

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chair
Subcommittee on State Foreign
Operations and Related Programs
House Appropriations Committee
HT-2, the Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Lee
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State Foreign
Operations and Related Programs
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Lee,

We write to urge you to increase investments and commitments to global gender equality in the FY2024 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations bill. The combined impacts of the war in Ukraine, the Taliban's increasing reign of gender apartheid and barring women and girls from attending school and pursuing employment, the repression of the voices of women and girls in Iran as they stand up for freedom, the global food crisis, and global inflation have exacerbated an already enormous gap in global gender inequality and equity. The World Bank estimates that approximately 2.4 billion women of working age worldwide are not afforded equal economic opportunity. Globally, women still only have three-quarters of the economic rights as men. Further, the World Economic Forum estimates it will take over 132 years to close the gender gap, and research shows that these inequalities hurt peace processes, undermine food security, and stunt economic growth.

Unless the United States dedicates significant resources to closing these gaps, decades of incremental progress for women and girls globally will be permanently lost. This means the U.S. must catch up to its allies in its commitment to gender equality, where the U.S. currently ranks 3rd from last.

When women and girls succeed, the world succeeds. As such, **in line with the President's request for \$3.1 billion in funding for gender equality**, we respectfully urge you to increase investments focused on the advancement of women's and girls' rights globally. This should include an increased investment in staffing and training on to implement the recently released National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence, and the Women's Economic Security Strategy.

We respectfully request that you include the following programmatic and language requests in the FY2024 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations bill, summarized below:

Category	Summary
Gender Equality Staffing and Training	Increase funding for dedicated gender staff and gender training.
Gender-Based Violence	Support the total funding level of \$300,000,000 to prevent and respond to GBV worldwide.
Women's Economic Empowerment	Support the total funding level of \$400,000,000 the Gender Equity and Equality Action (GEEA) fund.

Empower adolescent girls & addressing Child marriage	Support the total funding level of \$30,000,000 dollars for programs that reduce the incidence of child and forced marriage and to meet the needs of already married adolsescent girls, which includes \$7,000,000 for the joint UNICEF and UNFPA Global Program to End Child Marriage.
Women, Peace, and Security	Support the total funding level of \$200 million to support the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Act of 2017. This also includes \$19,000,000 to support and engage women and girls who are at risk from extremism and conflict and help with the implementation of the U.S. Strategy to Support Women and Girls at Risk from Violent Extremism and Conflict released publicly in October 2018.
Women’s and Girl’s Leadership	Support the total funding level of \$50,000,000 for the Madeleine K.Albright Women’s Leadership Program.
International Organizations and Programs	Support the total funding level of \$12,000,000 for UN Women and \$3,000,000 for UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women.

Gender Equality Staffing and Training:

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. This is critical 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 and ensure that U.S. assistance is effective.

We request the following report language be included in the SFOPS report:

Gender Advisors and Training at USAID:

“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 (P.L. 115– 428).”

Gender Advisors and Training at State:

“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.”

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Gender-Based Violence: Globally, an estimated 736 million women and girls – about one out of every three – have experienced GBV at least once in their lives. 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 funds requested would resource existing and new initiatives through the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally, as updated in 2022. These funds will address conflict-related sexual violence, technology-facilitated GBV and harassment, GBV and the intersections of the food crisis, and GBV in emergencies.

Given the robust and strategic nature of these goals, we request the total funding level of \$300 million for FY24.

Women’s Economic Empowerment and Equality

Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund: 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.

We request the total funding level of \$400 million for FY24.

Report Language on Women’s Equality at DFC: . 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. 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.

We request the following report language be included in the SFOPS report:

“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).”

Report Language on the Millennium Challenge Corporation: Gender training for all staff and increased staff with gender expertise is critical to ensure MCC’s work is effective and inclusive. There needs to be adequate staff that can identify how gender could play a role in impacting thresholds and compacts.

We request the following report language be included in the SFOPS report:

“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 training, technical assistance, and staff with gender expertise to ensure that the MCC has the capacity to shape its programs with gender analysis.”

Empowering Adolescent Girls and Addressing Child Marriage

Report Language on Adolescent Girls: 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 to educate and empower adolescent girls,, 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.

We request the following report language be included in the SFOPS report:

“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 to implement the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls including programs to 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. Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in coordination with the Administrator for USAID shall utilize the reports on this Strategy from the last three fiscal years to: (1) review and update a United States global strategy to empower adolescent girls, which includes a focus on girl’s access to quality, inclusive secondary education, and subsequent agency implementation plans, submitting the strategy to the House and Senate Appropriations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committee.”

Child Marriage: Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 12 million girls around the world were married before their 18th birthdays. Experts project that an additional 10 million girls will be married by 2030 due to the impacts of COVID-19. Rates of child , early, and forced marriage (CEFM) are even higher in times of conflict and humanitarian crisis. Girls that are married at a younger age 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.

We request the total funding level of \$30 million for FY24.

Women, Peace, and Security

Women, Peace, and Security Implementation at State and USAID: Consistent with the mandate of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-68), and with the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy of 2019, the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda is now enshrined in U.S. law and policy, and linked to the broader National Security Strategy. 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. This

funding request reflects the lessons and recommendations put forth by the 2021 SIGAR Report - Support for Gender Equality: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan.

We request the total funding level of \$200 million for FY24.

Women and Girl's Leadership

Madeleine K. Albright Women's Leadership Program: 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.

We request the total funding level of \$50 million for FY24.

International Organizations and Programs

UN Women: UN Women serves as a critical role in partnering with and building upon US programs in countries around the world which aim to create an environment in which every woman and girl can live up to their full potential. UN Women has been particularly important in delivering U.S. assistance to Ukraine.

We request the total funding level of \$12 million for FY24.

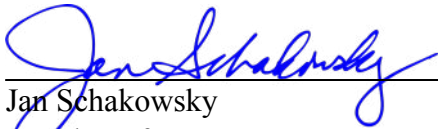
UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women: The UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women provides critical assistance to civil society organizations around the world that work to prevent violence against women and girls as well as men and boys.

We request the total funding level of \$3 million for FY24.

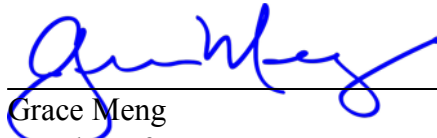
In addition to the requests outlined above, the signatories recommend support for other gender-related issues and programs, such as the protection and advancement of sexual and reproductive health and rights, which has been stated as an administration priority in both executive actions and in the U.S. commitments to the Generation Equality Forum. The inability to access contraception and other reproductive health services limits the capacity of individuals to exercise agency over their bodies and may hinder their potential to pursue opportunities around education and economic and civic engagement. Increasing funding for bilateral family planning programs and UNFPA (the leading multilateral provider of maternal and reproductive health and GBV services) to meet the U.S. fair share contribution to addressing global unmet contraceptive need, as well as, maternal, newborn, and child health programs and HIV/AIDS programs, including the DREAMS partnership, is vital.

We look forward to working with you to secure the funding necessary to advance gender equity, 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.

Sincerely,



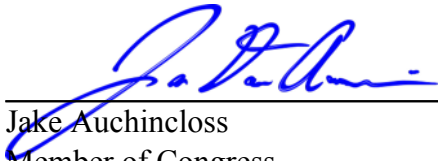
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



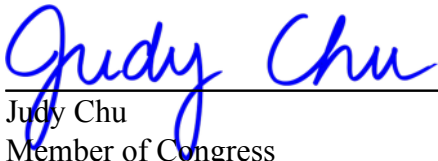
Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



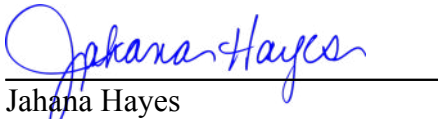
Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



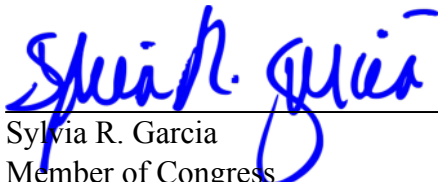
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



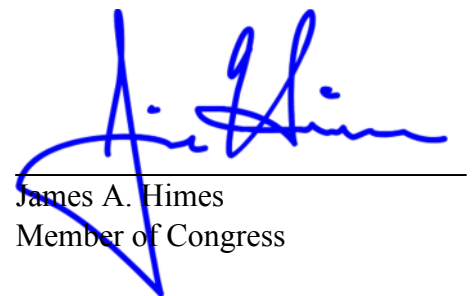
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



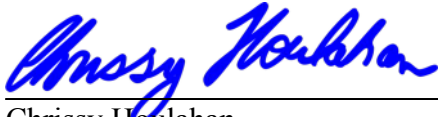
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



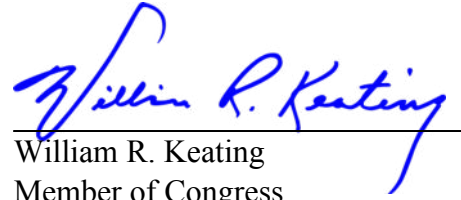
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



James A. Himes
Member of Congress



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



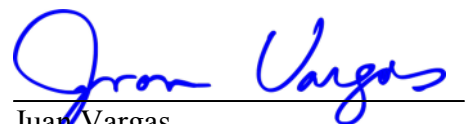
David Scott
Member of Congress



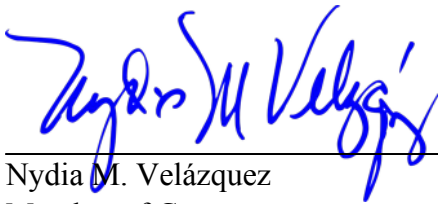
MARK TAKANO
Member of Congress



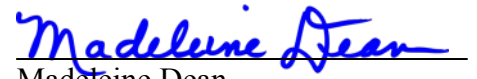
Dina Titus
Member of Congress



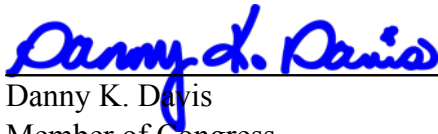
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



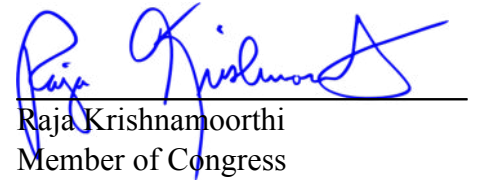
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



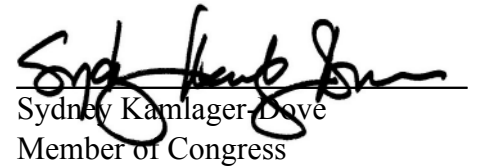
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress




Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress