



COALITION TO END
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
AND GIRLS GLOBALLY

Recommendations for the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally and the National Action Plan on GBV

The [Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls Globally](#) welcomes the Biden Administration's Executive Order on the Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council and commitment to prevent and respond to all forms of gender-based violence (GBV) globally. The diverse [members of our coalition](#) envision a world in which women, girls, and people of diverse gender identities can enjoy their human right to live free from violence. As the Biden Administration begins review of the [2016 U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally](#) and drafts the first National Action Plan on GBV, we welcome further opportunities to consult and collaborate to strengthen this global Strategy and the forthcoming whole-of-government Gender Equality and Equity Strategy. The following recommendations build upon the foundations laid out in the 2016 Strategy,¹ and we stand ready to work directly on language and provide resources that address these suggestions:

- **Maintain and Strengthen 2016 Definition of GBV:** The 2016 GBV Strategy made great strides by recognizing GBV is an umbrella term for any harmful threat or act based on actual or perceived biological sex characteristics, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, and/or lack of adherence to varying socially-constructed gender norms and highlighting that GBV is rooted in structural gender inequalities, patriarchy, and power imbalances. The GBV Strategy should:
 - Maintain this definition and further clarify how violence against women and girls is a subset of GBV but not an interchangeable term; and
 - Include in the definition of GBV an updated definition of harassment drawing on [ILO C90](#) (adopted in June 2019 with U.S. Government support).²
- **Align Strategy with International Standards on Human Rights:** The GBV Strategy should be situated within and reinforce international standards on human rights, centering the right to be free from GBV. The Strategy should:
 - Reaffirm the United States' commitment to the [Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) (DEVAW) and recognize that the United States should ratify the [Convention on the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#) (CEDAW);
 - Build the capacity of USG personnel to prioritize GBV in multilateral and bilateral diplomacy by outlining objectives, structures, and resources for such capacity-building; and
 - Ensure that international organizations and NGOs receiving U.S. funding have internal protocols, policies, and programs to prevent and address GBV and report regularly on such efforts, including sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian personnel.
- **Link and Elevate GBV Prevention in Other USG Engagement and Strategies:** Ending GBV requires coordinated action across agencies and policies. The Strategy must reflect and ensure

¹This document is a product of the feedback from a wide group of global gender equality experts, and the positions do not necessarily represent the views of all coalition members.

² Violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately and includes sexual harassment where violence and harassment is defined as "a range of unacceptable behaviors and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm and includes gender-based violence and harassment."

coherence within the USG and align with already complementary strategies/policies that can both help inform and be informed by the Strategy. The Strategy should:

- Call for the implementation of other existing USG strategies³ to more strongly include GBV analysis, commitments, and programming;
 - Require the use of risk mitigation tools to identify risks of and strategies to prevent increased incidences of GBV resulting from development and diplomatic efforts; and
 - Develop and standardize accountability mechanisms to ensure nondiscrimination and do-no-harm in USG efforts.
- **Operationalize Gender Mainstreaming:** Ending GBV must not be a side endeavor but a priority across USG policy and strategies. Gender mainstreaming allows for consistent and robust commitments to build internal structures that ensure effective policy and programming to end GBV. The Strategy should:
 - Focus on effective, evidence-based implementation and strengthening of the gender infrastructure, resources, and accountability mechanisms;
 - Strengthen training and expertise of staff and increase staffing as needed to integrate GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response into programs and policies where it is often overlooked, such as trade, economic growth, and procurement;
 - Within GBV-integrated programming, ensure that M&E systems are set up to track GBV outcomes (e.g., measure GBV risk mitigation within WEE programming); and
 - Maintain a holistic approach to gender equality by supporting cross-sectoral efforts and affirming the indivisible nature of different aspects of the lives of women, girls, and others marginalized due to their gender identity and/or expression.
 - Ensure that gender mainstreaming is part of planning and response to emergency and crisis response, including response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Increase Funding for GBV Programs:** GBV interventions are vastly underfunded despite the need for multiyear, comprehensive, and flexible programs. The Strategy should:
 - Increase resources for programs that address GBV as a primary objective as well as those that integrate GBV into other areas such as climate change and migration;
 - Direct USG agencies⁴ to include in their budget requests funding for specialized gender offices and staff acting as GBV focal points;
 - Ensure that the President's Budget Request for FY23 is at least [\\$380 million](#); and
 - Adapt grant processes and requirements that facilitate direct funding for local and community-based responses to GBV with a focus on women-led organizations, women's rights organizations, girl-led groups, and other networks led by those impacted by GBV.
- **Strengthen Victim/Survivor-centered Approaches:** To empower victims/survivors of violence by prioritizing their agency, rights, needs, and wishes, the Strategy should:
 - Ensure that victims/survivors are actively informing the development of policies and processes and that they are supported to lead their implementation; and
 - Invest in trauma-informed training and awareness-raising, reporting and investigation systems, and accountability structures that center the needs/ wishes of survivors and that ensure safe, accessible and quality services.

³ Such policies and strategies include, but are not limited to: the [WPS Strategy](#), [USAID Gender Policy](#), [U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls](#), [WEE/GEEA](#), [Central America policy](#), [asylum rules](#), [Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity strategy](#), [PEPFAR/DREAMS Initiative](#), [Countering Trafficking in Persons Policy](#), [Ending Child Marriage and Meeting the Needs of Married Children](#), [USAID Vision for Action](#), and [USAID's Gender and COVID-19 Guidance](#).

⁴ USG agencies should include, at a minimum, USAID, State, DOD, DFC, and MCC.

- **Apply a Whole of Community Approach:** Preventing and responding to GBV must be situated within a socio-ecological model that includes impacted communities, traditionally marginalized groups, schools, workplaces, communities of faith, public authorities, law enforcement, social service providers, and others. The Strategy should:
 - Prioritize holistic solutions that reach across multiple sectors and stakeholders in addressing the root causes of violence and promote community support, participation, and engagement for solutions; and
 - Ensure an inclusive approach to partnerships across a wide-range of local stakeholders including those focused on unions and workers' rights, women's rights, LGBTQI+ rights, faith communities, environmental rights, humanitarian response, indigenous rights, and girl-led groups.

- **Enhance Primary Prevention Efforts and Strategies:** Approaches to GBV prevention and response must survey, adapt, and implement [global evidenced-based best practices](#). Programs that apply a gender transformative lens to shift power imbalances and disrupt rigid gender norms have long-term impacts that address the root drivers of violence. The Strategy should:
 - Enhance the focus on community-based solutions that work with multiple stakeholders, including men and boys, as partners and community leaders;
 - Support early intervention programs that focus on children and youth, including specific programming for adolescent girls, to address and break the cycles of violence;
 - Integrate a specific focus across policies and programming to address discriminatory social norms, particularly as those drive gender inequality and/or exacerbate GBV; and
 - Expand grants to allow for longer project cycles for programs to address critical social norms, which require multiyear investments to show impact.

- **Improve Data- and Evidence-based Approaches:** USG programs and policies on GBV must be rooted in approaches with proven impact, using data and evidence-based approaches as basis for decision-making and resourcing. The Strategy should:
 - Improve efforts to collect and analyze gender-responsive data and data disaggregated by sex and age and, as appropriate, by disability, race, migratory status, religion, and advance research that improves data collection practices;
 - Increase funding for research to enhance understanding of the drivers of GBV and “what works” to prevent it, including resources for impact evaluations of existing interventions;
 - Collect data on GBV prevalence and mitigation in cross-sectoral themes including sexual and reproductive health, the world of work, education, community-based interventions, infrastructure, and climate change mitigation; and
 - Require that data collection be intersectional and focused on expanding the research and evidence base to find solutions to GBV using participatory and trauma-informed methods.

- **Apply an Intersectional Gender and Power Lens:** GBV is experienced in combination with and exacerbated by other forms of structural inequality. The Strategy should:
 - Mandate that a gender and power analysis inform each stage of programs/policy and include resources for the analysis across agencies as part of named operating and/or administrative expenses;
 - Gender and power analysis takes an intersectional approach recognizing and explaining how systems of oppression based on gender, age, disability, and other power differentials intersect and shape the risk and experience of GBV
 - Ensure that any policies and programs are informed, owned, and driven by those impacted by GBV and local stakeholders and that experts are fairly compensated for their expertise.

- **Prioritize Underserved Populations:** The Strategy recognizes women and girls experience GBV disproportionately, but must better address the vulnerability of other underserved groups such as [LGBTQI+ people](#), adolescent girls, and [Indigenous](#), migrant, or disaster-affected women and girls, or those with [disabilities](#). The Strategy should:
 - Ensure explicit mention and focus on traditionally underserved populations and those disproportionately impacted by GBV to address unique needs;
 - Ensure that policies and programs do not serve only cis-gendered women and girls;
 - Ensure prioritization of programming that addresses comprehensive and accessible support/services and that is responsive to age and disability;
 - Ensure that all GBV programming and measures take into account the historical and cultural realities of Indigenous women and that data gathering, analysis, and reporting methods take into account Indigenous status; and
 - Actively engage impacted populations in decision-making and the design and implementation of interventions, including climate-affected and displaced communities.

- **Integrate a [lifecycle approach](#) to Ending GBV:** While violence affects women and girls of all ages, gender and age barriers intersect to create specific GBV risks, particularly child and early and forced marriage and FGM/C, relevant to their age and phase of life. The Strategy should:
 - Ensure foreign assistance programs take a lifecycle approach to understanding the specific actions needed to advance gender equality and women's and girls' rights across their lifespan by applying a gender and age lens across all U.S. foreign policy and assistance.

- **Address Impacts of GBV in Emergencies** - Women and girls in emergencies (humanitarian, pandemic, conflict, climate, etc.) disproportionately experience GBV, and survivors of GBV in crises regularly lack services or support such as appropriate health care, shelter, or livelihoods. The Strategy should:
 - Incorporate [IASC](#) and [RTAP](#) guidelines, leaving room for development and adoption of new standards, protocols, and accountability mechanisms, including for preventing gender-based exploitation by humanitarian personnel;
 - Integrate newer approaches to addressing GBV in emergencies, such as the use of [cash and voucher assistance](#) as a protection mechanism for survivors or those at risk;
 - Improve mechanisms to identify and mitigate GBV risk within humanitarian responses, disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and resilience-building;
 - Improve training for providers of international development assistance during the onset and subsequent phases of a humanitarian crisis so that such providers are equipped to continue gender-informed relief, recovery, and reconstruction work; and
 - Strengthen programming and response to ensure the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities, as they are disproportionately at risk during humanitarian emergencies.

- **Uphold Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in GBV Prevention and Response:** To address GBV, the Strategy must recognize that many forms of GBV, including sexual and intimate partner violence and reproductive coercion, are violations of bodily autonomy and may lead to negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes. The Strategy should:
 - Ensure the provision of quality and timely comprehensive reproductive health services to the full extent allowable under the law, including post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV and other STIs and emergency contraception;

- Promote age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education that engages people on their sexual and reproductive rights and builds understanding of consent and healthy relationships; and
 - Explicitly mention and define reproductive coercion within the parameters of activities that constitute GBV, including the use of incentives or disincentives to lower or raise fertility or for uptake of specific contraceptive methods; withholding information on reproductive health options; forced sterilization; forced abortion; and forced pregnancy.
- **Improve Women’s Economic Empowerment and Equality (WEEE) by Addressing GBV:** GBV and its drivers [must be addressed](#) before women can achieve economic advancement. GBV prevents women from maintaining their livelihoods and allows for fewer economic opportunities. Economic strain at home can also lead to coping strategies that increase the risk for GBV, including sex for survival, sexual exploitation, and child marriage. The Strategy should:
 - Require WEEE programs and policies to be informed by “do no harm” principles and an intersectional gender analysis that assess and mitigate norms that can drive or exacerbate GBV, such as those around control of money and women’s work;
 - Ensure accountability in the workplace, including by incorporating core tenets of ILO Conventions 190 and 189 into trade and international assistance programs and policies;
 - Ensure USG efforts to advance WEE incorporate measures to address GBV as a key barrier to WEEE and as a critical component of establishing an enabling environment; and
 - Explicitly address sexual harassment and assault in school settings through USG programs and policies that aim to address women’s economic empowerment.
- **Apply a GBV Lens to Initiatives Addressing Climate Change:** As the climate crisis [compounds and exacerbates GBV](#), the Strategy must support integrated, holistic, gender-just solutions. The Strategy should:
 - Call for the appointment of a [national gender and climate lead](#) to ensure principles of intersectional gender justice are considered and applied in all climate action, including gender focal point within the UNFCCC;
 - Protect environmental and human rights defenders as [GBV is a tool wielded](#) to intimidate and threaten those organizing for the health of their communities and planet; and
 - Prioritize [direct access to funds for gender-just climate solutions](#), particularly for women’s organizations, gender-related groups, and women at the grassroots level.