

March 12, 2024

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart  
Chair  
House Subcommittee on State, Foreign  
Operations, and Related Programs

The Honorable Christopher Coons  
Chair  
Senate Subcommittee on State, Foreign  
Operations, and Related Programs

The Honorable Barbara Lee  
Ranking Member  
House Subcommittee on State, Foreign  
Operations, and Related Programs

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Ranking Member  
Senate Subcommittee on State, Foreign  
Operations, and Related Programs

Dear Chair Diaz-Balart, Chair Coons, Ranking Member Lee, and Ranking Member Graham,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge you to increase investments and commitments to global gender equality programs in the FY 2025 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations bill and Committee report as well as fully fund the International Affairs Budget at \$70.9 billion. U.S. leadership in advancing gender equality furthermore requires maintaining robust funding for the International Affairs Budget (function 150).

Gender disparities are worsening in the face of cascading global crises like climate change, ongoing conflicts and devastating humanitarian settings. In 2023 there were 110 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. [A 2022 United Nations report](#) states that without meaningful investment, it will take [286](#) years to achieve gender equality. Climate change and other environmental crises are multiplying the drivers of child marriages – including poverty, displacement, conflict and loss of education. Unless the United States dedicates significant resources to closing those gaps, decades of incremental progress for women and girls globally will be lost. A lack of investment in gender equality has the potential to undermine national security, economic, development and health goals; hinder the effectiveness of foreign operations funding; and minimize the human rights of over half the world. Despite this, the U.S. ranks almost at the [bottom of the list](#) of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee members in global commitments to gender equality. The impediments preventing women's full engagement in society exact a significant toll, leading to loss of life and depriving the global economy of approximately [\\$160 trillion](#).

**As such, we respectfully urge you to provide robust funding of no less than \$3.45 billion for global gender equality.** This should include increased investments to the programs below and in staffing and training on gender integration, which are critical to ensuring that foreign policy writ large is fit for purpose to most effectively spend U.S. taxpayer dollars for long-term global security and development.

Additionally, funding should support the implementation of the 2021 National Gender Equity and Equality Strategy, the 2022 U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender Based-Violence Globally, the 2022 U.S. Strategy on Global Women's Economic Security, the 2023 USAID Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy, the 2023 U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security, and specific gender sectoral issues – topline figures are highlighted below with specific requests, language, and justifications in the annex.

We understand that you face difficult budget choices and there are many priorities you must consider, but our nation must be a leader in providing these essential resources. Proposed investments in gender equality should not come at the expense of poverty-focused development, global health, and humanitarian

assistance. We look forward to working with you to secure the funding necessary to advance gender equality, which will not only support millions of women and girls, but will in turn promote sustainable development, strengthen national security, and reduce poverty around the world.

**TOPLINE REQUEST CHART:**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>TOPLINE REQUEST AMOUNT</b>
<b>GENDER EQUALITY (STATE AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS):</b>	No less than <b>\$3,450,000,000</b> in FY25 for global gender equality.
<b>GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE</b>	We ask for no less than <b>\$410,000,000</b> to support efforts to prevent and respond to GBV worldwide, including programs that address new GBV challenges such as climate change, technology-facilitated GBV online violence, and support capacity and coordination for GBV prevention, mitigation, and response across sectors.
<b>INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS</b>	No less than <b>\$5,000,000</b> shall be made available for the United Nations Joint Program on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation. This is in addition to amounts made available to the UN Children's Fund core resources under the heading "International Organizations and Programs" in this Act for fiscal year 2025.
<b>WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT</b>	No less than <b>\$400,000,000</b> for the Gender Equity and Equality Action (GEEA) Fund to foster women's economic empowerment and security globally.

<p><b>EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS &amp; ADDRESSING CHILD MARRIAGE</b></p>	<p>No less than <b>\$30,000,000</b> to be dedicated to the implementation of a coordinated and comprehensive effort to end child marriage and meet the needs of married girls globally in alignment with the <a href="#">U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls</a>.</p> <p>No less than <b>\$7,000,000</b> shall be made available for the United Nations Joint Program on Ending Child Marriage. This is in addition to amounts made available to the UN Children's Fund core resources under the heading "International Organizations and Programs" in this Act for fiscal year 2025.</p>
<p><b>WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY</b></p>	<p>No less than <b>\$355,000,000</b> to support the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Act of 2017, as well as the 2023 WPS Strategy and National Action Plan of the U.S. Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, and USAID.</p>
<p><b>WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' LEADERSHIP</b></p>	<p>No less than <b>\$50,000,000</b> to increase leadership opportunities for women and girls in countries where they suffer discrimination due to law, policy, or practice.</p>
<p><b>WOMEN AND GIRLS AT RISK OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM</b></p>	<p>No less than <b>\$19,000,000</b> to support and engage women and girls who are at risk from extremism and conflict and help with the implementation of the <a href="#">U.S. Strategy to Support Women and Girls at Risk from Violent Extremism</a> and Conflict released publicly in October 2018.</p>
<p><b>FAMILY PLANNING</b></p>	<p>No less than <b>\$1,740,000,000</b> for family planning/reproductive health (\$1.62 billion from the Global Health Programs account and \$116 million from the International Organizations and Programs account) to meet the U.S. fair share of addressing the unmet need for family planning.</p>

<p><b>GLOBAL LGBTQI+ RIGHTS</b></p>	<p>No less than <b>\$40,000,000</b> for the State Department's Global Equality Fund and no less than <b>\$30,000,000</b> for USAID Inclusive Development Hub's Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons.</p>
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CC:

The Honorable Kay Granger, Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

Sincerely,

ACDI/VOCA  
Alliance for Peacebuilding  
Amani Women Center  
Amnesty International USA  
Asian Family Support Services of Austin  
Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project  
CARE USA  
Center for Biological Diversity  
ChildFund International  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Collective Impact LLC  
Connecticut Coalition to End FGMC  
Council For Global Equality  
Diabetes Hub Multicultural Australia  
Double Hope Films  
Elliott School of International Affairs  
Equality Now  
Equipundo  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Every Woman Treaty  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
FP2030  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Futures Without Violence  
Gender Equality Initiative in International Affairs  
Girl Determined  
Girlkind Kenya  
Girls Rights Project  
Global Communities  
Global Justice Center

Global Rights for Women  
Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation (GWPF)  
GreeneWorks  
Guttmacher Institute  
GWU/SPH  
Hope Girls Rescue Mission  
Human Rights Campaign  
Integrate Health  
International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (IANGEL)  
International Center for Research on Women  
International Survivors and Families Empowered (iSAFE)  
Ipas  
Jewish Women International  
Kakenya's Dream  
Laal NYC  
Last Mile4D  
Maestral International  
Massachusetts Coalition to End FGM/C  
Mina's List  
Mosaic Family Services  
Mulika Afrika  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Nisaa African Family Services  
One Universe Alliance  
Oxfam America  
PAI  
Pastoralist Child Foundation  
Pathfinder  
PDRC International  
Peace Direct  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Population Council  
Population Media Center  
Population Institute  
Population Services International  
Reaching the Unreached Tanzania (RUT)  
Reproductive Freedom for All (formerly NARAL Pro-Choice America)  
Saferworld  
Sahiyo  
Sahiyo U.S.  
Save the Children  
Save Visions Africa (SVA)  
Savie NGO LGBTQ DRC  
Seeds to Sew International  
Silence Speaks / Voices to End FGM/C  
Solutions for Igniting Social Transformation  
South Asian SOAR  
Stop FGM Arizona  
Tahirih Justice Center  
Tanzania Community Care Organization  
The Borgen Project

There Is No Limit Foundation  
Together for Girls  
Unchained At Last  
Universal Access Project  
USA for UNFPA  
Wallace Global Fund  
Washington Coalition to End FGM/C  
WeSpeakOut  
Women Deliver  
Women for Afghan Women (WAW)  
Women for Women International  
Women Graduates USA  
Women Watch Afrika, Inc  
Women's Refugee Commission  
Women's Solidarity for Peace and Leadership  
Zonta International

## ANNEX —

### GENDER EQUALITY

#### **Programmatic Funding Request (Bill):**

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT SEC. 7059.

(a) IN GENERAL.— (1) GENDER EQUALITY.—At least \$3,450,000,000 of the Funds appropriated by this Act shall promote gender equality in United States Government diplomatic and development efforts by raising the status, increasing the economic participation and opportunities for political leadership, and protecting the rights of women and girls worldwide.

**Justification:** Gender inequality spans sectors, nations, and communities and is a key driver of poverty and other forms of injustice around the world. It is a major obstacle to the realization of human rights, social and economic growth, and human development. For example, if women had equal access to agricultural resources, the number of hungry people in the world could be reduced by 100. When women are an integral part of peace processes, peace agreements are 35 percent more likely to last over 15 years. If women around the world had the same opportunities as men, the world's economy would grow by 28 trillion dollars. However, according to the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report, it will take over [131 years](#) to close the gap between men and women to see these positive gains. Increased investments in gender equality and gender integration across foreign assistance would be a key first step towards realizing development and security gains sooner and spending U.S. tax dollars more effectively across all foreign policy agencies. This investment would also support the implementation of the U.S. National Gender Equity and Equality Strategy, and the Women's Economic Security Strategy and Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally 2022.

**Language Request (Report):** Under Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Section 7059

Reports Gender.—The Committee is concerned that, according to the United States' own reporting to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), only 20 percent of the United States' official development assistance integrates gender or promotes gender equality. The Committee directs that, not later than 60 days after enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the USAID Administrator, shall submit a report and conduct a briefing for the Committees on Appropriations on the percentage of development programs focused on gender integration as reported to the OECD, progress since the FY23 report, and plans to further improve the United States' performance, including via the solicitation process; so all foreign assistance integrates gender and 20 percent specifically promotes gender equality. Such a report shall be made publicly available as applicable.

**Justification:** The United States currently ranks third from last in integrating and targeting gender equality in their official development assistance. This also represents an inconsistency with both USAID policy and section 3 of the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–428) which calls for gender to be integrated throughout USAID's programs. This undermines the effectiveness of assistance, and this reporting would help provide clarity around what still needs to be done to address this, and steps being taken to ensure that foreign assistance is being spent effectively and closing gender gaps to enable better economic, development, and security outcomes. Ensuring there is progress on this from year to year with a goal of scaling up gender integration as is mandated by law while

providing additional transparency on such funding is important for effective use of foreign policy funds.

**Language Request (Report):** United States Agency for International Development

(USAID) Operating Expenses

**Gender Advisors.**—The Committee supports USAID’s commitment to putting a qualified and dedicated Gender Advisor in every overseas Mission, Regional Platform, and Washington Bureau and provides additional funds for this purpose. USAID shall identify funds for this purpose in the operating plan submitted to the Committees on Appropriations for fiscal year 2024.

**Gender training.**—The Committee recommendation includes funds above the prior year level for additional training, technical assistance, and staff with gender expertise and gender training to equip USAID with the technical capacity to carry out section 3 of the Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–428).

**Reports.**— Not later than 120 days after the enactment of this act, the committee directs the USAID Administrator to submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees describing the progress on appointing a dedicated Gender Advisor in every overseas Mission, Regional Platform, and Washington Bureau, and a list of the overseas Missions and Regional Platforms that are so far staffed with a dedicated gender advisor; and provide updates on additional gender trainings available and the missions and bureaus with staff receiving training, including percentage of staff that have received the different levels of gender training.

**Justification:** Dedicated operating expenses to ensure that there is funding for gender training for all staff across programs, sectors, offices, and functional staff (like contracting officers and procurement teams) and also for increased staff with gender expertise is critical to ensure US assistance is effective. To address this important and cross-cutting issue, foreign assistance programs must integrate efforts to achieve gender equality. Support for gender advisors and gender training would ensure that there is dedicated funding for training for all staff across programs, sectors, offices, and functional staff (like contracting officers and procurement teams) and for increased staff with gender expertise, because every issue area across every function needs to have staff that can adequately identify how gender could play a role in impacting the program, activity, or strategy. This will help enable USAID staff to increase their gender capacity and increase the effective use of taxpayer dollars.

**Language Request (Report):** Administration of Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Programs

**Gender Advisors.**—The Committee supports the State Department's commitment to gender equality and the need for qualified and dedicated Gender Advisors in overseas programs and diplomatic policy and support and provides additional funds for this purpose. The State Department shall identify funds for this purpose in the operating plan submitted to the Committees on Appropriations for fiscal year 2024.

**Gender training.**—The Committee recommendation includes funds above the prior year level for additional training, technical assistance, and staff with gender expertise and gender training to equip the State Department with the technical capacity to carry out gender equality goals.



**Justification:** Dedicated funds to ensure that there is gender training for all staff across programs, sectors, offices, and functional staff (like contracting officers and procurement teams) and also for increased staff with gender expertise is critical to ensure U.S. assistance and diplomatic efforts are effective. To address this important and cross-cutting issue, foreign assistance programs and diplomatic efforts must invest in training and staff to successfully integrate gender equality. Support for gender advisors and gender training would ensure that there is dedicated funding for training for all staff across programs, sectors, offices, and functional staff (like contracting officers and procurement teams) and for increased staff with gender expertise, because every issue area across every function needs to have staff that can adequately identify how gender could play a role in impacting the program, activity, or strategy. This will help enable the State Department staff to increase their gender capacity and increase the effective use of taxpayer dollars.

## **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)**

### **Programmatic Funding Request (Bill):**

SEC. 7059.(c) GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.— (1) Of the funds appropriated under titles III and IV of this Act, not less than \$410,000,000 shall be made available to implement a multi-year strategy to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in countries where it is common in conflict and non-conflict settings.

**Justification:** GBV affects every country and community in the world. Globally, an estimated [736 million women and girls](#) – about one out of every three – have faced GBV at least once in their lives. This number increases to [70% in humanitarian settings](#). This global issue is estimated to bear an [economic cost of USD \\$1.5 trillion](#), equivalent to approximately 2% of the global gross domestic product (GDP), or roughly the size of the entire Canadian economy. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated already high rates of GBV globally. For example, an additional 31 million cases of GBV, 13 million child marriages, and 2 million cases of female genital mutilation/cutting are [estimated to occur](#) between 2020 and 2030 as a result of the pandemic. This increase reverses 25 years of progress.

The U.S. Government articulated its goal of taking meaningful action to address GBV globally by prioritizing GBV in the new [National Gender Equality and Equity Strategy](#), the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally](#), the [Presidential Memorandum on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#), and by making commitments on [GBV at the Generation Equality Forum](#) in July 2021.

The \$410 million requested for the GBV would resource initiatives to address GBV globally through the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally, as updated in 2022. This updated strategy includes new strategic goals to scale up effective approaches to prevent and respond to GBV, expand the integration of GBV across U.S. foreign assistance, and strengthen interagency coordination on GBV. Given the robust and strategic nature of these goals, meeting these objectives requires additional funding above the \$250 million enacted by the FY23 Omnibus – we request \$164 million to effectively implement this work. In addition, this funding will also include resources to address conflict-related sexual violence, online GBV and harassment, and GBV in emergencies. Finally, this funding would be inclusive of resources needed to address the work around female genital mutilation/cutting (\$5 million for the Joint Program on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation, which should be in addition to UNICEF funding for core resources within the International Organizations and Programs account; no

increase) and GBV and women's and girls' civil and political participation (\$10 million to implement the Advancing Women's and Girls' Civic and Political Leadership Initiative).

#### **Language Request (Report): Gender-Based Violence**

With respect to subsection (c), the Committee directs USAID, in collaboration with the Department of State, to centralize resources for global GBV programs and implement the interagency U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally as updated in 2022. The Committee notes that the U.S. Department of State and USAID Evaluation of Implementation of the United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally highlights a series of recommendations essential for continued and successful implementation of this Strategy. Among them is expansion of GBV-related programming, including through stand-alone and multi-sector programs, enhancement of public awareness of all forms of GBV, and expansion of externally-facing tools and resources related to GBV. The Committee recommends the Department of State and USAID conduct activities to implement the 2022 updated Strategy.

The Committee recommends not less than the prior year level for programs to address gender-based violence in such settings, including the Safe from the Start program. Women and girls face extreme violence and threats in conflicts and humanitarian settings. Intimate partner violence, child marriage, and other acts of violence are often exacerbated during times of crisis. However, less than 1% of all humanitarian funding goes towards preventing and responding to gender-based violence

**Justification:** In humanitarian emergencies, an estimated [70% of women](#) experience GBV; this includes [1 in 5 women](#) who experience sexual violence and many more who experience domestic violence ([up to 65%](#) of women in certain contexts). Programs such as the State Department and USAID's Safe from the Start initiative provide humanitarian implementers with critical resources to better identify, prevent, mitigate, and respond to GBV in emergency settings from the onset of the crisis.

### **INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS**

**Programmatic Funding Request:** We request no less than \$5,000,000 for the UN Children's Fund under the heading "International Organizations and Programs" in this Act for fiscal year 2025, \$5,000,000 shall be made available for the United Nations Joint Program on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation. This is in addition to amounts made available to the UN Children's Fund core resources under the heading "International Organizations and Programs" in this Act for fiscal year 2025.

**Justification:** More than 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation FGM/C, mainly in the 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where it is most prevalent. This UN program on FGM/C was initiated in 2008. It has since facilitated work on the abandonment of FGM/C in 15 countries in Africa and the Arab states, by scaling up evidence-based and locally-led methodologies. The program supports work in 17 countries and works with community and religious leaders as well as girls and their families to tackle this harmful practice. The average age when female genital mutilation/cutting occurs is between 7 and 15 years old, but it can occur at any age. Girls subjected to FGM/C often require life-saving care – urgent treatment to staunch hemorrhage, antibiotics to quell infections, surgery to address urinary backup or emergency obstetric care for complicated deliveries. Treatment of health complications related to FGM/C costs health systems \$1.4 billion annually, but the prevention of FGM/C has demonstrated and positive impacts related to increased outcomes in health, education,

and delayed age of marriage for girls. The U.S. has contributed \$5,000,000 to this program since FY19.

## **WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND EQUALITY**

**Programmatic Funding Request (Bill):** We request \$400,000,000 for the Gender Equity and Equality Action (GEEA Fund) for women's economic empowerment initiatives.

SEC. 7059. GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT.— (2) WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT.— Funds appropriated by this Act shall be made available to implement the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018 (Public Law 115– 428): Provided, That the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, as appropriate, shall consult with the Committees on Appropriations on the implementation of such Act.

(3) GENDER EQUITY and EQUALITY ACTION FUND.—Of the funds appropriated

under title III of this Act, at least \$400,000,000 shall be made available for the Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund.

**Justification:** This request includes funding for programs administered by USAID, the State Department, and other relevant agencies to comprehensively advance women's economic empowerment and equality, including overcoming social, legal, and regulatory barriers to women's economic empowerment and equality via the Gender Equity and Equality Action fund. This would double the amount of the GEEA Fund that has been made available through appropriations for women's economic empowerment and security since FY 2021 (then as the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Fund).

Investment in programs that strengthen women's access to quality economic resources and employment opportunities, support women's entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, and break down barriers to women's participation in the economy creates far-reaching benefits. Women still own and control fewer assets, including property and land; earn less and experience more economic insecurity, and exercise more limited decision making power over economic and other decisions than men, impeding their economic advancement. They also face unique barriers such as gender-based violence, disproportionate unpaid care burden, and unmet health needs that stand in the way of their progress. It will take [169 years to close the economic gender gap](#), highlighting the need for increased investment. This investment will not only increase gender equality and women's rights, it will also increase development impact and could yield tremendous gains for women, their nations, and the global economy, including the potential to unlock a projected \$28 trillion in global economic growth.

**Language Request (Report):** United States International Development Finance Corporation

Corporate Capital Account 2X Women's Initiative.—The Committee supports the DFC's work to maximize women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship through the 2X Women's initiative, and to close gender gaps throughout their portfolio. The Committee directs DFC to continue and increase the use of administrative expenses for support of training, technical assistance, and staff with gender expertise to ensure that the DFC has the capacity to prioritize the reduction of gender gaps. To support these efforts funds appropriated under subsection (1) of this act shall be used to ensure the Development Finance Corporation has sufficient staff and training to fulfill this mandate and the mandate in section 1451 (f) of the BUILD Act of 2018 (division F

of Public Law 115–254). The Committee directs the DFC CEO to submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees, not later than 90 days after enactment of this Act, on the 2X initiative. Such report should assess DFC commitments to 2X transactions for fiscal years 2023 and 2024, disaggregated per transaction by the type of transaction, the percentage of such transaction qualifying as “2X”, and the sector/development objective advanced, and describe steps to be taken to increase such initiative throughout DFC’s portfolio.

**Justification:** The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) should continue to scale up financing opportunities for women owned and led businesses and increase economic opportunities for women through their 2X initiative as even with increases in DFC financing for this initiative women owned and led businesses lack access to finance globally. To support this goal there needs to be funds set aside from the program account to ensure that this work can continue and increase dedicated gender staffing. Women face numerous barriers in accessing finance and engaging in the economy, to ensure that the DFC is able to increase its development impact and fulfill its mandate to reduce gender gaps it not only needs to continue to scale up financing opportunities, but also ensure that all phases of its work take gender into account. Reaching gender parity in the economy could yield tremendous gains for women, their nations, and the global economy, and could unlock [a projected \\$28 trillion in global economic growth](#). However, the World Economic Forum estimates that it would take [169 years to close the economic gender gap](#) given the deep social barriers women and girls face. To address these issues the DFC needs staffing with gender expertise across their portfolio and functions and funds to finance projects that specifically target gender equality and women’s economic empowerment, so that women are included, gender gaps are reduced, and development impact is maximized.

**Language Request (Report):** Millennium Challenge Corporation

Inclusion and gender.—The Committee supports the MCC’s work to empower women and make inclusion central to the translation of growth into poverty reduction. The Committee directs MCC to continue and increase the use of administrative expenses for support of training, technical assistance, and staff with gender expertise to ensure that the MCC has the capacity to shape its programs with gender analysis.

**Justification:** Ensure that there is funding for gender training for all staff across areas of expertise and also for increased staff with gender expertise is critical to ensure MCC’s support is effective and inclusive. Support for gender staff and gender training would ensure that there is increased staff with gender expertise because every issue area across every function needs to have staff that can adequately identify how gender could play a role in impacting thresholds and compacts.

## EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS & ADDRESSING CHILD MARRIAGE

**Language Request (Report):** Adolescent Girl Strategy

**Adolescent girls.**—The Secretary of State, in consultation with the USAID Administrator, is directed to submit to the appropriate congressional committees, not later than 90 days after enactment of this Act, a report on the actions taken over the previous 12 months by all agencies with implementation plans to implement the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls including programs to encourage the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and address the needs of those who have already undergone these procedures; reduce the incidence of child, early, and forced marriage and address the needs of already married adolescent girls, efforts to respond to the needs of adolescent girls facing barriers to food security

and education, especially in humanitarian crises, and the training of staff on the specific challenges and needs of adolescent girls. The report should also be posted on a publicly available website.

**Justification:** The first-ever strategy of its kind of any government, the [U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls](#) outlines a comprehensive U.S. Government approach to agency-specific responses to educate and empower adolescent girls in development and humanitarian contexts, as well as mechanisms for inter and intra-agency coordination to harness the full power of the U.S. government and avoid duplication of efforts. The Strategy fulfilled a requirement from the 2013 Violence Against Women Act reauthorization. A 2017 Task Force convened by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), which included bipartisan Members of Congress and development experts, recommended funding these efforts at \$250,000,000 annually.

**Programmatic Funding Request:** We request no less than \$30,000,000 for the Combating Child Marriage account under Development Assistance to implement a coordinated and comprehensive effort to end child marriage and meet the needs of married girls globally in alignment with the [U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls](#). This represents an increase from the \$20,000,000 enacted in FY23. These funds should include no less than \$7,000,000 to the UN Children's Fund in this Act for fiscal year 2025 for the United Nations Joint Program on Ending Child Marriage. This is in addition to amounts made available to the UN Children's Fund core resources under the heading "International Organizations and Programs" in this Act for fiscal year 2025. The UN joint program, launched in 2016, has generated remarkable results addressing child marriage in [12 of the most high-prevalence or high-burden countries](#). This groundbreaking initiative strategically mobilizes key stakeholders in education, child protection, social welfare, behavioral change and communities themselves to deliver tangible results. By enhancing governmental and non-governmental capacities, fostering community engagement, and promoting action and accountability while maximizing donor contributions.

**Justification:** Globally 1 in 5 girls are married before their 18th birthday- that's an estimated 640 million women and girls alive today who were married as children. Despite decades of progress, rates of child, early and forced marriage have spiked in recent years. Rates of child marriage are even higher in times of conflict and humanitarian crisis. In fact, 9 out of 10 countries with the highest child marriage rates are fragile or extremely fragile states. In the Sahel, for example, more than half of adolescent girls, or an estimated 20 million girls are married as children. Child brides are deprived of their fundamental rights to health, education and safety and commonly face risks from early pregnancy, childbirth, and intimate partner violence, all of which often perpetuate a cycle of poverty. Communities and nations also feel the impact of child marriage. Systems that undervalue the contribution of girls and young women limit their own possibilities for growth, stability, and transformation. This request is based on a 2012 CBO score, estimating the cost to implement the International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act, and on increased need due to school closures and other impacts of the pandemic.

## WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

**Programmatic Funding Request:** We request that no less than \$355,000,000 be made available to support the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, the [U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security](#), released in June 2019 (and its soon-to-be-released update), and its [implementation plans](#) for the U.S. [Department of State](#), [Department of Defense](#), [Department of Homeland Security](#), and [USAID](#), released in June 2020, to expand, and improve coordination of, U.S. Government efforts to empower women as equal partners in conflict prevention,



management, and resolution, as well peacebuilding, transitional processes, and relief and reconstruction efforts in countries affected by conflict, crisis, or political transition, as well as to ensure the equitable provision of relief and recovery assistance to women and girls. This funding request also reflects the lessons and recommendations put forth by the [2021 SIGAR Report - Support for Gender Equality: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan](#). In addition to programming, capacity-building, and technical assistance, the U.S. should train U.S. military, diplomatic, development, and other relevant staff, contractors, and grantees, as well as partner governments and militaries, on how the inclusion of women increases the effectiveness of security-related policies, programs, and outcomes, as well as on the specific laws, policies, and programming available to enhance women's participation in all spheres of life. Senior level gender advisors will improve conflict prevention, management, and resolution efforts by promoting women's contributions to security, through attention at both the policy and operational levels, and strengthen the U.S. Government's ability to effectively and holistically counter adversaries, promote stability, and provide relief in conflict- and crisis-affected areas of the world. Any and all programming must also include reporting requirements, such as indicators, outcomes, analysis, and the collection of sex-disaggregated data, which will serve to identify and address barriers to women's meaningful participation in the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict, as well as peacebuilding efforts, training, and programs.

**Justification:** As the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda is now enshrined in U.S. law and policy, and linked to other key policies, such as the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability](#) and the [U.S. Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities](#), appropriate budget support is critical to the promotion and sustainment of peace and democracy and the achievement of U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives. Women's involvement in peace processes makes agreements more successful and sustainable. Peace agreements that include women are [20% more likely](#) to last at least two years and [35% more likely](#) to last 15 years. Despite being acutely impacted by conflict, women are often excluded from peace processes, making up just [13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators, and 6% of signatories](#) in major peace processes between 1992 and 2019. Thus, investment in women's participation in peace and political processes, as well as their protection and engagement in conflict and crisis recovery, can reduce violence and fragility globally, promote U.S. national interests, and ensure cost-effective foreign assistance.

- \$100,000,000 for the Department of Defense for full implementation of the WPS Act, the U.S. National Strategy on WPS, and the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act, including staffing, programming, research, and training.
  - This should include resources for hiring and training full-time equivalent personnel as full-time gender advisors to bolster WPS efforts in the Department of Defense within the six geographic combatant commands, Special Operations Command, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Cyber Command, Transportation Command, Strategic Command, and Space Command.
  - This should also include resources for department-wide training to ensure officials understand how the inclusion of women increases the effectiveness of security-related policies and programs, and specific steps that they can take to promote women's participation.
  - Furthermore, this should include at least \$9,000,000 to support WPS-related security cooperation and partner capacity-building efforts at the Department of Defense. Such support would facilitate implementation of the WPS Act and of the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act by funding the participation of female forces and the integration of gender perspectives in annual training,

education, exercises, and engagements. Including women in international security forces advances the primary purpose of U.S. security assistance—making these forces better and stronger and improving our national security. The U.S. should train its partner militaries on how including women improves security outcomes, and specific steps that they can take to promote women’s participation.

- \$100,000,000 for the Department of State for full implementation of the WPS Act and the U.S. National Strategy on WPS, including staffing, programming, research, and training. This should include resources for hiring and training full-time equivalent personnel as full-time gender advisors to bolster WPS efforts in the Department of State, in addition to department-wide training to ensure officials understand how the inclusion of women increases the effectiveness of security-related policies and programs, and specific steps that they can take to promote women’s participation.
- \$100,000,000 for USAID for full implementation of the WPS Act and the U.S. National Strategy on WPS, including staffing, programming, research, and training. This should include resources for hiring and training full-time equivalent personnel as full-time gender advisors to bolster WPS efforts in USAID, in addition to agency-wide training to ensure officials understand how the inclusion of women increases the effectiveness of security-related policies and programs, and specific steps that they can take to promote women’s participation.
- \$50,000,000 for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for the implementation of the WPS Act and the U.S. National Strategy on WPS, including staffing, programming, research, and training. This should include resources for hiring and training full-time equivalent personnel as full-time gender advisors to bolster WPS efforts in the Department of Homeland Security, in addition to department-wide training to ensure officials understand how the inclusion of women increases the effectiveness of security-related policies and programs, and specific steps that they can take to promote women’s participation.
- \$5,000,000 to support State, USAID, DOD, and DHS in conducting coordinated research on the impact of WPS principles on the effectiveness of peace and security related policies and programs.

## **WOMEN’S AND GIRLS’ LEADERSHIP**

### **Programmatic Funding Request (Bill): Women’s and Girls’ Leadership**

**WOMEN’S AND GIRLS’ LEADERSHIP.**—Of the funds appropriated by title \_\_\_\_ of this Act, not less than \$50,000,000 shall be made available for programs specifically designed to increase leadership opportunities for women and girls in countries where they suffer discrimination due to law, policy, or practice, by strengthening protections for women’s political status, expanding women’s participation in political parties and elections, increasing women’s opportunities for leadership positions in the public and private sectors at the local, provincial, and national levels, increasing adolescent girls’ civic and political knowledge and foundational skills, and addressing barriers to adolescent girls’ and women’s civic engagement and political participation.

**Justification:** Despite comprising over 50 percent of the world's population, women are underrepresented at all levels of public sector decision-making. At the current rate of progress, it will take 145.5 years to achieve gender parity in political participation. Women’s participation in politics results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs. Research shows that women's involvement in peace processes makes them 64% less likely to fail. Engaging more adolescent girls in civil and political activities could, over time, contribute to

increased presence of women in these spaces. Research shows that adolescents who actively participate in their community from an early age are more likely to become engaged citizens and voters, and that girls with female role models are more likely to have leadership ambition.

**Language Request (Report):** Advancing Women's and Girls' Civic and Political

Leadership Initiative

Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) shall jointly submit to the appropriate congressional committees and make publicly available implementation plans for the strategy to strengthen the participation of adolescent girls in democracy, human rights, and governance as part of the Advancing Women's and Girls' Civic and Political Leadership Initiative. The implementation plans shall:

- (1) increase the capability of adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, assuming leadership roles, holding decision makers to account, and influencing decision making at the household, community, and societal levels;
- (2) outline plans to increase direct financing for girl-led, girl-focused, and partner CSOs and host-country actors in democracy, human rights, and governance programming;
- (3) be developed in partnership with adolescent girls as well as other civil society in affected foreign countries as well as in the United States;
- (4) describe the anticipated technical, financial, and in-kind contributions of each relevant Federal agency to implement the strategy as well as a monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan.
- (5) include an estimate of the number of people reached by all new United States Government-funded foreign assistance or development projects disaggregated by age and sex in all reporting mechanisms for FY24.

**Justification:** Women's and girls' empowerment are intricately linked to inclusive democracies, sustainable development, and global stability. Women are less likely to fully engage in civic and political processes if they are discouraged and excluded from these processes in childhood, while also facing harassment and gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, lack of quality education, and other common barriers that collectively limit girls' civic and political participation. Research shows that adolescents who actively participate in their community from an early age are more likely to become engaged citizens and voters. New generations of girl and women leaders will have an exponential effect, as evidence shows girls with a female role model are more likely to have leadership ambition. By empowering adolescent girls with leadership skills as they transition into adulthood, we invest in their leadership potential and establish pathways to enshrine their participation in policymaking processes.

## **FAMILY PLANNING**

**Programmatic Funding Request:** Family Planning/Reproductive Health

Fund bilateral and multilateral FP/RH programs at \$1.74 billion (\$1.62 billion from the Global Health Programs account and \$116 million from the International Organizations and Programs account for a voluntary contribution to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)).



**Justification:** Providing a total of \$1.74 billion for international FP/RH programs would meet the U.S. fair share of addressing the needs of 218 million women in low- and middle-income countries with an unmet need for family planning. This recommended funding level represents the U.S. fair share and positions our country as a strong partner in the global effort to fulfill the unmet need for modern methods of contraception. This amount is calculated based on the targets included in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, which specified that one-third of the financial resources necessary to provide reproductive health care to communities around the world should be provided by donor countries and two-thirds by the low- and middle-income nations. By applying the U.S. percentage share of total gross national income of high-income countries to its assigned one-third contribution to the total funding required to address the unmet need for contraception, the U.S. share of the cost — based on relative wealth — equals \$1.74 billion. Other donor governments and low and middle-income nations, as part of the burden-sharing agreement, would be responsible for \$10.86 billion.

## GLOBAL LGBTQI+ RIGHTS

**Programmatic Funding Request:** We request no less than \$40 million for the State Department's Global Equality Fund and no less than \$30 million for USAID's Inclusive Development Hub's Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons. We also encourage the Committee to allow funds for these programs to be pulled from various accounts, including the Democracy Fund or Development Assistance, as needed by agencies.

**Justification:** Though several countries have made great strides in promoting LGBTQI+ rights, sixty-three countries continue to criminalize consensual same-sex sexual acts and many more continue to be dangerous, and even deadly, for LGBTQI+ people. Unfortunately, a wave of anti-LGBTQI+ laws and policies have been sweeping the globe, with Ugandan President Museveni signing into law the draconian Anti-Homosexuality Act in 2023 and other countries considering similar legislation that would add additional criminal penalties for same-sex conduct or ban the "promotion of homosexuality." These programs at the State Department and USAID are integral to combating violence, stigma, and discrimination against those in the LGBTQI+ community and strengthen LGBTQI+ inclusive development programming while complementing other U.S. foreign policy goals including the promotion of global health and economic development.