# USAID's Engendering Industries Best Practices Framework for Advancing Gender Equality in Male-Dominated Industries:
# 4.7 Establish an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to support the mental and emotional health of female and male employees

**About Your Gender Equality Plan**

The following Gender Equality Plan was generated using Engendering Industries' online tool: The Best Practices Framework for Advancing Gender Equality in Male-Dominated Industries. The best practices listed in this plan were identified and included to fill gender equality gaps at your organization. The information included in your plan provides an overview of how to implement best practices, challenges to implementation, and markers of success. More information and resources for advancing gender equality at your company are available at EngenderingIndustries.org.

**Description**

Employee Assistance Programs support the well-being of employees and provide external support to increase their productivity by supporting, assessing, and referring employees to appropriate care

Provide in the form of a general hotline, coaching, and/or outsourced specialist service that employees can access to address their health and well-being, emotional factors influencing their performance such as stress at work or at home, and reconciliation of work-life and family-life topics

Ensure the EAP (internal or outsourced) is seen as a trustworthy support system, providing neutral and anonymous support, socializing it early and often during onboarding and beyond

Define a framework for either an internal or outsourced system that specifies:

- Terms of contract and scope of work
- Independence of advice
- Confidentiality
- Private and safe data analysis to identify effectiveness of services and support decision-making
- Access to support mechanism and associated monetary fees for the employee and/or employer
- Communication plan and materials to sensitize employees to available services

Typical issues that the program may address include:

- Work-related experiences that limit individual performance, such as discrimination, harassment, and disrespectful behavior
- Need for career advice or support for reconciliation of work life and family life
- Individual physical and mental health challenges and issues, including trauma, domestic violence, and gender-based violence outside of the workplace, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS

- Family challenges and issues in handling transition phases, e.g., due to family duties and changes (birth, death, divorce, additional care duties)
- Financial and legal advice

**Challenges to Implementation**

EAPs can be challenging to implement effectively because of their complex and sensitive nature

EAP service providers may have limited scope to general counseling topics and quality of support for gender-related issues not sufficient

Financial costs to the organization for outsourcing the service and/or upskilling employees internally to manage

Employees may be reluctant to use it due to mistrust or stigma related to cultural attitudes around seeking care services, especially with taboo issues such as mental healthcare challenges or addiction

Ineffective communication strategy, resulting in a lack of awareness about the program

**What Success Looks Like**

EAP covers gender specific issues and has a scope of work explicitly including consulting topics to improve gender equality and reconciliation of work life and family life

EAP has specialized personnel for gender-related issues and/or all personnel are trained

All employees are aware of the EAP and feel it is accessible

Employees are more satisfied with the organization due to the provision of services

Female and male employees who choose to use the program perform better as a result of having access to the services

Reduced absenteeism

Women are able to perform better and qualify for promotions within the organization

Company receives anonymized data regarding demand, effectiveness, use and satisfaction by employees to make decisions about service offerings and providers to ensure quality and relevance

**Guide (incl. Sample EAP Policy):** What is an Employee Assistance Program & How Does it Work? (Fit Small Business)

**Report/Study:** Global Employee Assistance Programs: Evaluating EAP Effectiveness (National Business Group on Health)

**Example:** Mental Health & Self-Care (Equilo)

**Example:** OSH Answers Fact Sheets (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety)

**Webinar:** 10 Ways to Boost the Value of your Employee Assistance Program (Telus Health)

**Study:** How Employers Can Better Support Employees with Mental Health Issues (Emerald Insight)