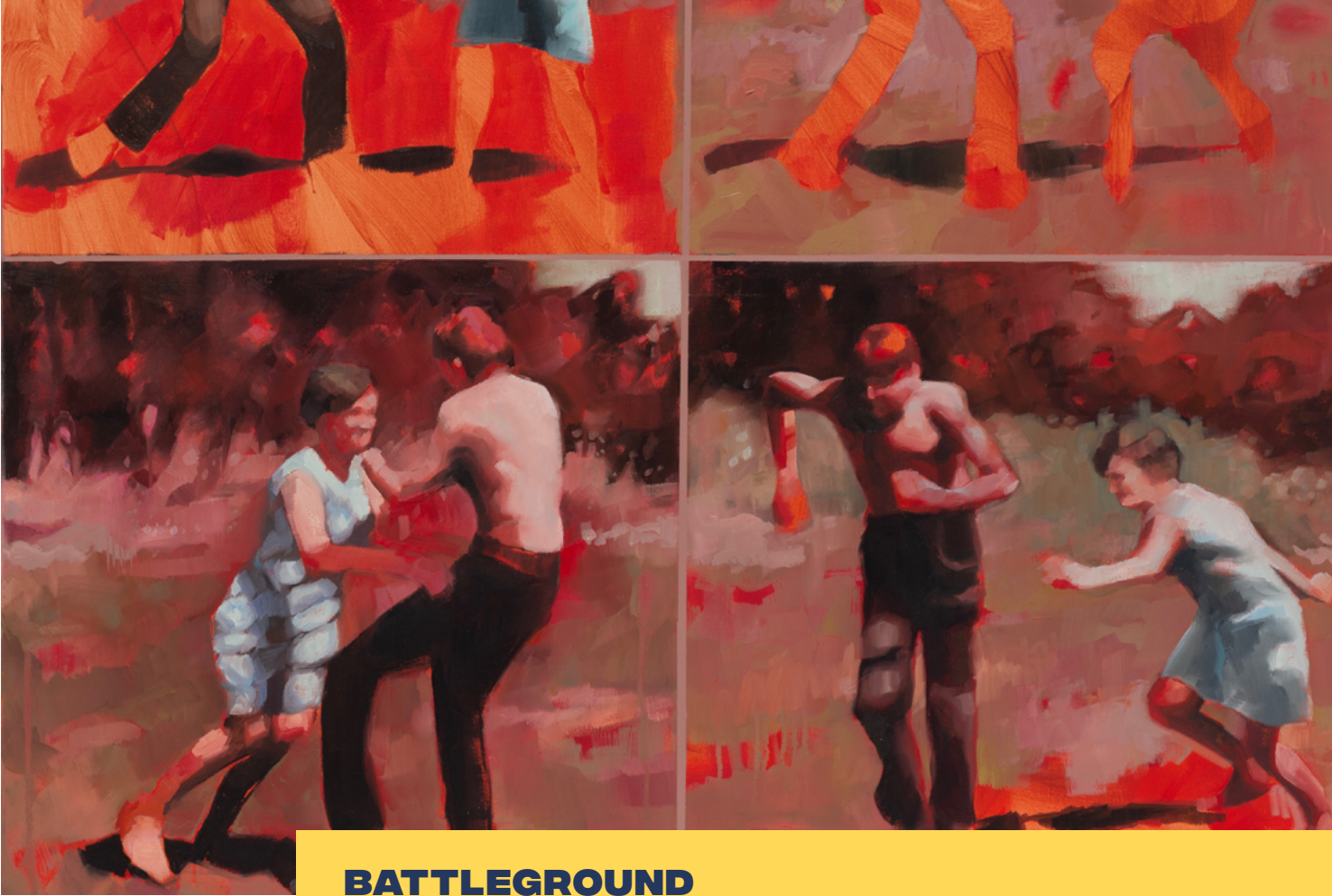
- As of January 2025, **63** had a policy on their websites regarding their commitment to advancing DEI in the workplace, 50 of which published specific strategies or measures to advance that policy.
- 44** of these 63 organisations had active US federal funding.
- By February 2025, **16** organisations had removed their DEI policies, **15** of which currently receive US federal funding. This includes **9** non-profit

organisations and **3** for-profit companies, as well as **3** federal agencies (Figure 7).

- One organisation removed reference to being an Equal Opportunity Employer.
- Some organisations removed their DEI pages entirely, some have significantly adjusted the language to remove reference to 'diversity' and replace with words like 'belonging', while some have maintained minimal legal compliance statements, such as references to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

**FIGURE 7.**  
Reduction in published DEI policies





## **BATTLEGROUND**

UK - 2023. Amy Dury

A couple playfully engages in a fight. As the narrative unfolds, the playful facade begins to unravel. Earthy red tones intensify the emotions depicted, the hidden rage and frustration beneath the surface. Viewers are prompted to contemplate the intricacies of human relationships, the challenges of navigating power dynamics and the ongoing pursuit of equality within intimate partnerships.

# **4. DECISION- MAKING IN A HOTBED OF COMPETING PRESSURES**

Our research on organisations active in global health indicates that the vast majority of those rolling back DEI initiatives are doing so to comply with direct orders from the US government and to maintain their eligibility for federal funding (see Figure 8).

We are aware that some organisations with active US grants have chosen not to comply with these orders—at least for now—when their operations are not dependent on federal funding. In other cases, even in the absence of legal action or funding cuts, the mere existence of these directives has been enough to pressure organisations into preemptively scaling back their DEI commitments—a phenomenon some have called “anticipatory obedience.”<sup>33</sup>

**ACCOUNTABILITY STARTS WITH EVIDENCE.**

**READ THE REPORT AND SHARE WHAT STANDS OUT.**

**#ROLLBACKANDRESISTANCE**

Recent developments have seen global health organisations outside the US follow the same line.<sup>34</sup> Other organisations may be reframing efforts, rather than abandoning diversity commitments altogether.<sup>35</sup>

## FIGURE 8.

**Snapshot of communication sent to all USAID partners to immediately cease DEIA activities**



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

January 24, 2025

### Notice on Implementation of Executive Order

To: **All USAID Contracting and Agreement Officers and Implementing Partners**

Subject: **DEIA Activities Under Existing USAID Awards**

Dear USAID Contracting and Agreement Officers and Implementing Partners,

USAID is taking prompt action to comply with the President’s Executive Order on [Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing](#), the rescission of Executive Order 14035 *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce*, and additional direction provided by the Department of State.

All previously identified principal Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) awards have been sent termination notices and should not incur any further costs. With respect to all other ongoing awards: all DEIA activities under all contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and other awards, including subcontracts and subawards, and programs domestic and abroad, are to cease immediately, with awards to be modified or terminated in accordance with applicable award terms and conditions.



Our findings indicate that organisations in our sample are scaling back or reevaluating their DEI programmes, reflecting a broader trend across other organisations beyond our sample. The reasons for this vary, often overlapping. In some cases, organisations are adjusting their DEI initiatives<sup>36</sup> to avoid potential legal risks.<sup>37</sup> For example, US government directives targeting “racial preferences” in hiring and promotion practices have prompted some to reverse their DEI policies. Others are responding to increasing pressure from political factions<sup>38</sup> and market forces, either supporting or opposing DEI efforts.<sup>39</sup>

The motivations behind these rollbacks are complex. For some organisations, scaling back DEI may be a strategic move to gain political capital or maintain stakeholder support. For others, it may reflect an already weak or absent commitment to DEI from the outset. Regardless of the specific drivers, it is clear that organisations, both within and beyond our sample, are scaling back DEI commitments in response to legal, political, and economic pressures.

Despite this seemingly bleak picture, the US administration has faced significant pushback. At the time of writing this report, over 70 lawsuits had been filed and some of these orders had been temporarily blocked by judges, for example the freezing of federal funding and attempts to dismantle

## **A ROLLBACK IN RIGHTS IS A ROLLBACK IN PROGRESS.**

**READ, REFLECT, AND RAISE YOUR VOICE.**

**#ROLLBACKANDRESISTANCE**

government agencies<sup>40</sup> (see lawsuit trackers [here](#) and [here](#)). Still, the US administration has often outpaced the judicial process, creating a gap between the rapid implementation of executive decisions and the time it takes for legal challenges to be resolved.<sup>41</sup>

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*“Like many multinational organisations, a workforce comprised of people with different backgrounds is a business necessity. We are committed to inclusion and belonging because they strengthen our workplace and help drive our performance. These are informed business decisions aligned to our business strategy.”*

**President of consistently high-performing organisation in annual GH5050 reports**



## **INSEPERABLE**

*Douala, Cameroon - 2023. Eric Takukam*

A figure crafted from multiple faces stares out at us with its multitude of eyes. In each detail of the figure is a constellation of other faces, other expressions. Squares and circles, jagged teeth and long noses, the figure is at once male and female. As Eric writes himself, 'Like the dark can't go without light, like without the valley there is no mountain, man is inseparable to woman. Equal.'

# **5. MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER**

The situation in the US continues to unfold, and what we see today will evolve as new political developments, court rulings, and shifts in public opinion reshape the discourse around gender equality and DEI.

GH5050 remains convinced of the necessity of DEI policies in the global health and development sectors, and we are therefore deeply concerned about the impact of the recent pushback against gender equality and social justice policies across the world, as well as recent developments in the US. GH5050 will continue to monitor the situation and deliver data crucial to tracking and demonstrating the impact of DEI for global health organisations.

We know we are not alone in our conviction. The attack on DEI, on gender equality and social justice more broadly gives us an opportunity to both reaffirm our commitment to principles of equity, equality, fairness and justice, and to develop stronger systems and structures that support these principles. These systems require resources, including financial resources, so finding innovative financial mechanisms to support the societies we want to see are also critical.

We end this report with a series of suggested actions to protect progress made to date on governance and representation in the global health sector, and counter further disinformation and attacks on DEI and gender equality.



## EL SALVADOR

*San Salvador, El Salvador - 2023. Mahé Elipe*

Abortion companions in El Salvador where abortion is considered a crime. Faced with this reality, women's groups have organised to provide physical and emotional assistance to women who choose to have an abortion.

# COLLECTIVELY, WE CAN MONITOR AND DOCUMENT, COLLABORATE, COUNTER-ATTACK, AND MAINTAIN THE PRESSURE.

## MONITOR AND DOCUMENT

Monitor and report on commitments to gender equality and DEI in the US and globally.

Publish and highlight the benefits of diversified leadership and broader DEI for organisations, highlighting real stories of change, and the threats to health equity posed by rolling back DEI.

Invest in research to assess the benefits and impacts, including returns on investment, of DEI-related measures in the global health system to support the case for legislative, policy and programmatic efforts.

## COLLABORATE

Create spaces to develop alternative visions of the society we want to see. Frame and communicate this vision in ways that will help energise and empower those fighting back and continue to debunk the prevailing propagandist claims and regressive narratives.

Share information, stay up to date, and communicate with partners and their staff about the emerging impacts of DEI rollback on health and gender equality.

Participate in and forge progressive coalitions that transcend silos of gender, class, race and geography.

## COUNTER-ATTACK

Produce counter-narratives and highlight experiences of biases, nepotism, and opportunism under the disguise of merit and the harm they do.

Collectively mobilise to find creative ways to advance and protect DEI initiatives including in places where DEI is penalised (or at risk of being criminalised in the future) without endangering organisations, their work or their funding.

Mobilise grassroots and wider campaigns to push back on regressive policies and support legal challenges in the US and wherever DEI is under threat.

## MAINTAIN THE PRESSURE

Maintain and uphold the ethos and culture of DEI in organisations' workplace practices – while policies and practices to support DEI may have been rescinded recently, continue to build on significant progress made by organisations in global health in developing and implementing policies and practices to support DEI.

Continue to push for fairness and diversity in all organisations as the norm to build progressive workplaces and nurture workforces that are inclusive and equitable. Since 2017, GH5050 has observed that some organisations have never put in place policies to promote gender equality and DEI - more pressure should be applied on these organisations.

Identify future risks to DEI elsewhere and support pre-emptive coalition-building and campaigning.

Advocate for leaders in the global health system – governments, including local, multilaterals, philanthropic funders – to step into the void left by the US government and increase funding for gender equality, democratic norms and social justice initiatives around the world.

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