

Gender Community Statement on Foreign Assistance April 2017

Each year when Congress budgets and appropriates federal spending to provide for our common prosperity and security, it makes important decisions about American values and reflects those values to the nation and the world. Typically, this includes investing in the long-held and cherished American tradition of supporting vulnerable people at home and abroad, including the most marginalized, with the critical assistance they need to build healthy, self-sufficient lives. Increasingly, the U.S. has shown bold leadership supporting women and girls to achieve their full potential, including those that make up 70 percent of the 1.3 billion people worldwide living in extreme poverty.

By spending less than one percent of the budget, our foreign assistance dollars provide lifesaving assistance and transform lives and economies for the better across the globe. It is worth the penny on the dollar to support women entrepreneurs, business owners, and small shareholder farmers to become more self-reliant because doing so helps them lift themselves and their communities out of poverty. Including women in humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts not only brings their perspectives to the table, but also makes America's noteworthy assistance in conflict and emergency settings more efficient and impactful. Preventing violence against women – which affects an estimated 35 percent of women worldwide¹ – helps women be more secure, productive members of their societies and builds lasting peace both abroad and for Americans here at home. Foreign assistance is such a small sum, yet it means the difference between life or death for millions of women and girls globally.

For decades, foreign assistance has reflected and advanced American values globally. This strong bipartisan effort has helped people escape the cycle of poverty and oppression so they can lead secure and productive lives. Investments in women and girls bring high returns for economic growth, well-being, and democratic governance, which maximize the benefits gained from the investment of United States' taxpayer dollars. In fact, research has shown that gender inequality is bad for economic growth². If women were able to participate in the economy equally, it would yield a 26 percent increase in global GDP, or \$28 trillion in 2025³. As history has shown, foreign assistance also helps America develop strong trade, political and military partners – for instance, 11 of America's top 15 trading partners were once recipients of U.S. foreign aid⁴.

In this work, the U.S. has been a model and beacon of hope to women and girls who survive violence, poverty, health threats and various forms of discrimination. Through the years, both Republican and Democratic administrations have invested in girls' education, women's health, economic opportunity, political participation, human rights, education and much more. For example, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) started under the leadership of President George W. Bush has now reached tens of millions of people through life-

¹ World Health Organization. "Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence." 2013. Geneva, Switzerland. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf

² Hakura, Dalia, Mumtaz Hussain, Monique Newiak, Vimal Thakoor, and Fan Yang. "Inequality, Gender Gaps and Economic Growth: Comparative Evidence for Sub-Saharan Africa." IMF Working Paper. June 2016. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp16111.pdf>

³ McKinsey & Company. "The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women's Equality Can Add \$12 Trillion to Global Growth: Executive Summary." September 2015. Page ii.

⁴ U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. "Here's Why Foreign Assistance is Important." January 4, 2017. <http://www.usglc.org/2016/01/04/heres-why-foreign-assistance-is-important/>

saving medications and one million adolescent girls via critical HIV prevention interventions. These initiatives have become core to our foreign policy, our response to humanitarian emergencies, and our efforts to fight poverty around the world. We have already seen that investments in women and girls makes U.S. aid more effective. Cuts to any part of the foreign assistance budget will necessarily mean cuts to critical programs for women and girls, and for many such cuts could be life-threatening.

The U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)--including through the leadership of an Ambassador for Global Women's Issues at State and a Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment at USAID--have been strong partners in advancing the bipartisan goal of empowering women and girls. Increasingly, agencies like MCC, Peace Corps, Labor and Agriculture, have also joined in this effort. Together, their efforts have made the United States a global powerhouse in leading the advancement of women and girls worldwide. Yet this work could be lost if it is not prioritized with appropriations and political commitment.

This appropriations cycle, we call on you to remember the millions of women and girls who are counting on you to continue the proud, bipartisan and noble tradition of American goodwill and global leadership, leadership that they too often fail to see in their own countries. Congress must maintain funding for the international affairs budget at robust levels, including international development and humanitarian assistance, to provide lifesaving and impactful support for girls and women globally.

(List in formation)

1. 1,000 Days
2. Advancing Girls' Education in Africa (AGE Africa)
3. Advocates for Youth
4. AFL-CIO
5. Alliance for Peacebuilding
6. American Association of University Women (AAUW)
7. American Jewish World Service
8. American Medical Student Association
9. American University Washington College of Law
10. Amnesty International USA
11. AVAC
12. Baha'is of the United States
13. Breakthrough
14. CARE USA
15. Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
16. Center for Inquiry
17. Center for Reproductive Rights
18. ChildFund International
19. ChildVoice International
20. CORE Group
21. Council for Global Equality
22. Double Hope Films
23. EngenderHealth
24. Equality Now
25. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
26. Feminist Majority Foundation

27. Free the Slaves
28. Friends of UNFPA
29. Futures Without Violence
30. Georgetown University School of Nursing and Health Sciences
31. Girl Determined
32. Girl Rising
33. Girl Up
34. GirlForward
35. Girls Rights Project
36. Global Fund for Women
37. Global Network of Black People working in HIV
38. Global Progressive Hub
39. Global Rights for Women
40. GreeneWorks
41. Handicap International
42. Health GAP (Global Access Project)
43. Heartland Alliance International
44. Heifer International
45. Human Rights Campaign
46. Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University
47. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
48. International Civil Society Action Network
49. International HIV/AIDS Alliance
50. International Justice Mission (IJM)
51. International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
52. International Rescue Committee
53. International Women's Health Coalition
54. International Youth Alliance for Family Planning
55. International Youth Foundation
56. IntraHealth International
57. IPPF/WHR
58. IREX
59. Islamic Relief USA
60. John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
61. Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing
62. Management Sciences for Health
63. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
64. Mercy Corps
65. Mercy-USA for Aid and Development
66. National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
67. National Association of Social Workers
68. PAI
69. Pastoralist Child Foundation
70. PATH
71. Pathfinder
72. Peace X Peace
73. Peaceful Families Project
74. Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon
75. Plan International USA
76. Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA)
77. Population Council

78. Population Institute
79. Population Media Center
80. Population Reference Bureau (PRB)
81. Promundo
82. Promundo-US
83. Protect the People (PTP)
84. Refugees International
85. Saferworld
86. Sahiyo
87. Save the Children
88. Shadhika Project, Inc.
89. Sierra Club
90. Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces
91. Smash Strategies
92. Solidarity Center
93. Tahirih Justice Center
94. The Global Fund for Children
95. The Hunger Project
96. The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
97. The WomanStats Project
98. Too Young to Wed
99. U.S. National Committee for UN Women
100. UN Association of the USA
101. Unchained At Last
102. USA Mali charitable association of NYC
103. Vital Voices Global Partnership
104. Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA)
105. Weill Cornell School of Medicine
106. Winrock International
107. Women Deliver
108. Women Enabled International
109. Women for Women International
110. Women Graduates USA
111. Women of Reform Judaism
112. Women Thrive Alliance
113. Women's Action for New Directions
114. Women's Global Education Project
115. Women's Refugee Commission
116. World Education, Inc.
117. World Hope International
118. ZanaAfrica Foundation