

October 19, 2023

Director Shalanda Young
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Young,

Gender equality is not only a human right, but also a key driver of social and economic development. However, the world is still far from achieving it. The [Global Gender Index](#) benchmarks the current state and evolution of gender parity across four key dimensions: *economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment*. The 2023 report reveals some alarming facts: at the current rate of change, it will take 131 years to close these gaps globally. The report also shows that the pandemic has set back the global gender parity score to the level it was before the outbreak, but the pace of improvement has slowed down significantly. To reach gender equality within a century, we need to act faster and bolder. The Biden- Harris Administration has a unique opportunity to increase its investments in global gender equality, shorten the timeline, and create a more just, secure, and prosperous world. We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to build on the FY 2024 request and continue to raise your funding for global gender equality in the FY 2025 request, with the aim of matching other global leaders by allocating 20 percent of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to gender equality initiatives over four years.

There is a continuous and persistent assault on the rights and opportunities of women and girls worldwide: [132 million](#) girls are not in school today; around [2.4 billion women](#) globally don't have the same economic rights as men; [12 million](#) girls are married before the age of 18 each year; and 1 in 3 women worldwide will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime. The [global cost of violence against women](#) has been estimated at \$1.5 trillion. By investing in gender equality, not only can the Biden-Harris Administration address a critical human rights issue, it also has the opportunity to create [longer lasting peace](#), [increase food security](#) and spur [economic growth](#).

As such, we respectfully urge you to request at least \$3.45 billion for global gender equality in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget request. This represents the proportional increase needed to scale up to 20 percent of ODA, targeting gender equality work over the next four years. This should be in addition to mainstreaming gender in all work and increasing staffing capacity for gender equality. The chart below provides additional breakdowns for funding for specific gender equality areas.

We understand that you face difficult budget choices and that there are many priorities you must consider. With that, we request a proportionate increase in the topline number in the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill and that any increases to the accounts listed above not come at the expense of other poverty-focused development or humanitarian assistance accounts. We look forward to working with you and with Congress to secure the funding necessary to advance global gender equality.

TOPLINE REQUEST CHART:

CATEGORY	TOPLINE REQUEST AMOUNT
GENDER EQUALITY (STATE AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS):	No less than \$3,450,000,000 in FY25 for gender equality to proportionally scale up to 20% of foreign assistance spending dedicated to closing gender gaps (about \$6 billion) over the next four years.
GENDER EQUALITY STAFFING AND TRAINING	Increase dedicated funding at USAID, the State Department, MCC, the DFC, and other relevant foreign policy agencies for increased gender staff and gender training to implement the gender strategy, and policy and legislative mandates.
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE	No less than \$410,000,000 to support efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence worldwide.
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	No less than \$350,000,000 for all activities that foster women's economic empowerment.
EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS & ADDRESSING CHILD MARRIAGE	No less than \$30,000,000 dollars 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 U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls .

GLOBAL LGBTQI+ RIGHTS	No less than \$40,000,000 for the State Department's Global Equality Fund and no less than \$30,000,000 for USAID Inclusive Development Hub's Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons.
FAMILY PLANNING	No less than \$1,740,000,000 for family planning/reproductive health (FP/RH) (\$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 services in low- and middle-income countries.
WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY	No less than \$355,000,000 to support the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 and the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (update forthcoming)..
WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' LEADERSHIP	No less than \$50,000,000 to increase leadership opportunities for women and girls in countries where they suffer discrimination due to law, policy, or practice.

Sincerely,

- Alliance for Peacebuilding
- American Humanist Association
- American Jewish World Service
- Amnesty International USA
- California NOW
- CARE USA
- Center for Biological Diversity
- ChildFund International
- Council for Global Equality
- Education Development Center
- Equality California
- Equimundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice
- FHI 360
- Futures Without Violence
- Girl Up USA
- Girls Rights Project
- Global Communities
- Global Justice Center

Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation (GWPF)
GreeneWorks
Guttmacher Institute
GW/Elliott School of International Affairs
Heartland Alliance International
Human Rights Campaign
Immigration Equality
International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (IANGEL)
International Center for Research on Women
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
Ipas
Just Like My Child Foundation - Girl Power Project®
Last Mile4D
Management Sciences for Health
MSI Reproductive Choices
National Center for Transgender Equality
North American MenEngage Network (NAMEN)
Outright International
Oxfam America
PAI
PFLAG National
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Institute
Population Media Center
Reproductive Freedom for All (formerly NARAL Pro-Choice America)
RH Impact
Saint Albert Charity (Cameroon)
Save the Children
The Hunger Project
The Population Council
Together for Girls
Too Young To Wed
Unchained At Last
Union for Reform Judaism
Universal Access Project
Vital Voices Global Partnership
White Ribbon Alliance
Women Deliver
Women for Women International
Women Graduates USA
Women of Reform Judaism
Women Watch Afrika
Women's Refugee Commission
World Learning

ANNEX: FUNDING REQUEST AND JUSTIFICATION NARRATIVE:

1. GENDER EQUALITY

We request a minimum of \$3,450,000,000 in FY25 to promote gender equality in the United States' government's diplomatic, development, and humanitarian efforts. This would put the U.S. on par with other global leaders that are contributing 20 percent of ODA to gender equality-focused work. It would also signal a commitment in State and Foreign Operations to scale up funding for the goals outlined by the establishment of the [White House Gender Policy Council](#).

The Administration should also commit to have 100 percent of U.S. international funding incorporate gender and social inclusion in project design, implementation, and evaluation (i.e., be "gender mainstreamed"). This gender-mainstreamed funding and subsequent supported projects and initiatives would cut across all sectors and areas of foreign policy (e.g., trade, migration, defense) to ensure that all of U.S. foreign policy addresses gender inequalities and different needs, perspectives, and challenges faced by people of different genders. The request should also include **scaling up funding for women's rights organizations**; at a minimum, the FY25 request for this new category should be **\$270 million** and should continue to be scaled up in subsequent years.

The Biden-Harris Administration should also invest in building the internal capacity and infrastructure to make this effort effective and should request dedicated funding for additional administrative/operating expenses for training of all staff across agencies, departments, programs, sectors, offices, and functional staff (like contracting officers and procurement teams) and for increased staff with gender expertise. As such, we request additional funding for **USAID Operating Expenses, MCC Administrative Expenses, U.S. DFC Administrative Expenses, State Department Administration of Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Programs, Department of Treasury International Affairs Technical Assistance, and other relevant agencies**. This should include high-level dedicated gender staff with gender expertise at every foreign policy agency (those focused on Trade, Foreign Assistance, Diplomacy, Defense, and Immigration) and staffing levels on the White House Gender Policy Council that mirror all other government councils. Additionally, the State Department Office of Global Women's Issues and USAID's Gender and Development Hub should be robustly supported: an additional \$20,000,000 should be made available to support the programming of the [Office of Global Women's Issues](#). The Office ensures that gender equality, including the rights of women and girls, are fully integrated into U.S. foreign policy and programming.

2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

We request no less than \$410,000,000 of non-attributed funds to support efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence worldwide. This amount should include \$250,000,000 to support implementation of the [2022 U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally](#) and the key Biden-Harris Administration policy priority to eliminate gender-based violence as highlighted in the groundbreaking [National Gender Equality and Equity Strategy](#); \$100,000,000 to establish a centrally-managed GBV fund to accelerate solutions to specific challenges

identified by the Administration as a priority, including GBV in the context of technology and digital spaces, climate change, and migration; and \$25 million to strengthen internal capacity at the State Department and USAID, including increasing personnel, training, and GBV expertise to implement GBV programs and elevate GBV through diplomacy and policy. We also request that contributions towards multilateral agencies include at least \$30 million in funding for joint initiatives related to the prevention of child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Furthermore, given the recent USG transition to a localization agenda, we ask for \$5 million (a \$3.5 million increase from the FY24 budget) towards supporting the work of the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (UNTF). In 2022 [UNTF](#) managed a grants portfolio of 186 projects in 70 countries and territories, across five regions, with grants totalling USD 87.8 million. Grant recipients were primarily civil society organizations, the majority (62.4 per cent) being women's rights organizations.

Justification: The global scale of GBV is staggering, and the COVID-19 pandemic placed millions more women and girls at risk, while diminishing the availability of and access to life-saving support services. Even before the pandemic, an estimated [736 million women](#)—almost one in three—were estimated to have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. The physical, psychological, and economic impacts of GBV affects individuals, families, communities, and nations deeply. In 2016, the [global cost of violence against women](#) was estimated by the UN to be \$1.5 trillion, equivalent to approximately 2% of the global gross domestic product (GDP), roughly the size of the entire Canadian economy. The crises in Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Tigray have all spurred dramatic increases in GBV and exemplify the risks posed during *any* emergency to increased incidents of GBV. Despite the critical need to address GBV in humanitarian settings, GBV funding accounted for just [0.12 percent](#) of all humanitarian funding.

3. WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND EQUALITY

We request no less than \$350,000,000 for all activities that foster women's economic empowerment and equality. This includes \$300,000,000 for renewed and increased funding for the Gender Equity and Equality Action (GEEA) Fund that will also help fund U.S. Government contributions to women's economic empowerment initiatives like the We-Fi Initiative or the Childcare Incentive Fund. The remaining \$50,000,000 should go towards implementation of the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018 and increasing funds in the programmatic account that are set aside for financing for the 2x initiative at the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and ensuring the Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) work on gender and social inclusion is fully supported.

Justification: Investment in programs that strengthen women's access to employment opportunities, support entrepreneurship, create market linkages, and break down barriers to women's participation in the economy creates far-reaching benefits. Yet, women still hold fewer assets, earn less, and own fewer businesses than men. Data from 2022 shows that it will take [151 years to close the economic gender gap](#). The increase in funding to GEEA Fund marks the first time the amount has increased since the FY21 appropriations bill and matches the

additional needs created as a result of the impacts of [COVID-19 on women's economic empowerment](#). The additional \$50 million for WEE Act implementation and DFC will provide additional funds to support micro, small, medium, and large women-owned and women-led businesses through the DFC and USAID and support a goal of 50% of the DFC's portfolio going towards women-owned or women-led businesses as women make up 50% of the population.

4. EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS & ADDRESSING CHILD MARRIAGE

We request no less than \$30 million annually for the implementation of a coordinated and comprehensive effort to end child, early and forced marriage and meet the needs of married girls in alignment with the [U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls](#). This commitment should be in addition to funding to implement the strategy to address the increased needs due to global humanitarian crises and conflicts, including slow and sudden onset climate-change related emergencies, forced displacement, and protracted conflicts. These funds should include a new allotment of \$7,000,000 to the U.S. commitment to the joint UNICEF/UNFPA Global Program to End Child Marriage, which has generated remarkable results addressing child marriage in [12 of the most high-prevalence or high-burden countries](#).

Additionally, we encourage sufficient funding to support robust training and mainstreaming efforts to collect data from existing indicators across agencies to allow for consistent tracking of funding for vulnerable populations, such as adolescent girls. This includes the new [USAID Youth 7 F indicator](#), which allows for the disaggregation of programs by age, gender, disability, and experiences of conflict. The community commends this new effort and encourages the Agency to mainstream trainings on the new indicator to ensure consistent and thorough implementation of its use. In alignment with the USAID localization agenda, we recommend that implementation plans include an emphasis on mechanisms and funding to support local civil society organizations, particularly those that are youth-centered or youth- and/or girl-led. Evidence supports that local actors are some of the most effective in addressing the entrenched social norms that hinder adolescent girls' empowerment and opportunities.

Justification: According to UNICEF, an estimated 640 million girls and women alive today were married in childhood. While some progress has been made, child marriage rates have continued to rise in certain regions. At the current rate, it will take 300 years for child marriage to be eliminated. 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 global humanitarian crises and conflicts. The funding for the joint UNFPA/UNICEF program is critically needed as other global leaders have also reduced funding to their annual contribution to the program which leaves a devastating hole in the annual budget of \$31M, which is already experiencing a shortfall of more than \$6M/year.

These funds should also include increased commitments to local organizations that are championing girls' rights. Local women's rights and youth rights organizations, including girl-led initiatives, have critical roles to play in preventing child marriage and supporting married girls, including in humanitarian contexts.

5. GLOBAL LGBTQI+ RIGHTS

We request no less than \$40,000,000 for the State Department's Global Equality Fund and no less than \$30,000,000 for USAID Inclusive Development Hub's Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons, as a minimum to support the priorities laid out in President Biden's Memorandum on Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons Around the World. This should come in addition to measurable inclusion work across humanitarian and development assistance, and should not come at the expense of other poverty-focused development, global health, humanitarian aid, women's empowerment and gender equality programs, or programs focused on other marginalized communities. Overall increases in the Democracy Fund are also warranted to ensure that marginalized population programs are funded at levels commensurate with need. The Biden Administration must finally align its financial investments to meet the dangerous moment facing the global LGBTQI+ community.

Justification: Gender equality also must include investments in global LGBTQI+ rights programs in a critical moment where opponents of LGBTQI+ rights have been emboldened and anti-rights groups, including those from the United States, are pouring money into advancing homophobia and transphobia around the world. Sixty-four countries continue to criminalize consensual same-sex sexual acts. Twelve of these countries have jurisdictions in which same-sex relations are punishable by death. Many more countries continue to be dangerous, and even deadly, for LGBTQI+ people even after the implementation of protective laws. Additional investments in the Global Equality Fund would enable the State Department to strengthen the capacity of LGBTQI+ organizations, both through administrative and operational means; build networks of intermediary funders to sustain regional and global LGBTQI+ movements; attend to the increasing security threats, particularly the rise of violence, facing LGBTQI+ organizations and human rights defenders; and support historically underfunded regions of the world, including the Middle East and North Africa and Asia and the Pacific. USAID's LGBTQI+ programs have allowed USAID to build stronger partnerships through the LGBTI Global Human Rights Initiative, set up emergency mechanisms, and develop a series of programs focused on strategic communications and social behavior changes for LGBTQI+ rights in two regions of the world. Last year, USAID was also able to launch the Rainbow Fund, which enabled missions to apply directly for LGBTQI+ inclusive development programs. Despite Congress' increased investment, USAID's LGBTQI+ programs continue to face high demands for funding, particularly with the recent launch of the Agency's LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy. It is estimated that current funding is only able to support roughly one-third of the received demand from USAID missions. For additional justification, see the [Organizational Letter to OMB for FY 2025 Global LGBTQI+ Programs](#).

6. FAMILY PLANNING

We request to 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). Providing a total of \$1.74 billion for international FP/RH programs would

meet the [U.S. fair share](#) of funding resources needed to address the unmet need for family planning services of 218 million women in low- and middle-income countries who want to delay or prevent pregnancy but struggle to access modern contraception and position our country as a strong partner in this global effort.

Justification: This amount is calculated based on the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action targets, 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. See the [Coalition Letter to OMB for FY2025 Global Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Programs](#) for additional details.

7. WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

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 [implementation plans](#) for the U.S. [Department of State](#), [Department of Defense](#), [Department of Homeland Security](#), and [USAID](#), released in June 2020, as well as the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stabilization](#) (as required by the [Global Fragility Act of 2019](#)), [U.S. Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities](#), (as required by the [Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act](#)), [National Gender Equality and Equity Strategy](#), and the [U.S. Strategy to Support Women and Girls at Risk from Violent Extremism and Conflict](#) to expand, and improve coordination of U.S. Government efforts to empower women as equal partners in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as peacebuilding, transitional processes, and relief and reconstruction efforts in countries affected by conflict, fragility, crisis, violent extremism, or political transition, as well as to ensure the equitable provision of relief and recovery assistance to women and girls at-risk from, or survivors of, conflict and violent extremism. The request includes \$100,000,000 for the Department of State, Department of Defense, and USAID each, as well as \$50,000,000 for the Department of Homeland Security and \$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. .

Justification: As the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda is now enshrined in U.S. law and policy, and linked to the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stabilization](#), [U.S. Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities](#), [National Gender Equality and Equity Strategy](#), the [U.S. Strategy to Support Women and Girls at Risk from Violent Extremism and Conflict](#), and other key security and gender-related policies and strategies, 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 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. The establishment and expansion of 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, prevent and address violent extremism, 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 and violent extremism, as well as peacebuilding efforts, training, and programs.

8. WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' LEADERSHIP

We request no less than \$50,000,000 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 adolescent girls' civic and political knowledge and related foundational skills, and increasing women's opportunities for leadership positions in the public and private sectors at the local, provincial, and national levels. We urge the U.S. to direct this funding toward women- and girl-led organizations as part of the USG's locally led development agenda.

9. TRACKING EXPENDITURES

The progress that has been made in tracking US investments in gender programming has not been matched by a systematic tracking of obligations and expenditures. The [SFOPS House Committee Report for FY 2022](#) even expresses concern that "only 20 percent of the United States' official development assistance integrates gender or promotes gender equality" and further directs the Secretary of State to "submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations on the percentage of development programs focused on gender integration as reported to the OECD and plans to improve the United States' performance." The lack of effective accounting and tracking for investments in gender programming has inhibited the ability of both advocates and policymakers to accurately assess where and how funds have been used. We strongly suggest including funding in the budget to ensure that financial expenditure tracking systems at the Department of State and USAID are funded and include an explicit focus on gender expenditures in US-funded foreign operations.