

Women's Network for the Global Partnership's Signature Initiative to Mitigate Biological Threats in Africa

The Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (GP)'s **Signature Initiative to Mitigate Biological Threats in Africa** (SIMBA) supports **coordinated action** by GP and African partners to address **emerging and ongoing biotreats on the African continent**. **Practical implementation** of the Signature Initiative's threat reduction programs prioritizes **gender equity and robust engagement of local women champions** as a critical contributor to **sustainable health security in Africa**. As such, the GP and its supporting partners have initiated the formation of a dedicated **Women's Network** of African health security professionals to **operationalize Signature Initiative objectives** and further define the **unique contributions and perspectives** of women professionals across African regions.

This project will formally establish the **Women's Network**, built around a **core team** tasked with facilitating its development through a **step-wise approach**. It begins with carefully defining the **strategy**, establishing a **tangible set of objectives and priority activities** and defining the **governance structure** and **operational framework**. The mitigation of biological threats and **meaningful participation of women** in assessing and responding to those threats require **shared awareness and responsibility** across professional sectors and geographic regions. This will be achieved by promoting **multisectoral engagement**, as well as **locally driven approaches** and **region-to-region knowledge exchange** in collaboration with **regional organizations** active in the biosafety and biosecurity landscape across Africa and globally.

Expected Outcomes

The overarching, short-term goal of the *Women's Network* is **embedding gender equality** and **empowering women** in the **creation and delivery of the GP Signature Initiative programmatic activities in Africa**. Longer-term goals include **ensuring women have decision-making power and leadership opportunities in biosafety and biosecurity** across **Africa, ASEAN, LAC, and beyond**. Promoting the network's self-actualization through **African women leading and organizing other African women** is a **cornerstone of its sustainable development and structure**, and will serve as a **model** for these other regions as **clear and actionable steps towards gender equity** in global biosafety and biosecurity workforces and decision-making.

Project Tasks and Events

- Establishment of a **core working group** balanced across geographic regions and professional sectors;
- Hosting **2 virtual preparatory workshops** with Network Members and observers from ASEAN and LAC regions;
- African representatives **presenting lessons learned** from preparatory workshops in **ASEAN region** at A-PBA conference in Bangkok, Thailand;
- **Planning and hosting a side event at ASLM conference** in Capetown, South Africa to outline Network structure and activities; and,
- Hosting a **follow-up Women's Network Meeting** and **international workshop** in Arusha, Tanzania in 2025, **Embracing DEI in Global Biosafety & Biosecurity** in collaboration with the **Tanzanian Biological Safety Association** and other partners.

