

November 2, 2012

Mr. Jeffrey Zients
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Zients:

On behalf of the Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls Globally and the undersigned organizations, we are writing to respectfully urge you to support funds requested by the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other agencies to implement the United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security in Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014.

We applaud the release of the United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence, the United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, the accompanying Executive Orders, as well as the Department of State, Department of Defense (pending final release), U.S. Agency for International Development, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Implementation Plans. The Obama Administration has taken a critical step towards empowering women and girls around the world by creating these unprecedented initiatives. The key to their successful implementation lies in the ability to fund them so that real change can occur on the ground.

Background on Gender-based Violence (GBV) Globally

Violence against women and girls is a horrific and widespread human rights crisis that demands a response. Its many forms (such as domestic violence, intimate partner violence, child/early marriage, rape, sexual assault, trafficking, female genital mutilation/cutting, and honor killings, to name a few) occur both in times of peace and in times of conflict and humanitarian crises. Such violence is also an early warning sign of volatility and emerging security concerns. Moreover, gender-based violence undermines the effectiveness of existing U.S. investments in global development and stability, whether fighting HIV/AIDS, increasing basic education, promoting rule of law, or creating stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan. When women and girls thrive, societies are more likely to prosper economically, experience reduced rates of HIV and AIDS, see a decrease child and maternal mortality, and have more participatory and democratic governments. Americans support efficient and effective approaches to end morally repugnant abuses against women and girls. In a 2009 poll, the majority of U.S. voters (61 percent) said addressing global violence against women and girls should be one of the top priorities for the U.S. government.

Background on Women, Peace, and Security

Nearly half of all peace processes fail within the first decade of their signature, a chilling statistic that brings into stark contrast the grim results when peace negotiations are not inclusive and true peace is not achieved. Failures of international peace processes frequently have a direct impact on U.S. security and

interests—as the National Security Strategy states, “Countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women are accorded full and equal rights and opportunity. When those rights and opportunities are denied, countries often lag behind. Furthermore, women and girls often disproportionately bear the burden of crises and conflict.” Women, Peace and Security is about protecting women and girls from violence before, during and after conflict, which has direct impact on the stability of a society overall; engaging women in peace-building and conflict-prevention processes to achieve a more sustainable peace and reduce violence; and, opening equal opportunities for men and women, girls and boys to take part in the rebuilding of their communities and nations following war.

The prevention and mitigation of violent conflict is far more cost effective and efficient than prosecuting war. Similarly, peace processes that are inclusive are more likely to be sustainable. While it may seem more costly or complex to ensure an inclusive process, it is a much better value than risking failed negotiations and the escalation of conflict. The National Action Plan requires direct funding to women's civil society organizations in conflict affected societies. These organizations typically manage and run programs at a fraction what international agencies charge simply for their administrative costs. They are more sustainable and rooted. The impact is both immediate as their programs offer direct assistance to communities, and long term as their own institutional capacities develop and strengthen.

We understand the tremendous fiscal challenges that our nation faces; however, during this time, we cannot lose sight of the human rights violations women and girls are enduring around the world. There is a critical need for funding across the federal government to empower women and girls so that they in turn can contribute to the global community. The U.S. ought to view women and girls—half of the population—as agents of change in their nations and beyond, not victims and passive recipients of foreign aid. We also urge you to ensure that such investments in gender-based violence and the Women, Peace, and Security agenda do not come at the expense of other poverty-fighting and humanitarian assistance accounts and programming.

We look forward to working with you and with Congress to secure the funding necessary to support these initiatives. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Celia Richa at 202-595-7387 or cricha@futureswithoutviolence.org.

Sincerely,

4Girls
Local Leadership
Africa Faith and Justice Network
Amnesty International USA
Equality Now
Futures Without Violence
International Center for Research on Women
International Civil Society Action Network
International Medical Corps
International Rescue Committee
Jewish Women International
Management Sciences for Health
National Council for Research on Women

Oxfam America
Peace X Peace
Refugees International
Tahirih Justice Center
United Methodist Women
U.S. National Committee for UN Women
Vital Voices Global Partnership
Winrock International
Women's Actions for New Directions
Women, Peace and Security Resources
Women Thrive Worldwide
Women's Refugee Commission