

# U.S. STRATEGY AND NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

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# Introduction

## Statement of National Policy

The U.S. government is committed to advancing women’s participation in peace and security processes and integrating gender perspectives in U.S. foreign policy and national security decision-making through implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Act of 2017. In doing so, we emphasize UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325’s premise that the core WPS principles of women’s participation and protection are critical for effective conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping efforts. Women and girls play an integral role in building and maintaining global peace and security.

The implementation of the WPS agenda is both a moral and a strategic imperative for U.S. foreign policy and national security. Research shows that the status of women and the stability of nations are inextricably linked: higher levels of equality make countries more prosperous, secure, and democratic; conversely, lower levels of gender equality result in greater instability, corruption, and conflict. An escalation in the targeted rollback of the rights of women and girls has been proven to be one of the earliest warning signs of rising instability. Understanding and addressing the gendered dynamics of conflict will help the United States achieve and safeguard our national security priorities. When we institutionalize and invest in WPS initiatives through policies and programs, we invest in sustainable peace, international security, and economic stability.

Since the U.S. government last issued a U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security in 2019, critical global events have shifted the landscape—including geopolitical changes, a rise in climate-related crises, and advancements in technology, among others—which compel us to adapt and update our approach, in line with the requirements of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017. These developments are reflected in this updated 2023 U.S. Strategy and National Action Plan (“Strategy”) on WPS.

The Strategy is rooted in existing legislation and normative frameworks. It is informed by consultations with civil society, women-led organizations, and women leaders, whom we thank for contributing their time and expertise to the development of the Strategy. The Strategy is a fulfillment of the WPS Act of 2017 – the first ever comprehensive law of its kind, and builds on prior U.S. commitments to advance women’s involvement in peace and security processes, including Executive Order 13595 mandating the first U.S. NAP on WPS, the 2011 National Action Plan, 2015 National Action Plan Review, the 2016 National Action Plan, and the 2019 WPS Strategy. The Strategy advances UNSCR 1325 and subsequent UN Security Council Resolutions on WPS and draws on lessons learned globally, including from the Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) and other NAPs from around the world.



## Executive Summary

The 2023 U.S. Strategy on WPS is situated in the context of challenges and opportunities that unite us as a global community, including ongoing conflicts; migration and displacement; the COVID-19 pandemic; the climate crisis and environmental degradation; food and energy insecurity; democratic backsliding and corruption; deepening social and economic inequalities; increased gender-based violence (GBV); and the risks, impacts, and opportunities posed by digital technologies, including new and emerging technologies. This Strategy recognizes that these challenges cannot be solved without prioritizing gender equity and equality across our foreign policy and national security. The U.S. government continues to reinforce the need to eliminate barriers to women’s meaningful participation and integrate gender perspectives in peace and security decision-making processes.

The Biden-Harris Administration has elevated and institutionalized gender equity and equality across both U.S. domestic and foreign policies at an unprecedented level, including through Executive Order 14020 (March 2021), which established the White House Gender Policy Council and directed the creation of the first-ever U.S. National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, which recognizes that WPS is critical to advancing both gender equality and sustainable peace and security.

The Strategy captures a deliberate, participatory, locally-led, and evidence-informed approach towards our implementation of WPS objectives. The Strategy include five Lines of Effort (LOEs):

- **LOE 1: Participation** – Seek and support the preparation and meaningful participation of women and girls in civic and political leadership, in informal and formal decision-making processes, and in institutions related to peace and security.
- **LOE 2: Protection** – Promote the protection of the human rights of women and girls, and prevent and respond to all forms of GBV across the continuum of peace, conflict, and crisis contexts, including conflict-related sexual violence.
- **LOE 3: Relief, Response, and Recovery** – Prioritize gender-responsive policies and programs to support the safety, participation, and leadership of women and girls in U.S. government responses to conflict, crises, and disasters, and provide safe, equitable access to humanitarian assistance.
- **LOE 4: Integration and Institutionalization** – Integrate WPS principles across U.S. policies and programs to strengthen the institutionalization of comprehensive gender analyses and improve gender equality outcomes.
- **LOE 5: Partnerships** – Encourage partners to mainstream WPS principles across policies and strategies, and strengthen capacity to improve gender equality in processes and institutions connected to peace and security decision-making.

The U.S. government recognizes the interconnectedness of domestic and international implementation of the WPS agenda, particularly as threats are not halted at borders, and conflicts and crises globally affect us here at home. We acknowledge the need to promote women’s participation in decision-making roles in local, state, and national government, and to strengthen WPS principles within our institutions. This includes ensuring women and girls’ safety and preventing and responding to all forms of GBV that occur in the United States. We will continue



to advance approaches to implementing WPS that are proven to work, knowing that the ability and efforts of the U.S. government to institutionalize the WPS agenda and broader efforts to advance gender equality directly impact our nation's ability to build trust and encourage our partner nations to implement these same priorities.

Throughout this Strategy, we prioritize women and girls in a fully inclusive way, recognizing the presence of intersecting identities such as race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, socioeconomic status, language, location, and disability, among others, and how these factors can contribute to unique experiences.

## The Strategic Challenge

### Strategic Context

The Biden-Harris Administration's National Security Strategy (2022) outlines two key principles to guide our national security priorities: strategic competition and global challenges. As state and non-state authoritarian regimes seek to erode the rules-based international order and erase progress on human rights, the U.S. government is committed to setting itself apart as a credible model of inclusion, equality, and democratic governance. By integrating and applying an intersectional gender perspective into our policies and programs, we improve the efficacy and impact of our work. Through the adoption and implementation of inclusive policies, such as the WPS Strategy, the U.S. government is better able to promote U.S. values that make us stronger, safer, more prosperous, and more democratic.

There are a range of shared challenges that threaten global security, none of which can be effectively managed without the full and meaningful participation of women and girls. Women's participation in public life translates to more stable and secure societies. We know that when women and girls have equal and safe access to education, employment, and leadership positions across sectors, the workforce is more skilled and diverse, which enhances American and global prosperity and security. By fully utilizing the talents of all people, a nation can harness the potential of its entire population, driving innovation and economic growth, and generating more effective solutions to global challenges. This, in turn, enhances U.S. competitive edge and collective productivity, as well as that of our partners.

### Biden-Harris Administration Priorities

In support of tackling these strategic challenges, the Biden-Harris Administration has identified several cross-cutting priorities to guide implementation of the WPS agenda. These themes have been previously identified in: the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (2020), the U.S. National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality (2021), the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally (2022), and the U.S. Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities (2022), the U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy (2022), the U.S. Strategy on Global Women's Economic Security (2023), the U.S. Strategy to Respond to the Effects of Climate Change on Women (2023), the 2023 Roadmap for the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, and the National Cybersecurity Strategy (2023). In addition to these government-wide strategies, the National



Defense Strategy (2022), underscores sexual assault prevention and response across the force as a priority for military readiness, complementing the recommendations of the 90-Day Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military (2021).

- Elevating women’s leadership and participation in preventing and responding to risks and impacts in fragile, crisis, and conflict-affected settings and contexts, including through conflict prevention and stabilization, atrocity prevention, and addressing conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).
- Deepening our efforts to jointly address climate security and WPS, acknowledging the gendered dimensions of the climate crisis and the critical role of women as leaders in climate risk mitigation, adaptation and response.
- Promoting digital inclusion and addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV)—including the ways women public figures, human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society leaders are systematically targeted by gendered disinformation, online harassment and abuse in an effort to silence them;
- Advancing women’s meaningful participation and protection in the defense and security sector, particularly through removing barriers to the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women in the joint force and modeling accountability for gender-based violence within our own armed forces.

## Theory of Change: U.S. Strategy and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

**If** the U.S. government integrates a gender perspective into our defense, development, diplomacy, and foreign policy programming and processes—including prioritizing women’s meaningful participation and leadership in peace and security processes and supporting efforts to prevent and respond to all forms of GBV in conflict and crisis contexts—**then** we will improve our national security outcomes and further global peace and equality.

The work of implementing the WPS agenda requires addressing the root causes of conflict and removing barriers that restrict the ability of women, girls, and all people to freely and safely participate in civic, political, economic, and social life.

### Guiding Principles

The U.S. government is committed to comprehensively implementing the WPS agenda and recognizing the importance of women and girls freely and safely participating in peace and security decision-making processes. The following guiding principles inform the U.S. implementation of the WPS agenda, informed by years of civil society engagement and consultation, evidence-informed activities, and research.



## **Intersectional Approach**

In line with the U.S. National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality and the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally, this Strategy aims to address overlapping forms of discrimination to advance equity and equality, which negatively impact women and girls and other underserved communities in the United States and around the world. The implementation of all five Lines of Effort below will be informed by the historical and current context of these intersecting burdens. We will take an inclusive, intersectional approach in our implementation of WPS to enable a more comprehensive, equitable, and context-driven understanding of the drivers and effects of conflict and potential responses.

It is important to engage men and boys to strengthen our understanding of the gendered impact of conflict, to address harmful social norms, increase allyship for women's leadership, and support men and boys' positive contributions to peace and security.

## **Systemic Approach**

We will implement an inclusive approach that takes into consideration the historic, structural, sociocultural, and systemic disadvantages and power imbalances members of different groups face as a result of systemic inequality. We acknowledge and are committed to ensuring that underserved and historically marginalized communities are deeply involved in processes that advance peace and security. This will enable their equitable participation in, access to, and benefit from peace and security efforts, including their participation in policy and program design, implementation, and evaluation. Combatting systems of inequality in the implementation of the Strategy requires a holistic approach that engages with and includes people of all genders, challenges discriminatory gender norms, and promotes gender equality.

## **Localization**

Integration and elevation of local voices and the leadership of women and girls is essential for effective WPS implementation, and to generate buy-in, legitimacy, and sustainability in peace and security processes. A localized approach requires programming, policy, and funding that are rooted in and incorporate local understandings of gender norms and conflict dynamics to effectuate meaningful engagements and activities. Breaking cycles of conflict and promoting peaceful and secure nations are only possible when the action and agency of local women leaders, organizations, and communities are included. U.S. policies and programs should be informed by and implemented through local partners, consistent with applicable statutory authorities and subject to the availability of funds. The U.S. government undertakes this work with humility, acknowledging the expertise within affected communities who utilize their lived experience to inform impactful and sustainable WPS work. We further recognize that any activities undertaken should be inclusive, accessible, and safe.



# Lines of Effort

## Line of Effort 1 – Participation:

*Seek and support the preparation and meaningful participation of women and girls in civic and political leadership, in informal and formal decision-making processes, and in institutions related to peace and security.*

Women are essential participants in peace and security processes. Women’s “meaningful” participation means that women should have access and ability to influence decision-making on issues impacting their lives, their communities and environments, and their countries. Ensuring women’s meaningful participation in peace processes has been proven to improve outcomes for all people, with studies indicating that women’s participation makes peace agreements 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years. Moreover, higher levels of gender equality are correlated with healthier democracies. Importantly, violence should not be a consequence of participating in peace and security processes, and efforts to ensure women have a seat at the table must also address the enabling environment for their participation.

Prioritizing women’s civic and political participation and leadership is a key entry point to building democratic resilience. The institution building that occurs during a political transition offers a rare opportunity to remove the legal, political, and financial barriers to gender equality and women’s meaningful participation. For democratic institutions to remove barriers to gender equality and women’s meaningful participation, the political institutions and governing structures must be built in a way that reflects the needs and priorities of women and girls.

Our efforts to prioritize women’s meaningful participation are closely related to those identified in the U.S. Strategy on Global Women’s Economic Security. Research demonstrates that advancing women’s economic security improves their ability to meaningfully participate at all levels of society, thus strengthening democracy and peace and security processes.

### Challenge

Globally, progress on gender equality has regressed in recent years, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, and the rise of authoritarianism and broader democratic backsliding in recent years. Systemic inequality continues to create barriers to women’s meaningful participation and institutionalized discrimination is exacerbated in situations of conflict, crisis, and fragility.

Between 1992 and 2019, women averaged only 13 percent of negotiators, six percent of mediators, and six percent of signatories in major peace processes. There are multiple barriers to women running for political office, and to their recruitment, retention, and advancement in public service, defense, and security sector roles. These include GBV and harassment in the workplace, lack of access to training or education, and social norms and responsibilities around caregiving, which can be exacerbated by insufficient access to or unaffordable childcare.

GBV in all its forms is a human rights abuse and has been used as a method to halt women’s meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Conflict and fragile settings experience an increase in all forms of GBV, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse—which threatens the well-being of the survivors and prevents their full





participation in economic, political, and social spheres. In addition, GBV may be used as a tool to target women for their participation in peace and security processes. Violence against women in political and public life, including through the misuse of digital technologies, disincentivizes women from engaging in political discussions both online and offline, undermining democratic processes and sustainable peace. We have seen the consequences of targeted reprisals, gendered disinformation, and online harassment and abuse against women politicians, human rights defenders, environmental defenders, journalists, and peacebuilders. Despite this, the risk of gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), should never be used as an excuse to exclude women from participating in political or public life.

## Approach

To reduce barriers facing women’s meaningful participation, the U.S. government will continue to support a safe and enabling environment for women’s contributions to preventing and resolving violence and conflicts in their communities, contributing to peace processes, and guiding post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. This goal is advanced by the integration of WPS, gender, and inclusive development experts into the core team of decision-makers in U.S. government efforts, and by using a gender analysis to integrate a gender perspective across our work.

Case Study: As part of our commitments through the Summit for Democracy, the USAID-led Advancing Women’s and Girls’ Civic and Political Leadership Initiative is providing more than \$15 million to reduce the individual, structural, and socio-cultural barriers to the political empowerment of women and girls. USAID is doing this by building the pipeline of women leaders and facilitating their safe and meaningful participation in politics and public life. In conflict and crisis-affected contexts, this includes a focus on women’s safe and meaningful participation in peacebuilding and political transition processes. USAID has begun program implementation in nine focus countries, including some affected by conflict and crisis: Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Kyrgyz Republic, and Yemen.

We invest U.S. funds to support local women’s leadership and participation in U.S. government peace and security programming, including activities related to amplifying women’s efforts to build adaptation, mitigation, and resilience to climate change. We will, as appropriate, deliberately staff interagency coordination and negotiations teams with gender experts and talent that reflects the diversity of the United States, prioritizing an inclusive approach and dedicating resources to this priority. We will engage with a diverse range of women across the fields of defense and security, and underscore the importance of women at all stages of the conflict cycle, including in conflict prevention, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, and military operations.

As part of our commitment to prioritizing women’s meaningful participation in U.S. foreign policy, we will encourage the perspectives of local, grassroots, historically marginalized, women-led civil society organizations and their experts in informing U.S. government foreign policy and support a safe and enabling environment for their direct and meaningful engagement. This closely aligns with LOE 4 on Integration and Institutionalization.



Case Study: In 2022, the Department of State established the U.S.-Afghan Consultative Mechanism (USACM) to inject the voices of Afghan women and civil society into U.S. and international policymaking. To this end, the USACM convenes a diverse range of Afghan women and civil society from inside and outside Afghanistan in a series of off-the-record expert exchanges, public events, and high-level policy meetings with U.S. government officials at senior and technical levels.

## **Line of Effort 2 – Protection:**

*Promote the protection of human rights of women and girls and prevent and respond to all forms of gender-based violence in conflict and crisis contexts, including conflict-related sexual violence.*

The implementation of LOE 2 is closely aligned with the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally. We acknowledge the importance of a holistic approach and the need for policies and programs that are responsive, adaptable, and flexible. GBV is any harmful threat or act directed at an individual or group based on actual or perceived sex, gender, gender identity or expression, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, and/or lack of adherence to varying socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity. Although individuals of all gender identities may experience GBV, women, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals face disproportionate levels of GBV due to their unequal status in society. GBV can take many different forms and includes the use or threat of physical, psychological, sexual, economic, legal, political, social, and other forms of control, coercion, and/or violence. GBV, including CRSV, is directly related to and can drive broader security dynamics such as the outbreak or resurgence of hostilities, the rise of violent extremism, arms proliferation, population displacement, and collapsed rule of law. GBV can also be an early warning indicator for an onset of atrocities and an atrocity itself. GBV is fundamentally rooted in gender inequality, which is directly linked to an increased risk of instability, violence, and conflict.

All forms of GBV should be recognized and addressed as potential threats to national security. While GBV occurs in both conflict and non-conflict settings, there are active, evidence-based prevention efforts that can be undertaken to reduce the prevalence of GBV. GBV prevention and response approaches should be prioritized and initiated before an acute crisis to strengthen mitigation and prevention efforts that will protect all individuals from GBV. In the context of our WPS programming, we take steps to identify risks, strengthen safety and security measures, employ the principle of “Do No Harm”, and ensure reporting mechanisms and linkages to survivor services.

### **Challenge**

In the context of multiple ongoing conflicts, CRSV continues to be a prevalent form of GBV globally. Global crises, including health stressors and climate change, exacerbate rates of GBV. Fragile and conflict-affected settings experience an increase in all forms of GBV, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence, sex trafficking and the sexual exploitation and abuse of girls and children. Natural resource scarcity—often induced or exacerbated by climate change—also increases rates of GBV. In particular, food insecurity, water scarcity, and an inability to fulfill traditional roles and responsibilities related to natural resource procurement



increases the prevalence of GBV in the home and on collection routes. High rates of GBV are typically reported in temporary shelters put in place following disasters and in internally displaced persons and refugee camps. Crises, conflict, and climate change effects also exacerbate risks of trafficking in persons and of child, early, and forced marriages, which threaten women’s and girls’ health and safety. Women environmental and land defenders offer solutions to environmental degradation and climate impacts, but often face gendered oppression and violence. The continuum of violence requires consistent action to prevent and respond to GBV, including CRSV.

Women, girls, and LGBTQI+ political and public figures, women in the defense and security sectors, peacebuilders, human rights defenders, environmental defenders, activists, and journalists are uniquely targeted by reprisals, intimidation, and abuse, including TFGBV, which can impede their meaningful participation in political, public, and economic life. State and non-state actors, including violent extremist groups and individuals, increasingly misuse and exploit technology to lead gendered disinformation campaigns against women in public life, including politicians, activists, and journalists. These actions can suppress democratic movements, and reduce women’s participation in peace and security decision-making. TFGBV can precede and carry over into physical settings and can follow women into their homes and communities. Further, online misogyny, which can share roots with other forms of hate-based violence, including racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism, threatens U.S. national security. Research on the nexus between online misogyny and domestic terrorism from the U.S. Secret Service, which examines the online presence of perpetrators of mass violence, notes that “[h]atred of women, and the gender-based violence that is associated with it, requires increased attention from everyone with a role in public safety.” In sum, the lack of a safe and enabling environment for women to equitably and safely participate online has negative consequences for democracy and for international peace and security.

Women and girls face disproportionate and unique impacts of instability, fragility, and conflict, including all forms of GBV. This is especially true for underserved and historically marginalized communities; for example, women and girls with disabilities face heightened risk of GBV in conflict and emergencies—including lack of accessible services for care and support—due to discrimination based on their gender and disability. There is a global trend of reversing laws that protect women, restricting their access to justice and resulting in societies in which women are not legally protected. A common practice among authoritarian regimes is to eradicate laws that protect women and marginalized communities, including criminalizing LGBTQI+ status or conduct.

Too often, legal frameworks on GBV are weak and lack nuance, proper implementation, and enforcement. They often do not consider the spectrum of violence that impacts people’s lived experience, particularly with the acceleration of new and emerging technologies and the threats to women and girls in the growing virtual domain.

## **Approach**

We acknowledge that it is crucial to emphasize justice and accountability, such as access to formal judicial processes, and traditional or informal justice and accountability measures, in addressing GBV and prioritizing women’s and girls’ safety, and we acknowledge that justice and accountability are incomplete without access to comprehensive GBV response services. The U.S. government is committed to bolstering efforts to promote justice and accountability for



perpetrators of GBV and supporting the passage and implementation of stronger national and local laws and policies and international frameworks through our bilateral assistance and multilateral diplomacy.

Case Study: In November 2022, the Presidential Memorandum on Promoting Accountability for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence directed the U.S. government to use all existing tools to promote accountability for perpetrators of CRSV globally, including those pertaining to sanctions, visa eligibility, and security assistance. In June 2023, the Biden-Harris Administration imposed sanctions targeting actors who perpetrate this abuse—marking the first time that a dedicated focus on conflict-related sexual violence in furtherance of the Presidential Memorandum has led to the imposition of U.S. sanctions.

At the core of LOE 2 implementation is a trauma-informed, locally-led, and survivor-centered approach. This approach is outlined in the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally, particularly Objective 2.1 as it relates to peace and security processes. The Atrocity Prevention Task Force requires the inclusion of gender and GBV considerations in the conduct of atrocity risk assessments in priority countries and has refined and expanded atrocity prevention toolkits to incorporate CRSV-specific early warning, prevention, and accountability options. We will prioritize U.S. support for GBV prevention and response interventions that are proven, adaptable to local contexts, survivor-centered, and trauma-informed. Survivor and at-risk communities can lead and support context-specific programs and outreach, which are essential for prevention programming to be effective. Healthcare services are likewise especially critical for GBV survivors, especially to enable time-sensitive access to the clinical management of rape, and must be survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and done in a compassionate and privacy-maximizing setting, particularly in conflict zones.

The U.S. Government acknowledges that our commitment to women’s and girls’ protection and safety must be consistent and ongoing, regardless of crisis, conflict, war or disaster, and integrated into larger atrocity prevention and conflict prevention efforts. We will prioritize prevention and support for survivors during times of peace, conflict, and post-conflict, acknowledging the systemic continuum of violence and cycles of conflict. We will continue to identify triggers and early warning signs, including through the use of quantitative and qualitative indicators, to better prevent and respond to GBV.

Case Study: In October 2021, the DHS U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) published its first standalone “T-Visa Law Enforcement Resource Guide.” The T non-immigrant status is a temporary immigration benefit that enables certain victims of a severe form of trafficking in persons to remain in the U.S. for an initial period of up to four years. Trafficked individuals are often vulnerable to GBV, and some forms of trafficking are considered GBV. Women and girls are disproportionately impacted. The T non-immigrant status is an important tool in allowing survivors to obtain justice and accountability.

We will invest in deepening our understanding and addressing the root causes of GBV in conflict, emergency, and fragile settings. In order to do this, we will work with partner nations on how to tailor programs to prevent and address GBV, including through security cooperation and assistance programs and activities, consistent with available authorities and subject to the availability of funding. We will also integrate foreign policy and programming efforts that focus



on GBV prevention, mitigation, and response with those addressing the climate crisis and environmental challenges.

### **Line of Effort 3 – Relief, Response, and Recovery:**

*Prioritize gender-responsive policies and programs to support the safety, participation, and leadership of women and girls in U.S. government responses to conflict, crises, and disasters; reinforce women’s agency and decision-making at every-level of relief, response, and recovery efforts; and provide safe, equitable access to humanitarian assistance.*

The world continues to face an increasing number of crises, resulting in more displaced persons and a growth in humanitarian assistance needs globally, with disproportionate impacts on women and girls. Now, more than ever, it is important to prioritize gender equality, women’s participation, and GBV prevention and response in U.S. government relief, response, and recovery efforts. During times of crisis, national systems, like health, security, legal systems, and community support structures are compromised. This breakdown of systems can reduce access to health services and legal services, leading to an environment of impunity in which perpetrators are not held to account. Women and girls, especially those with historically marginalized intersectional identities, are disproportionately impacted, and face a heightened risk of GBV, including intimate partner violence; child, early, and forced marriage; sexual violence; and sexual exploitation and abuse. Too often, relief and recovery efforts do not take into account the unique needs of women and girls in program design, leaving them without safe and equitable access to humanitarian assistance.

At the same time, women and girls, and the organizations they lead, play a critical role in all aspects of humanitarian response, and their leadership is essential in addressing GBV, developing effective strategies and mechanisms, and implementing relief and recovery efforts. U.S. and international responses that take women and girls into account from the outset are more likely to prevent or mitigate systemic breakdowns during crises.

#### **Challenge**

The international community does not consistently prioritize or resource gender equality and GBV prevention and response in policies and programs from the onset of crises, and women are not equitably included in the development and implementation of humanitarian programming. Though prevention of and response to GBV are classified as life-saving interventions in humanitarian settings, these programs are not prioritized within humanitarian response architecture and are consistently underfunded. Despite their roles on the frontlines of humanitarian assistance campaigns, women leaders and women-led organizations struggle to access humanitarian funding. Limited gender and GBV expertise on humanitarian response teams means that these issues are not meaningfully included or prioritized in strategy or decision-making processes for conflict and crisis intervention, undermining the overall impact.

There is limited sex-disaggregated data to identify, track, and prioritize the needs and vulnerabilities of different communities, including women and girls, during emergencies and in fragile settings. Existing conflicts and crises continue to exacerbate gender inequality and GBV.

Finally, the unique experiences and needs of women and girls must be taken into account in security-related relief, response, and recovery efforts. For example, disarmament,



demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs often fail to acknowledge women and girls' complex roles as combatants, dependents, and supporters of armed groups, as well as community members experiences during crisis or conflict. However, women and girls face distinct challenges in reintegration programming and barriers to recovery and access to tailored resources. Similarly, women and girls face specific security needs and risks in times of conflict, crisis, or disaster, which local security sector institutions are often ill-equipped to respond to or address adequately. Women also play a crucial role in recovery after conflict; their integration in the community affords them unique insights into planning next steps, including mine and unexploded ordnance clearance for agricultural use.

## Approach

In order to strengthen our relief, response, and recovery efforts, we will continue to prioritize and center the safety, participation, and leadership of women and girls in the development and implementation of U.S. government responses to crises and disasters. This includes the integration of gender analysis into relevant policies, plans, programs, and operations. Implementing departments and agencies are working to integrate and collect sex- and age-disaggregated data, when feasible and safe to do so, to better inform relief and recovery policies and programs, while ensuring a “do no harm” approach is also implemented.

We will work to advance a humanitarian response that promotes women's leadership, prioritizes GBV prevention and response programming, and shifts funding, influence, and decision-making power to women and girls within humanitarian response systems, consistent with available authorities and subject to the availability of funds. We will take action in collaboration with partner nations and international organizations for disaster preparedness, risk reduction, and mitigation. We will endeavor to increase, as appropriate, representation and leadership of women and girls, specifically women-led organizations and local women leaders, in emergency management, civil protection, and humanitarian assistance decision-making structures and in delivery of that assistance in conflicts, crises, and disasters, including those induced or exacerbated by climate change. We will work to ensure that all U.S. humanitarian actors prioritize concrete actions to prevent, mitigate, and respond to GBV within the context of humanitarian assistance, and to ensure that women and girls are leading in the organization of the delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance and civil protection from the onset of every humanitarian response. Consistent with available authorities and subject to the availability of funds, we will endeavor to develop security assistance and related programs and initiatives that intend to improve inclusive and gender-responsive governance of the security sector, build partners' institutional capacity on gender-responsive DDR, and professionalize partner-nation security forces. Additionally, as feasible, we will include the participation and leadership of women for humanitarian mine action and the clearance of explosive remnants of war.

Case Study: In August 2023, the U.S. government released the first-ever U.S. Strategy to Respond to the Effects of Climate Change on Women to acknowledge and address the disproportionate effect of climate change on women and girls. This Strategy directly links gender inequality and climate change with advancing the WPS agenda because climate change impacts—such as extreme weather events and food and water insecurity—are threat multipliers and increase the risk of displacement, migration, and conflict, especially in regions that suffer from instability, and particularly for women and girls.



Women and girls must be able to access all humanitarian assistance programs safely and equitably, including water and sanitation, food aid and shelter, education, healthcare, and livelihood activities. This effort begins by ensuring women’s participation in the design of relief and recovery projects, which helps secure the explicit and systematic integration of gender and protection issues and perspectives into response efforts. Women must have the opportunity to inform priorities for transitional justice and accountability, for the reconstruction of infrastructure and restoration of basic services, and for rebuilding economies in ways that offer opportunity for themselves and their families. They must also have the opportunity to meaningfully participate and shape these spaces, especially given their potential to drive more accessible, inclusive, effective and sustainable approaches.

Case Study: The Safe from the Start ReVisioned initiative, a joint USAID and Department of State program, seeks to ensure all individuals, specifically women and girls, are free from all forms and threats of GBV in emergencies. Safe from the Start ReVisioned calls on the humanitarian community to not only add to, but also to change conventional humanitarian response efforts and expertise – shifting power to crisis-affected women and girls, and recognizing them as experts, providers, and leaders.

We will prioritize the inclusion of gender, GBV, and WPS experts in interagency conflict and crisis response processes. This includes training negotiators on WPS principles and ensuring that those negotiators have reach-back support from WPS experts. We intend to engage with women leaders and members of civil society before conflicts arise and maintain communication if and when conflicts do arise.

## **Line of Effort 4 – Integration and Institutionalization:**

*Invest in our people and integrate WPS principles across U.S. policies and programs to strengthen the institutionalization of comprehensive gender analyses and improve gender equality outcomes.*

When engaging partner nations on gender equality initiatives, it is critical that the United States models and employs WPS principles within our own defense, diplomacy, and development institutions and policies. Our foreign policy and national security are strengthened by reflecting the principles outlined in this Strategy internally. Working to improve our internal systems, processes, and structures to be more inclusive, diverse, and representative of the needs of the population of the country will strengthen our implementation of the Strategy and advance national security outcomes. By integrating and applying an intersectional gender perspective into our policies and programs, we improve the efficacy and impact of our work. This also requires a transformational shift in how the U.S. government assesses, plans, and operates around the globe. It requires our policies and programs to become more holistic, locally-consulted and led, accessible, and inclusive in their approaches to ensure that they are responsive to the unique security needs of the populations with which we interact, whether through diplomatic, defense, or development engagement.

National Security Memorandum 3 states, “Our institutions reflect the American public they represent, both at home and around the world. It is the policy of the [Biden-Harris] Administration to prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as a national security



imperative, in order to ensure critical perspectives and talents are represented in the national security workforce.” We acknowledge that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts, including efforts to prevent and address all forms of gender-based violence—including sexual harassment—throughout the national security workforce, are separate but complementary and reinforcing to the implementation of the WPS agenda.

## Challenge

Due to the lack of staff dedicated to advance WPS and a need for greater training, much of the coordination responsibility across departments and agencies to collaborate on all relevant peace and security efforts is managed by a small number of experts. Additionally, it is challenging to balance strategic planning processes while simultaneously executing activities in support of WPS priorities within institutions where WPS objectives are not naturally incorporated into organizational processes. Failing to proactively link the WPS agenda to broader security efforts ultimately hinders the efficacy of both.

Systemic barriers including GBV, sexual harassment in the workplace and on the way to work, childcare, and caregiving responsibilities can also serve as barriers to women’s retention and advancement in the workplace.

## Approach

Our work to improve the integration and institutionalization of the WPS agenda requires mainstreaming WPS principles across policy, planning, and program formulation and implementation. We will improve our monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems and data collection methods to better capture existing gender equality efforts across the U.S. government. This will give us the ability to identify both gaps and successes and ensure we continue investing in what is working.

We will build these systems into existing structures, integrating gender analysis into institutional frameworks and processes where gender-related information enhances organizational and operational effectiveness. We will also integrate WPS in the implementation of other relevant U.S. government strategies, including the National Security Strategy and the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability.

Case Study: The selection of priority locations for implementing the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, under the 2019 Global Fragility Act, considered quantitative measures of gender inequality as one key indicator of potential instability. During the interagency development of 10-year plans to implement the strategy, posts and Washington teams conducted hundreds of consultations, intentionally seeking out diverse, local perspectives, including from women-led organizations and women’s rights networks, to inform the analysis of drivers of fragility and the setting of objectives to foster stability. The monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans and baseline analyses developed by posts will systematically mainstream gender data, gender analysis, and the use of WPS indicators throughout implementation to inform decision-making.

We know that we must build upon and strengthen the knowledge of existing staff to understand and promote gender equality. At our bases, missions, embassies, and consulates around the globe, we will engage with our Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) and Locally Employed Staff to





help maintain institutional knowledge and to prevent the loss of knowledge and relationships that can result from the departure of rotating U.S. employees. We will continue to prioritize training and budgets for technical assistance to USG staff at our overseas bases, embassies, and offices, and meaningfully include civil society best practices and recommendations in the development of U.S. government training programs. We know that gender equality provides a stronger, more diverse military and workforce, and enhances the United States' ability to achieve our national security goals.

Case Study: On his first day in office, Secretary of Defense Austin pledged to counter sexual assault and harassment in the military as a top priority and in February 2021 directed the establishment of the Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military. In June 2021, the IRC released a report identifying more than 80 recommendations for the ways that the Department can improve climate and culture, prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment, better care for survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable. Specific to WPS, the IRC identified, "DoD should ensure that there is an internal focus on preventing sexual harm and gender-based violence across the force in implementing the 2017 U.S. WPS Act." DoD is currently actioning the recommendation identified in the report.

We will work to improve gender equity and equality in support of our national security, diplomacy, defense, and development workforce and objectives by removing barriers to women's meaningful participation and integrating a gender perspective into institutional processes. Introducing various gender perspectives can be a national security capability to provide an analytical framework for understanding how perceived and societal gender roles shape human security concerns of a diverse population and helps address strategic and operational gaps. The U.S. government will continue to institutionalize WPS through a whole-of-institution approach that mainstreams WPS principles across policies, strategies, operations, training, and education.

Case Study: Since 2019, DoD has hired and trained new gender advisory workforce personnel each year as Gender Advisors, WPS Program Managers, and Gender Focal Points across the Combatant Commands, Military Departments and Services, and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. These personnel conduct gender analyses to inform military planning, operations, and activities within the mission areas they support. Since 2019, the DoD has trained over 1,100 personnel qualified to serve in one of these roles.

Where relevant, U.S. departments and agencies will provide guidance, training, and education on integrating and mainstreaming WPS and broader gender equality initiatives across existing government programs. Many existing programs and initiatives are complementary and mutually reinforcing of WPS principles, and are strengthened by coordination across all relevant strategies, policies, and programs.



## Line of Effort 5 – Partnerships:

*Encourage partners to mainstream WPS principles across policies and strategies, and strengthen capacity to improve gender equality in processes and institutions connected to peace and security decision-making.*

As global threats to security grow more complex and spread at a faster pace, strong, sustained partnerships with international and domestic actors are essential. Effective WPS implementation requires the support of the global community, including but not limited to other governments, including their defense institutions and security forces, multilateral, regional, and local organizations including civil society and local women leaders. Partnering with other governments requires engaging with all levels of society, including local authorities and municipalities to integrate a community-based and context-specific approach, consistent with statutory authorities and appropriations. In working with our partners on WPS implementation, we will prioritize diversity, both in the makeup of our partners, and in the development of policies and programs.

### Challenge

The U.S. government cannot develop and maintain our desired emphasis and effective implementation of the WPS agenda without robust partnerships. The global advancement of the WPS agenda and gender equality more broadly is dependent on sustained engagement from local and national governments. We will need to continuously coordinate with partner governments, multilateral institutions, and civil society in order to secure the necessary resources, capacity, and accountability mechanisms that are critical to ongoing implementation of WPS principles in our national security and foreign policy.

The U.S. government also acknowledges that we must strive to better integrate WPS principles within our own institutions and policies in order to be a stronger partner and maintain our international leadership and credibility.

### Approach

WPS strengthens partnerships and demonstrates a common commitment to the values and norms desired and deserved by all people: dignity, respect for human rights, and equality under the law. The United States' competitive advantage is our values-based leadership, evidence-based approach, and mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships. Consistent with the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and in support of combatting the malign influence of actors such as the governments of the People's Republic of China and Russia, we must continue to prioritize equality as both a moral and strategic imperative.

Case Study: The Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse (Global Partnership) was announced at the Summit for Democracy in December 2021 and was officially launched at the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2022 to bring together countries, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to better prioritize, understand, prevent, and address the growing scourge of technology-facilitated gender-based violence. It was established in response to the pivotal need to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence as part of a shared global agenda to promote



peace, security, and stability – recognizing that the chilling effects of online harassment and abuse on the civic and political participation of women, girls, and LGBTQI+ persons undermine this agenda. The Global Partnership focuses on three strategic objectives: develop and advance shared principles, increase targeted programming and resources, and expand reliable, comparable data and access to it. To-date, the Global Partnership is comprised of fourteen diverse country members, advised by a multistakeholder Advisory Group.

We will strengthen bilateral partnerships and demonstrate leadership through U.S. participation in international networks that advance gender equality. We will continue to prioritize engagement with multilateral entities, including the United Nations and NATO, and with bilateral partners on key strategic priorities.

Case Study: With the government of Romania, the United States is a 2023 Co-Chairs of the UN Women WPS Focal Points Network (WPS-FPN). The WPS-FPN has 100 members, which include UN member states and regional organizations, and was developed in 2016 for policymakers to share experiences and best practices to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda. Through our Co-Chairship, the U.S. Government has sought to further advance the implementation of WPS to include diverse existing and emerging issue areas such as climate, disaster relief and response, and arms control, and to engage experts through a multi-sectoral approach including government, civil society, academic, private sector, and legislative leaders. The United States will continue this multilateral and bilateral engagement after our year as Co-Chair by drawing upon the foundation laid by WPS-FPN members to engage with existing and future WPS Centers of Excellence which focus on coordinating WPS efforts to address gaps and advance the implementation of the WPS agenda.

We will seek collaboration with like-minded partners to identify and enhance complementary programming across all LOEs related to the U.S. implementation of the WPS Strategy. We are committed to working with partners on capacity and technical assistance for WPS, including WPS policy development; removing barriers to recruitment, retention, and promotion of women across defense and security sectors; and enhancing capacity to mainstream and institutionalize a gender perspective across policies and programs.

We will enhance partner countries' capacity to train women in their security forces, to provide more equitable opportunities within peacekeeping forces, and to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and CRSV through security sector reform and security cooperation activities. We will work to increase and promote the participation of women from partner countries in exchange programs like International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs.

Case Study: Since Fiscal Year 2021, the Department of Defense has planned and executed over fifty new programs to advance WPS principles with the national level military and security forces of partner nations through dedicated security cooperation programs. The WPS security cooperation programs focus on building partner nations' defense institutional capacity to address the meaningful participation of women in decision making; addressing sexual harassment and assault and other forms of violence that disproportionately impact women's



participation in the security sector; and implementing a gender analysis and WPS principles into security sector policy, planning, exercises, and training. Notably, such WPS security cooperation programs have built the capacity of partner nation gender advisory workforce personnel and expanded the network of military gender advisors across regional partners.

Similarly, we will work to reduce barriers for servicewomen in our military and that of partner nations, to participate in professional military education (PME) and security cooperation activities. In doing so, we strive for inclusive representation of the U.S. Armed Forces across security cooperation engagements with an understanding that diversity enhances the strength and capabilities of the workforce.

We will continue to collaborate with civil society as partners in strengthening engagement with and integrating the perspectives of impacted communities into the U.S. government's WPS work. We are committed to developing mechanisms to meaningfully support and engage local women and girls in our peace and security efforts. We will amplify local expertise, networks, leaders, and experiences through our advocacy efforts.

The United States will continue to prioritize equitable and diverse partnerships with local women leaders and gender equality organizations across sectors. In particular, the United States is committed to ensuring that women receive equitable compensation for their expertise on emerging global issues. The United States will give particular attention to the voices and lived experiences of local and underrepresented populations.

## Measuring Success: Outcomes and Impact

To track progress toward women's ability to meaningfully participate throughout the peace and conflict continuum, mainstream WPS principles, and share progress with our civil society partners, the U.S. government is committed to rigorously tracking and reporting annually on metrics across the interagency. This will include a summary and evaluation of this Strategy's implementation by departments and agencies; applicable interagency coordination; and the monitoring and evaluation tools, mechanisms, and common indicators to assess progress made within this Strategy's LOEs.

The approach to coordinating interagency efforts to measure and track commitments and impact goals is highlighted in the logic framework highlighted in Annex I. We will integrate both qualitative and quantitative information, and prioritize survivor-centered, localized, and data- and evidence-driven methods – adhering to the “do no harm” principle. This logic framework was developed in coordination with interagency monitoring, evaluation, and learning experts, and policy and program staff, and builds upon existing metrics and indicators.

The logic framework outlined in Annex I is the basis for more detailed metrics and indicators that will be included in each department and agency's specific Implementation Plans. Having a meaningful monitoring, evaluation, and learning strategy requires a bespoke approach for each department and agency.



## Resourcing and Reporting

With FY 2023 resources, the Biden-Harris Administration is attributing more than \$2.6 billion in foreign assistance to advance gender equality, more than doubling our annual prior year commitments to promote gender equality and human rights around the world. The FY 2024 Budget request includes a record \$3.1 billion in foreign assistance for programs advancing gender equality.

No later than nine months after this Strategy goes into effect, the Departments of State, Defense, and Homeland Security, and USAID shall each develop and provide to the White House and Congress a detailed, implementation plan that provides the following information:

1. Department and agency specific objectives with associated action or tasks, milestones, and anticipated timelines for activities that implement each Strategy LOE. This should include benchmarks and deliverables for each necessary action
2. The anticipated technical and financial contributions of each department or agency for executing the Strategy;
3. Roles and responsibilities for implementation of the Strategy and NAP across the department or agency;
4. Guidance and processes required to implement the WPS Strategy and NAP, highlighting existing guidance and identifying new policy or doctrine, or capabilities to be developed in support of the Strategy;
5. Corresponding timelines and milestones, with clear benchmarks and deliverables for each necessary action;
6. A Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan that incorporates how each department and agency will realize and measure the Inter-Agency's Logic Frameworks Outcomes and Priorities (Annex 1); and
7. Measures of effectiveness and associated methods of assessment that, at minimum, measure involvement both pre- and post-intervention, to ensure the policies and initiatives are effective at achieving strategic goals.

Not later than two years after submission of this Strategy, the implementing departments and agencies shall submit to Congress and be prepared to brief the appropriate congressional committees on a report that summarizes and evaluates the relevant departments' and agencies' implementation plans; describes the nature and extent of interagency coordination on implementation; outlines the monitoring and evaluation on policy objectives; and describes existing, enhanced, or newly established training.



# Annex I – Logic Framework

Upon the release of each agency's implementation plans, the U.S. government will also release a set of identified Inter-Agency commitments that align with and support the Logic Framework: Annex 1 and are measurable to track impact.

<p><b>Outcome 1: <i>Participation</i></b></p> <p>Increase the meaningful participation of women and girls in peace and security decision-making processes.</p>	<p><b>Priority 1.1:</b> Mitigate barriers and increase enabling environments for women and girls’ meaningful participation in peace and security decision-making processes related to the cycle of preventing, resolving, and rebuilding after conflict, crisis, and violent extremism.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 1.2:</b> The U.S. government will increase women and girls’ meaningful participation in security sectors.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 1.3:</b> The U.S. government and partner governments are responsive to women and girls’ needs and recommendations in peace and security processes.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 1.4:</b> Women and girls have increased opportunity to access and influence decision-making bodies, networks, and processes.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 2: <i>Protection</i></b></p> <p>The human rights of women and girls are promoted and respected throughout the cycles of violence, conflict, and crisis, including in the prevention and response to all forms of gender-based violence.</p>	<p><b>Priority 2.1:</b> The development of U.S. government policies and programs includes a survivor- and trauma-informed approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence, including integrating localized and survivor-determined definitions of justice and accountability.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 2.2:</b> Survivors of gender-based violence have access to justice, health, and psychosocial support and services.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 3: <i>Relief, Response &amp; Recovery</i></b></p> <p>An intersectional gender approach is systematically integrated by the U.S. government as part of preparedness for, prevention of, and responses to</p>	<p><b>Priority 3.1:</b> U.S. government’s relief, response, and recovery efforts increase gender equity and equality and mitigate harmful gender norms.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 3.2:</b> U.S. government relief, response, and recovery efforts include programs, policies, systems, and mechanisms to prevent GBV risks and provide safe, comprehensive resources to survivors.</p>



<p>conflict, natural disasters, and the climate crisis.</p>	<p><b>Priority 3.3:</b> U.S. government relief, response, and recovery efforts support local women’s leadership in humanitarian response.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 4: <i>Integration &amp; Institutionalization</i></b></p> <p>U.S. government internal systems, processes, and structures integrate WPS principles in training personnel and program design are more inclusive, diverse, and representative of the needs of the population.</p>	<p><b>Priority 4.1:</b> U.S. government increases its investment in WPS advisors, staff, and technical experts. Staff are meaningfully integrated and resourced across policies, programs, and training.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 4.2:</b> U.S. government personnel are equipped and properly trained on the knowledge, resources, and technical expertise to advance the Strategy.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 4.3:</b> U.S. government policies and programs are informed by intersectional and inclusive gender analysis.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 4.4:</b> Training, reporting, and integration of relevant U.S. government strategies and policies occurs across agencies.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 4.5:</b> U.S. government improves monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems and data collection methods to better capture WPS efforts.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 5: <i>Partnerships</i></b></p> <p>The U.S. government builds and strengthens partnerships with other governments, multilateral organizations, academia and research institutions, civil society, and the private sector to advance the objectives of the WPS agenda.</p>	<p><b>Priority 5.1:</b> U.S. government provides support for partner governments in adopting and enforcing laws and implementation frameworks that promote gender equality.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 5.2:</b> U.S. government builds upon and develops mechanisms for ongoing communication and information sharing loops with partner governments, civil society, academia and research institutions, and the private sector.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 5.3:</b> U.S. government partners with multilateral institutions and fora to elevate Women, Peace and Security action and promote shared responsibility.</p>
	<p><b>Priority 5.4:</b> U.S. government prioritizes supporting local civil society organizations through its policies, funding, and partnerships.</p>



# Annex II – U.S. Women, Peace and Security Implementation Plan Report and Lessons Learned 2023

## Department of State Report on the Implementation of the United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)

### Executive Summary

The Department of State acknowledges that the global Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is a tool to achieve gender equality and remains dedicated to its implementation as a means to achieve national security and foreign policy objectives. The WPS Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-68) (WPS Act) codified the U.S. government’s longstanding commitment to implementing WPS through a Strategy and Implementation Plan. This third public report evaluating the Department’s progress to implement the 2019 U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS Strategy) highlights and analyzes the Department’s WPS efforts during Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 received through a data call.

The WPS agenda aligns with the U.S. government’s priorities on promoting and protecting the human rights of all persons. Advancing gender equity and equality is a critical component of the Administration’s broader equity agenda, including on racial equity, the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons, international religious freedom, and the rights of persons with disabilities. The WPS Strategy and the Department’s WPS Implementation Plan build upon and complement these priorities by emphasizing the importance of an intersectional approach – understanding and addressing how different aspects of women and girls’ identities shape their ability to lead safe, dignified, and empowered lives.

### Department Highlights

#### Line of Effort 1: Participation

*Seek and support the preparation and meaningful participation of women around the world in decision-making processes related to conflict and crises.*

The Department continued to demonstrate its commitment to advancing the preparation and meaningful participation of women in the justice and security sectors through diplomatic efforts and investments in capacity building in priority countries. During the reporting period, the Department invested approximately \$127.6 million in assistance programming to advance WPS. For several indicators under this Line of Effort (LOE), we saw either increases or a return to pre-pandemic levels. For example, we observed a 25 percent increase in the number of foreign national women participating in U.S.-funded training on security, justice, criminal justice, law enforcement, and/or peacekeeping (WPS 1.2-1), up from 32,524 in FY 2021 to 40,546 in FY 2022. We also saw the number of women in U.S. exchange programs focused on human rights and/or preventing violence or conflict (WPS 1.3-3) return to pre-pandemic levels, after dropping off significantly due to travel restrictions. Key leader diplomatic engagements for Washington-based principals focused on increasing women’s meaningful participation and leadership (WPS 1.3-1) more than doubled from 102 in FY 2021 to 211 in FY 2022.





### **Women's Participation in Peacebuilding and Decision-Making**

**Supporting Her Empowerment: Women's Inclusion for New Security (SHE WINS) Rapid Response Fund (RRF), Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI):** SHE WINS is focused on increasing the capacity of women-led organizations to participate meaningfully in security, peace, and political processes through targeted initiatives in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Papua New Guinea, Yemen, and Uzbekistan. Additionally, the SHE WINS RRF was launched to respond to areas where there are acute peacebuilding needs and the potential to drive high impact, locally led approaches to peacebuilding, and emergent WPS opportunities. Emergent opportunities include supporting WPS efforts and issues that are arising for this first time or re-emerging in a violent context, and have not historically been acknowledged, supported, addressed or funded by the global community. Ranging from \$500 to \$250,000, the RRF supports WPS work in select fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Since its launch in November 2022, targeted investments in women-led organizations advancing WPS initiatives have been made in: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, and North Macedonia. This program provides opportunities to respond to emergent WPS opportunities and address institutional barriers that often prevent timely support in the places that need it most.

**U.S.-Afghan Consultative Mechanism (USACM), S/GWI Office of the U.S. Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls and Human Rights:** The USACM, established in July 2022, coordinates and deepens Afghan engagement with U.S. government officials and was created in direct response to the demands of Afghan women, at-risk communities, and civil society. Comprised of various Afghan women's coalitions, as well as civil society leaders, journalists, academics and religious scholars from inside and outside Afghanistan, the USACM informs U.S. policy on issues ranging from documentation of human rights abuses to the role of women in Islam. The mechanism is currently in an initial phase, with structure and core operating principles being established. Over time, with input from Afghan and U.S. government stakeholders, the USACM will iteratively evolve its structure, format, and processes, adapting them to meet its objectives and create new avenues for engagement by interested parties.

**Colombia Local Peace Councils Program, Bureau of Conflict Stabilization Operations (CSO):** The CSO-funded program promoted meaningful inclusion of women in local peacebuilding and stabilization processes, resulting in over 140 legal instruments, bylaws, and organizational rules for municipal government institutions that require and protect the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and stabilization processes; consultation with women's groups in shaping policies that affect women, and recognize the unique challenges and needs faced by women as survivors of conflict and gender based violence, and their role in peacebuilding.

### **Women's Participation in Military Training**

**U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM):** Expanding the role of women and enhancing gender integration in peace operations is a cross-cutting priority for GPOI, the world's largest peacekeeping capacity building program. In FY 2022, GPOI activities increased the meaningful participation of women in peace operations by encouraging partners to train and deploy women peacekeepers, delivered training to peacekeepers on gender integration, and removed barriers to women's participation in training



through gender-sensitive infrastructure upgrades to partner countries' peacekeeping training centers. In FY 2022, 1,478 women participated in GPOI events.

**International Military Education and Training (IMET), Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM):** In FY 2022, 550 women attended IMET-funded courses, participating as part of foreign military personnel from 135 countries who received professional military education at U.S. defense institutions alongside U.S. counterparts to build expertise, interoperability, and people-to-people ties that deepen security partnerships and enhance mission efficacy. IMET is committed in its efforts to increase meaningful participation of women in our partner militaries. In FY 2022, IMET obligated at least \$3 million specifically to train women personnel to attend IMET courses.

## **Line of Effort 2: Protection and Access**

*Promote the protection of women and girls' human rights; access to humanitarian assistance; and safety from violence, abuse, and exploitation around the world.*

The Department demonstrated an increased commitment to preventing and responding to gender-based violence (GBV) globally through the launch of the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally as well as the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, foreign assistance and diplomatic action, including in areas affected by conflict or instability, with a notable increase in focus on prevention. These efforts included security sector capacity building, humanitarian assistance, support for service providers, conflict prevention, investments in early warning systems, and countering violent extremism (CVE). The number of key leader engagements for Washington-based principals focused on women's safety and prevention of GBV in conflict, crisis, and disaster contexts (WPS 2.1-1) increased by 51 percent from 41 in FY 2021 to 62 in FY 2022. There was also a 12 percent increase in the number of countries where bureaus and/or posts reported substantial and sustained diplomatic engagements promoting enhanced GBV efforts, including Front Office involvement, increasing from 43 in FY 2021 to 48 in FY 2022 (WPS 2.1-2). The indicators for this LOE demonstrate steady progress on both foreign assistance and diplomatic WPS efforts.

## **Responding to Gender-Based Violence in Crisis and Conflict**

**Partnership with the United Kingdom (UK) on CRSV (S/GWI, Department-wide):** The Department has worked closely with the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) team over the last year to elevate the issue of GBV in crisis and conflict settings, including CRSV. Through participation in the UK's PSVI Champions Network—and continued participation in the International Alliance on PSVI—bilateral and multilateral exchanges, such as high-level attendance at the PSVI International Conference and related commitments and deliverables, and continued coordination on WPS and GBV issues, the Department was part of leading the global conversation to engage more on a survivor-centered approach that emphasizes justice, not just legal accountability for survivors.

**Ukrainian Women and GBV, Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL):** In FY 2022, DRL supported a program to address the impact of the war on women in Ukraine, with a focus on gender-based violence, by developing and strengthening strategic, regional coalitions of stakeholders that respond to women's unique needs and elevate them to prominence in Ukraine's wartime and post-war agendas. Through this program, locally generated models will



be scaled-up across Ukraine to empower women to rise to the challenges they face and have their voices heard in wartime and post-war recovery processes for greater gender equality in Ukraine.

### **Responding to Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence**

#### **Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse**

**(Department-wide):** The Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, or the Global Partnership, was announced at the Summit for Democracy in December 2021 and was officially launched at the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2022 to bring together countries, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to better prioritize, understand, prevent, and address the growing scourge of technology-facilitated gender-based violence. It was established in response to the pivotal need to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence as part of a shared global agenda to promote peace, security, and stability – recognizing that the chilling effects of online harassment and abuse on the civic and political participation of women, girls, and LGBTQI+ persons undermine this agenda. Current members of the Global Partnership are the governments of Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, France, Iceland, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The Global Partnership focuses its work on three strategic objectives: develop and advance shared principles, increase targeted programming and resources, and expand reliable, comparable data and access to it. In the first year of action, the Global Partnership made significant progress on each of the strategic objectives and plans to continue to focus on delivering concrete results on these moving forward.

### **Line of Effort 3: Internal U.S. Capabilities**

*Adjust United States international programs to improve outcomes in equality for, and the empowerment of, women.*

Throughout FY 2022, the Department worked to institutionalize WPS principles through training, integrating gender analysis in policies and programs globally, and building WPS into strategic frameworks. In FY 2022, the number of bureau-led trainings to Department and/or interagency personnel on WPS strategy themes (WPS 3.2-3) increased by 23 percent from FY 2021. Additionally, the number of Foreign Service Institute (FSI) trainings that integrated WPS Strategy goals increased to 38, an increase of 14 courses (WPS 3.2-2). The number of staff participating in WPS-relevant FSI and other trainings also increased to 1,864 in FY 2022, up from 1,759 in FY 2021 (WPS 3.2-4).

### **Institutionalizing WPS in Strategic and Thematic Frameworks**

In alignment with the 2022 White House National Security Strategy, and the Department's and USAID's FY 2022-2026 Joint Strategic Plan, Department bureaus and overseas missions continued to update strategies to align with the new guidance. There were a combined 72 Integrated Country Strategies (ICS), Functional Bureau Strategies (FBS), Joint Regional Strategies (JRS), and thematic and regional frameworks that integrated WPS principles (WPS 3.1-3). This is a significant increase from FY 2021 and FY 2020, where there were 44 and 46 respectively. **Mission Kosovo's** ICS incorporates WPS objectives relating to security cooperation, including U.S. efforts to strengthen gender and ethnic diversity of Kosovo Security Forces along its ten-year transition into a professional, multi-ethnic, NATO-interoperable territorial defense force. **Mission Angola** also updated its ICS during the reporting period to include a sub-objective on promoting "the role of Women in Peace and Security within the



Angolan Armed Forces and civilian security institutions.” A new activity in **Mission Chile**’s latest ICS calls to “collaborate and assist Chilean defense entities in exporting gender integration and UN Women, Peace, and Security initiatives.”

Additionally, the updated U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally incorporated core process measures of progress to ensure civil society consultation, annual accountability, regular integration and adaptation based on progress and civil society feedback, common requirements for gender analysis, and standard global indicators. This strategy purposefully applies a WPS approach and process metrics to improve how the U.S. government has institutionalized WPS across interagency U.S. government Strategies.

**Integrating WPS within the Implementation of the Global Fragility Act (GFA) of 2019 and Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act (EWGAPA) of 2018:** The Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) is working with interagency partners to align GFA and EWGAPA implementation with the WPS Strategy. For example, the selection of GFA priority country/regions leveraged CSO Bureau Advanced Analytic Office’s expertise to utilize sex-disaggregated data and quantitative indicators of gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women in its analytical methodology to select priority countries/regions. During the development of the GFA 10-year country and region plans, our diplomats conducted hundreds of consultative meetings, intentionally seeking out diverse, local perspectives – including women-led organizations and women’s rights networks. The White House-led Atrocity Prevention Task Force has included GBV and other risks of violence against women and girls in the revised U.S. Atrocity Risk Assessment Framework; incorporated the promotion of gender equality into the implementation of atrocity prevention efforts through consultations with diverse stakeholders; and has added CRSV-specific early warning, prevention, and accountability options into its atrocity prevention toolkit.

#### **Line of Effort 4: Partner Support**

*Encourage partner governments to adopt policies, plans, and capacity to improve the meaningful participation of women in processes connected to peace and security and decision-making institutions.*

During this reporting period, the Department made progress in developing and maintaining partnerships with other like-minded governments to strengthen their leadership on WPS. In FY 2022, 15 countries integrated WPS concepts into their CVE policy frameworks with U.S. diplomatic or programmatic support (WPS 4.1-2), up from zero in FY 2021. The number of key leader engagements for Washington-based principals leading to partnerships or sustained collaboration on WPS (WPS 4.2-1) increased by 31 percent between FY 2021 (16) and FY 2022 (23). Despite a slight decline in the number of countries that developed, revised, or implemented WPS National Action Plans with U.S. diplomatic or programmatic support (WPS 4.1-1), from 19 in FY 2021 to 18 in FY 2022, there was a significant increase in the number of countries where bureaus and/or posts report sustained and ongoing collaboration and partnerships with diverse actors on WPS, including Front Office involvement (WPS 4.2-2), jumping to 118 in FY 2022 from 48 the previous reporting year. Sustained technical support and diplomatic engagement can help create an enabling environment for increased collaboration and partnerships on WPS. Through capacity building, sharing best practices, and building partnerships, the Department



demonstrated a sustained commitment to women and girls' safety, and full, equal, and meaningful participation in peace and security processes globally.

### **Bilateral and Multilateral Engagements**

The number of U.S. remarks or speeches in multilateral fora focused on peace and security that include WPS themes (WPS 4.3-3) increased by 41 percent from 61 in FY 2021 to 86 in FY 2022. While this increase indicates progress in elevating the WPS agenda within multilateral fora, there were significant decreases in the number of WPS events and negotiated commitments in this arena. There were 78 events or activities focused on WPS at multilateral fora, summits, or convenings sponsored by the United States (WPS 4.3-2) in FY 2021 decreasing to 19 in FY 2022. The number of high-level negotiated commitments that reflect WPS concepts introduced or co-sponsored by the United States in multilateral settings (WPS 4.3-1) decreased in FY 2022 from 63 commitments in FY 2021 to 44 commitments in FY 2022.

**Ukrainian Women and GBV, U.S. Mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (USOSCE):** USOSCE supported a project of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to provide legal advice and psychological counseling for survivors of gender-based and domestic violence in 14 localities in Tajikistan. In response to the war, the USOSCE has used front office engagement, public diplomacy and awareness raising initiatives on preventing gender-based violence and holding perpetrators accountable. The U.S. Mission has provided funding through the OSCE to support women in Ukraine and hold the perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) accountable by directly supporting women's organizations in Ukraine and Moldova to provide services to survivors of CRSV.

In FY 2022, **Embassy Helsinki** routinely engaged with the Government of Finland on WPS issues as part of Finland's Universal Periodic Review under the United Nations Human Rights Council and during the development of its fourth National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS, released in March 2023. **Mission Vietnam** regularly partnered with the Vietnam Women's Union, civil society, universities, and other actors to promote WPS principles through activities and programs. The Mission also worked closely with the National Assembly to develop women's meaningful leadership. It also worked with mine action groups to promote women's contributions in the unexploded ordnance sector. **Embassy Tunis** routinely engaged with women community leaders involved in community policing and countering violent extremism, female law enforcement personnel, and lawyers and civil society actors focused on combatting gender-based violence.

### **Lessons Learned**

This year, the Department has a unique opportunity alongside the interagency to reflect on overall lessons learned since the release of the 2019 U.S. Strategy on WPS, which are included below.

**Data Collection; and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL):** Improving data collection and MEL systems remains an opportunity for improvement as the Department continues to refine its implementation of the WPS agenda. The MEL frameworks developed in support of the 2019 WPS Strategy and Department Implementation Plan marked a new phase in



the Department's WPS work, whereby the Department took steps for the first time to annually measure WPS efforts. For each reporting cycle since, inconsistent data and underreporting was observed. The Department should prioritize investments in WPS MEL to improve gender indicator usage and disaggregation of data by sex, which requires resources for additional staffing and improved data analytic systems.

**Institutionalization and Training:** Sustaining and expanding Department knowledge and internal capacity to implement WPS priorities is vital to advancing foreign policy and national security objectives. Since FY 2020, the Department has made significant progress creating training opportunities, integrating gender analysis in policies and programs globally, and integrating WPS across U.S. frameworks and strategies and should continue these efforts. Scaling up awareness and implementation of WPS will require expanding human capacity and resources for internal training as well as continued high-level communication on WPS as a foreign policy priority. Instituting standard position descriptions and work commitments for Department Gender Advisors, and expanding training and instituting requirements, are NGS Action Plan institutional reform commitments currently in process.

**WPS and Digital Technologies:** There is an urgent need to better understand the use and implications of digital technologies in peace and conflict contexts. On the one hand, digital technologies are increasingly used to help connect communities, facilitate early warning information, collect and document evidence of atrocities, and foster civic engagement and participation in peacebuilding activities. However, while leveraging their positive uses, we must also address the harmful effects of digital technologies, including online harassment, abuse, and gendered disinformation, on women's safety and meaningful participation in decision-making processes and institutions. When women are not safe and experience targeted reprisals for their participation in political and security processes due to gender norms and roles, they are unable to equitably participate in decision-making processes. GBV in all its forms has a negative impact on women's ability to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes. Violence against women in politics and public life, including technology-facilitated GBV (TFGBV), disincentivizes women from engaging in political discussions both online and offline, which, in turn, impacts the stability of democracy. Looking forward, it will be imperative to coordinate with our partners to address the gendered implications of technology on peace and security.

**Civil Society and Other Non-Governmental Engagement:** The success of the WPS agenda relies on consistent and regular consultations and engagement with women leaders and women-led organizations in U.S. foreign policy efforts, while ensuring these engagements are trauma-informed and not extractive. The Department took some measures to expand consistent and formal exchanges with civil society organizations and can explore additional opportunities focused on localization to inform policies and programming. Local voices include women leaders, civil society organizations, local organizations that represent diverse voices, local authorities and municipalities, among others, as appropriate.



# Department of Defense Report on the Implementation of the United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)

## Executive Summary

The Department of Defense (DoD) Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan (SFIP) lays out three overarching, long-term Defense Objectives (DOs) that guide the Department's implementation of the Lines of Effort (LOEs) in the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS Strategy), pursuant to the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-68). DO 1, "The Department of Defense exemplifies a diverse organization that allows for women's meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of the Joint Force," supports WPS Strategy LOEs 1, 2, and 3. DO 2, "Women in partner nations meaningfully participate and serve at all ranks and in all occupations in defense and security sectors," supports WPS Strategy LOEs 1, 3, and 4. DO 3, "Partner nation defense and security sectors ensure women and girls are safe and secure and that their human rights are protected, especially during conflict and crisis," supports WPS Strategy LOEs 2 and 4.

Over the past four years of the implementation of the WPS Strategy, DoD has learned the following lessons:

- 1) Dedicated authorities, funding, personnel, and senior leader support are critical elements of the Department's WPS implementation process.
- 2) Collaboration with U.S. interagency partners and U.S. civil society organizations has expedited DoD's understanding and application of WPS principles within its operations, activities, and investments.
- 3) DoD WPS implementation takes place in two primary ways: (1) within DoD's internal talent management to strengthen women's meaningful participation in the U.S. military and to diversify U.S. forces; and (2) within the planning and execution of external military operations, engagements, and activities around the globe. Both contribute to greater DoD WPS implementation.
- 4) Incorporating WPS principles within DoD operations and activities begins with an understanding that a gender analysis should inform the Department's definition of the civilian environment.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 was a year of reinvigorated activity for the DoD WPS program. The additional WPS-related authorizations and obligations enacted by Section 1210E of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2021 and the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions enabled the Department to accelerate progress toward its WPS defense objectives. Additionally, the Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military highlighted key linkages with the Department's WPS efforts, providing useful guidance to the Military Departments and Services for WPS implementation. Finally, the FY 2022 Appropriations Act included an increase in Operation and Maintenance (O&M) funding for WPS, as well as a designation of \$6 million for WPS-related funding within Defense-wide O&M International Security Cooperation Programs (ISCP) account. The Department achieved a number of accomplishments in FY 2022. Below are illustrative highlights of DoD's WPS implementation within each WPS Strategy LOE.



## Department Highlights

### Line of Effort 1: Participation

*Seek and support the preparation and meaningful participation of women around the world in decision-making processes related to conflict and crises.*

The Department's responsibility in support of WPS LOE 1 is to advance women's meaningful participation through engagements, relationships, and security cooperation programs and activities with partner nations' defense and security sectors around the world. DoD advances WPS through security cooperation programs and activities that focus on working with partner nations to advance women's meaningful participation within partner nations' defense and security sectors. Partner nations often request assistance from the Department to improve the recruitment, retention, development, and employment of women in their national security forces. The Department is also able to share with partner nations via WPS security cooperation programs and activities the lessons it has learned while diversifying the U.S. Armed Forces. Department highlights in FY 2022 include:

- The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)), in consultation with the Department of State, initiated a multi-year pilot program that will develop a barriers assessment methodology to identify barriers and opportunities with respect to strengthening the recruitment, employment, development, retention, and promotion of women in foreign security forces. This project is planned to complete in 2025.
- The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) developed a Gender Dynamics Risk Index that incorporates over 30 open-source indicators on women's integration in peace and security processes in the assessment, monitoring, and evaluation of DoD security cooperation programs and activities.
- *Through the State Partnership Program and the Bilateral Affairs Officer Program, National Guard units and U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) took opportunities to brief and meet with defense officials from Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Bahrain, Qatar, and Kazakhstan on WPS. USCENTCOM also engaged with civilian organizations looking to improve women's meaningful participation in foreign nations' defense and security forces.*
- U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) *worked on the recruitment and promotion of women within the Bulgarian Armed Forces (BAF) logistics community and increasing the participation of women, including the participation of more senior-level women, in developmental workshops aimed at ensuring the BAF can move and support Allied and U.S. forces. Additionally, USEUCOM's WPS-related efforts in Serbia focused on implementation of human resources policies for professional development and promotion of women into senior military positions and tactical integration of women into peacekeeping units.*
- U.S. Space Command advanced women's participation and WPS priorities by establishing WPS subject matter expert exchanges with emerging partners from Thailand, Brazil, and Colombia as part of the integration of new space partners into its annual multinational exercise. Along with established partners from Chile, Canada, and the United Kingdom, the pilot subject matter expert exchange focused on the retention of women that work within partner nations' military Space workforces.





## **Line of Effort 2: Protection and Access**

*Promote the protection of women and girls' human rights; access to humanitarian assistance; and safety from violence, abuse, and exploitation around the world.*

The U.S. military works with our partners and allies globally to promote understanding of and respect for the law of war (also referred to as the law of armed conflict or international humanitarian law (IHL)) and international human rights law (IHRL). In the WPS context, this effort includes a focus on IHL and IHRL protections that apply to women and girls. To accomplish this, DoD incorporates gender analyses into military operations, including security cooperation programs and activities, which considers gender together with other socio-cultural factors to understand human behavior and the different security needs and challenges of host nation civilians. Department highlights in FY 2022 include:

- DoD provided gender advisory support to Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), led by U.S. Northern Command, which continued through February 2022. OAW was the coordinated effort across the U.S. government led by DHS to support, house, and resettle vulnerable Afghans, including those who worked on behalf of the United States. This support provided direct advice on gender and protection issues to military leadership and staff managing the day-to-day operations of the U.S. installations involved in OAW.
- U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) integrated key WPS considerations into its intelligence community conferences, specifically on ways women can be involved in counterterrorism forces, prevention programs, and roles within terrorist groups. For example, Joint Intelligence Command AFRICOM (JICAF) Counter Terrorism (CT) analysts facilitated the 7th annual CT Conference as the first iteration of WPS intelligence integration at JICAF.
- U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) discussed the gender dimensions of the cyber domain and recruitment and retention of women and girls into STEM fields in engagements with students from South and Latin America at the Inter-American Defense College and with the British Defence Staff and UK Liaison Office to USCYBERCOM. USCYBERCOM has also developed course material for training on the gendered aspects of the cyber domain and conducting a gender analysis on a cyber-related mission.
- U.S. Transportation Command mainstreamed WPS considerations into its annual exercise, TURBO CHALLENGE, which examines the coordination requirements between contract maritime vessels in response to human trafficking.

## **Line of Effort 3: Internal U.S. Capabilities**

*Adjust United States international programs to improve outcomes in equality for, and the empowerment of, women.*

The Department made significant progress institutionalizing WPS principles in policies, doctrine, plans, training, and exercises. Throughout FY 2022, OUSD(P), the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands (CCMD), and Military Departments had at least one full-time Gender Advisor (GENAD) and made significant progress in developing Gender Focal Points (GFP) across their organizations and subordinate commands. DoD also expanded its training for the gender advisory workforce. Department highlights in FY 2022 include:



- The Department of the Air Force (DAF) drafted the first Military Department-level Strategic Action Plan for WPS, prepared position descriptions for hiring eight government civilian gender advisory workforce personnel, and co-led two Gender Focal Point training courses, becoming the first Military Department to conduct WPS training.
- DSCA and the Military Departments established WPS working groups to coordinate their organizations' efforts to implement the DoD WPS Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan (SFIP). This resulted in a more streamlined approach to integrating WPS principles within DSCA's and the Military Departments' missions.
- DSCA's Defense Security Cooperation University (DSCU) developed WPS modules for security cooperation workforce certification and instructed 271 security cooperation officers who serve in U.S. embassies, 42 defense advisors who are assigned to foreign ministries of defense, and 24 senior leaders in the U.S. Government and the U.S. military.
- The Joint Staff (JS) trained more than 209 U.S. Government personnel on WPS priorities. JS trained 97 GFPs and 33 new GENADs, while U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) and DAF trained 79 GFPs.
- U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute provided recommendations to reflect WPS principles in the following doctrinal publications: Army Doctrine Publication 3-13, Information; Army Training Program (ATP) 2-22.9-1, Open-Source Intelligence Volume I; ATP 5-0.2-1, Staff Reference Guide Volume 1 Unclassified Resources; ATP 3-57.30, Civil Network Development and Engagement; and Field Manual 3-16, The Army in Multinational Operations. Army University supported WPS training events at USEUCOM and USAFRICOM; provided gender insights to the Security Force Assistance Brigade Tabletop Exercise; and also developed and conducted training for Female Engagement Teams at two of the OAW safe havens installations.
- The Secretary of the Navy directed the Department of Navy to prioritize implementation of WPS principles into Professional Military Education during Fiscal Year 2022. Under the leadership of Rear Admiral Shoshana Chatfield, the first woman president of the Naval War College (NWC), the NWC appointed a full-time WPS chair position, incorporated WPS as a key line-of-effort across all programs in the 2022-2027 Naval War College Strategic Plan, hosted their 8<sup>th</sup> WPS Symposium, created a WPS elective course, and incorporated WPS principles in core courses in master's degree programs and executive certificate programs.
- Marine Corps University reviewed WPS curriculum, implemented WPS principles, and finalized WPS courses for senior executives and the general population. They also executed their initial "Operationalizing WPS 100" course to certify 40 personnel as "Gender Focal Points" in the Marine Corps. Marine Corps University reviewed WPS curriculum, implemented WPS principles, and finalized WPS courses for senior executives and the general student population.
- U.S. Strategic Command continued its partnership with Cornell University to develop its Women in Leadership certification program that provides a gender diversity toolkit for leadership and command personnel to improve command culture.



## Line of Effort 4: Partner Support

*Encourage partner governments to adopt policies, plans, and capacity to improve the meaningful participation of women in processes connected to peace and security and decision-making institutions.*

Through integrating WPS into security cooperation programs and activities, DoD works to support allies' and partners' ability to build defense capabilities and institutional capacity that are diverse, inclusive, upholds human rights, and can respond to the unique security needs of host nation populations. In FY 2022, CCMDs conducted gender analyses for security cooperation programs and activities to shape and inform their approach to planning, designing, programming, and executing security cooperation programs with allies and partners in their areas of responsibility. Department highlights in FY 2022 include:

- Representatives from Special Operations Command Africa, with support from the U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso, worked with Burkinabe Armed Forces on ways to enhance trust and meaningful engagement with local Burkinabe women's organizations in areas with violent extremist organization activity.
- DoD Regional Centers for Security Studies—as authorized by Section 342 of Title 10, U.S. Code, and managed by DSCU—continued efforts to communicate WPS principles to senior, multilateral, and inter-ministerial personnel through education, training, research, and advising activities.
- INDOPACOM designed and delivered a Fiji WPS National Action Plan (NAP) Orientation Workshop that employed a systematic, collaborative, and inclusive approach to strengthen good governance and to prioritize WPS objectives in national-level strategy.
- The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) for Policy Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) office included WPS on the agenda for its annual bilateral meetings with Chile (Defense Consultative Committee) and Argentina (Bilateral Working Group).
- Secretary of Defense Austin discussed WPS with Chilean Minister of Defense Maya Fernandez at the July 2022 Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas (CDMA) defense ministerial. Minister Fernandez proposed creating a WPS subcommittee to the Defense Consultative Committee, which Secretary Austin agreed to. The WPS subcommittee is the first WPS-focused subcommittee in any OSD-led bilateral meeting.
- U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) collaborated with Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Paraguay to host a WPS Southern Cone Workshop in Chile to discuss implementation of WPS initiatives and best practices, and to issue a call to action for future efforts. General Laura Richardson, Commander of USSOUTHCOM, and the Vice Minister of Paraguay were in attendance.



# Department of Homeland Security Report on the Implementation of the United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)

## Executive Summary

This report highlights significant Department of Homeland Security (DHS) accomplishments in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. It represents a sampling of DHS activities, programs, and engagements that support principles of the WPS Act. Accomplishments for each line of effort (LOE) are detailed below. This report also provides lessons learned that will inform subsequent years' programs and initiatives.

### Line of Effort 1: Participation

*Seek and support the preparation and meaningful participation of women around the world in decision-making processes related to conflict and crises.*

**Reimagining the Female Experience Workshop, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), March 2022.** A diverse group of 27 women leaders across ICE participated in a workshop to discuss opportunities to strengthen ICE's ability to recruit, retain, and advance women employees. It brought together women from across the Agency, GS-13 to SES, representing all aspects of the ICE law enforcement mission, human resource personnel, recruitment, and the legal division. The workshop was a result of previous interviews, a focus group, and survey responses from participants. During the workshop, the group identified opportunities to improve women's experiences at ICE, such as mentoring, both for law enforcement (LE) and non-LE roles; developed ideas and designed actionable solutions to improve women's experiences throughout the career lifecycle; and presented solutions to 12 members of the leadership team. There is a plan to implement these solutions in the future. While ICE has steadily increased its numbers of women applicants, employees, and leaders, there remains an opportunity for ICE to better recruit, retain, and advance women. ICE increased the percentage of women law enforcement officers (LEO) hired between FY 21 and FY 22: Deportation Officers 6% to 25% and Special Agents from 18% to 44%.

**Partnership with Girls Who Code, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), March 2022.** In celebration of Women's History Month, CISA partnered with Girls Who Code on a social media storytelling campaign featuring women with careers in cybersecurity. The campaign, which provided firsthand accounts of women's experiences working in technology, received over one million impressions on social media. In September 2021, CISA had initially partnered with Girls Who Code to develop pathways for young women to pursue careers in cybersecurity and technology. This collaboration seeks to tackle issues of underrepresentation by increasing the awareness of cybersecurity and technology careers and working with employers to build tangible pathways for young women, especially young women of color, to get hands-on experience in the private sector and the non-profit sector or government. CISA and Girls Who Code continue to explore collaborative opportunities related to cybersecurity careers for girls, women, and those who identify as nonbinary.

**Training of Women in Law Enforcement, Federal Law Enforcement Centers (FLETC), ongoing.** This training supports DHS efforts to increase the participation of women in law enforcement, both domestically and internationally. DHS's 30x23 Initiative specifically targets women by increasing their entry into law enforcement to 30% by 2023. In FY 2022, 12,415 women participated in FLETC training programs, compared to 8,458 in FY 2021. This figure includes 404 women foreign nationals, representing 72 countries, who attended U.S. funded training. Subject areas for FLETC training include Critical



Communication Skills, Sex Crimes Investigations, Leadership Development, Leadership for Women, Advanced Interviewing, and Internet Investigations.

## **Line of Effort 2: Protection and Access**

*Promote the protection of women and girls' human rights; access to humanitarian assistance; and safety from violence, abuse, and exploitation around the world.*

**Victim-Centered Approach Institutionalization, Council on Combating Gender-Based Violence (CCGBV), May 2022.** Components and headquarters offices reviewed their policies, operations, communications, and training and identified ways to further institutionalize the victim-centered approach (VCA) across the agency. This approach equally values (1) trauma-informed and culturally responsive interactions with victims and (2) the detection, investigation, and prosecution of perpetrators. It promotes victims' safety and autonomy and prioritizes culturally sensitive and trauma-informed actions by the Department. The review process was coordinated by the Council on Combating Gender-Based Violence (CCGBV), DHS's main forum for cross-departmental collaboration on actions to prevent and address violence based on sex, gender identity or expression and sexual orientation. Planned or recent actions to advance this effort to include establishing DHS-wide standards for VCA implementation and developing VCA informational resources for Department employees, policies, lowering barriers for the public to obtain assistance, implementing additional trauma-informed care protocols, creating a victim-centered lexicon, and delivering targeted training to employees. Concurrently, the CCGBV has pursued complementary activities such as convening stakeholder listening sessions in September and October 2022 on victim-centered approaches to combating female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).

**The Role of Gender in Targeted Violence and Threat Assessment Webinar, Office of Intelligence and Analysis, March 2022.** The National Threat Evaluation and Reporting (NTER) Program Office developed and led a webinar for Federal, State, Local, Tribal, Territorial, and Private (F/SLTTP) Sector partners on "The Role of Gender in Targeted Violence and Threat Assessment." NTER empowers homeland security partners to adapt to new threats and prevent terrorism and targeted violence. The event included approximately 100 F/SLTTP partners across the country. It featured three experts specializing in a variety of gender-related topics such as expertise in active shooter situations, mass shootings, and security policies and procedures; forensic psychiatry; and law enforcement expertise specializing in intimate partner violence-related cases—specifically, physical, and emotional abuse, stalking, strangulation, restraining orders, sexual abuse, and child abuse.

**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Policy and Guidance, October 2021.** USCIS published the first standalone T-Visa Law Enforcement Resource Guide. The T-Visa is a temporary immigration benefit that enables certain victims of a severe form of trafficking in persons to remain in the U.S. for an initial period of up to four years. This includes sex trafficking, where women are often disproportionately impacted. The resource guide responds to frequently asked questions regarding the T-Visa application process for certifying agencies; emphasizes that completing Form I-914, Supplement B, Declaration of Law Enforcement Officer for Victim of Trafficking in Persons, is consistent with a victim-centered approach; and provides certifying officials with promising practices for approaching the certification process. USCIS' updated guidance addresses establishing eligibility, physical presence, the age-based exemption from the requirement to comply with law enforcement requests, and how the agency evaluates involuntary servitude claims. The guidance reduces barriers for noncitizen victims of trafficking, consistent with the intent of the Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000. In FY 2022, USCIS granted T-Visa status to 1,715 victims, an increase of over 106% from FY 2021.

## **Line of Effort 3: Internal U.S. Capabilities**



*Adjust United States international programs to improve outcomes in equality for, and the empowerment of, women.*

**Women, Peace and Security Training, Gender Policy Working Group (GPWG), ongoing.**

The GPWG was established to advance the work of the White House Gender Policy Council (GPC) in accordance with Executive Order 14020. The GPWG meets monthly and is chaired by the WPS Manager. Participants include gender subject-matter experts from DHS Components and programs. During this reporting period, training by the WPS Manager focused on the three G's of "gender parity, gender perspectives, and gender analysis" in the furtherance of WPS principles. Gender parity involves those initiatives that increase the opportunity of women to participate in the DHS workforce. Gender perspectives take into consideration the specific security needs of different genders and access to resources to better protect underserved individuals, such as in emergency preparedness and response. Gender analysis is critical as a systematic process in both the promotion of gender parity efforts and the integration of gender perspectives within DHS activities, programs, and engagement. Other training topics included masculinities and engaging with men, human trafficking, and conflict-related sexual violence.

**Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Training, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), ongoing.**

In FY 2022, the USCG reviewed recommendations of the Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military and the accompanying implementation roadmap. The USCG then worked cross-programmatically with internal and external stakeholders to develop a Coast Guard-directed IRC Plan of Action and Milestones (PoAM). In FY 2022, USCG conducted several relevant training activities. One such training was "Recognize, Evaluate, Assess responsibility, Confirm appropriate action, and Take action" (REACT) bystander intervention training and evaluation. REACT was conducted at Coast Guard Training Centers (TRACEN) with valuable collaboration among TRACEN personnel, the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), and the DoD-funded evaluators-National Opinion Research Center (NORC).

**Advanced Human Trafficking Training, Center for Countering Human Trafficking (CCHT), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), August 2022.**

Human trafficking disproportionately impacts women and girls. The CCHT hosted Advanced Human Trafficking Training for investigators and others supporting human trafficking investigations. The training was held at ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) headquarters and streamed virtually, with approximately 80 personnel from HSI field offices and HQ attending in person, and a daily average of 95 individuals attending virtually. Topics included the state of HSI human trafficking investigations, sex trafficking and forced labor case studies, use of task forces in human trafficking investigations, courtroom strategies and preparation, victim interviewing, victims' rights law, the Continued Presence Program, Blue Campaign resources, and engaging with victims and survivors. Presenters included HSI case agents, a forensic interview specialist, the Department of Justice Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit, Interpol, Wells Fargo, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), and a human trafficking consultant/activist with lived sex trafficking experience.

## **Line of Effort 4: Partner Support**

*Encourage partner governments to adopt policies, plans, and capacity to improve the meaningful participation of women in processes connected to peace and security and decision-making institutions.*



DHS engages partner nations on WPS initiatives. This allows DHS to mobilize political will and action from other governments, international organizations, and nongovernmental actors.

**Training with Mexico’s National School of Emergency Management (ENAPROC), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), multiple dates.** FEMA’s Office of Policy and Program Analysis, International Affairs Division, collaborated with ENAPROC to provide a CERT program to educate individuals about disaster preparedness for the hazards that may occur where they live. CERT trains volunteers in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. FEMA provided materials for several training engagements for the CERT in partnership with ENAPROC. The following training was offered in FY 2022: Introduction to CERT (2,346 women); CERT Basic (84 women); CERT Train-the-Trainer (40 women); and CERT Program Manager (33 women). ENAPROC tracks and maintains this training through sex-disaggregated data for its programs.

**Operation Forced Labor Outreach and Targeting Initiative, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), March 2022.** HSI Seoul, Korea, conducted Operation Forced Labor Outreach and Targeting Initiative (FLORA) outreach to the Dashihamkke Center, an NGO affiliated with the Seoul Metropolitan city government and the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, to support victims and survivors of sex and labor trafficking. Participants discussed HSI’s role in investigating sex trafficking and forced labor and the exploitation and abuse of underage students. The Chief of the Dashihamkke Center agreed to cooperate with HSI Seoul and share information and resources pertaining to forced child labor and trafficking in the future. In FY 2022, HSI International Operations conducted approximately 42 outreach events, reaching almost 9,000 individuals.

**Gender-based Violence (GBV) and LGBTQI+ Training, DHS Pride, August 2022.** Two DHS subject-matter experts from the DHS Pride organization working at Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) were selected as part of a six-person team to create and deliver a curriculum titled “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence” to law enforcement partners from six countries at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Gaborone, Botswana. In addition to tools and discussions to handle situations of sexual and gender-based violence as law enforcement personnel, the curriculum introduced partners to victim assistance programming, trauma-informed interviewing, and LGBTQI+ sensitivity training. This course presented a rare opportunity to reflect on LGBTQI+ issues. Participants included police officers and prosecutors from seven countries, including Botswana, Eswatini, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda. Feedback from many participants revealed the desire for additional training on working with LGBTQI+ populations and strategies for undoing negative perceptions about the community in their own societies.

**Support to Ukrainian Refugees, Blue Campaign, ongoing.** Blue Campaign is the unified voice for DHS efforts to combat human trafficking. Following Russia’s unprovoked war on Ukraine, DHS has been providing support and humanitarian relief to Ukrainian nationals in need, both in the U.S. and abroad. Blue Campaign provided support to DHS and government-coordinated efforts by developing human trafficking awareness materials in Ukrainian. These materials are being used to communicate with refugees so they understand where they can get support if they feel they are being forced to work or engage in commercial sex acts against their will. Frontline workers are also using these materials to recognize and report suspected cases of human trafficking among refugees.



## Lessons Learned

**LOE 1:** To enhance the participation of women, simply increasing numbers is not enough. Recruitment is important, but there must also be efforts aimed at career mobility and retainment of talent. Mentoring is a critical part of this process. Promoting intersectionality with regard to demographics such as race, disability, and sexual orientation is important to ensure opportunities for the participation of all women.

**LOE 2:** A cross-departmental approach is important in providing protection from GBV and access to services. Continued improvements to identification and screening lead to holding more perpetrators accountable and ensuring that more victims are safe, stable, and offered protections. A victim-centered approach provides nonjudgmental assistance with an emphasis on self-determination while assisting victims in making informed choices, helping to restore victims' feelings of safety and security, and safeguarding against policies and practices that may inadvertently re-traumatize victims.

**LOE 3:** Effective training should be consistent and mandatory. Training should be conducted at different levels, starting with basics and moving to advanced levels. It should also be progressive, building upon previous training. Training must constantly evolve to support new mandates and policies.

**LOE 4:** Success is best achieved by sharing resources with partner nations and allowing them to tailor those resources to meet their own particular needs. Initiatives such as disaster response and counter-trafficking are most effective when undertaken with partners, through engagement within government, private sector, NGOs, academia, and survivors.





## Executive Summary

[The Women, Peace, and Security \(WPS\) Act of 2017](#) made the United States the first country with a comprehensive domestic law on WPS. Per the requirements of this historic legislation, the 2019 [U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security](#) (WPS Strategy) was developed as a whole-of-government policy to advance women’s meaningful participation in preventing and resolving conflict, countering violent extremism (CVE), and building post-conflict peace and security. [USAID’s WPS Implementation Plan](#) (2020) articulates how USAID supports the WPS Strategy through effective and coordinated action across our development and humanitarian assistance efforts. In the U.S. government’s forthcoming **U.S. Strategy and National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2023)**, USAID will continue to focus on integrating and institutionalizing women’s and girls’ perspectives into all fragility, violence prevention, and conflict-related strategies.

In adherence to the commitments of USAID’s Implementation Plan, the Agency has increased its efforts to align WPS with the [Administrator’s vision and approach to localization](#). The Administrator’s vision includes a set of new internal reforms, actions, and behavior changes so that all of USAID’s work puts local actors in the lead, strengthens local systems, and responds to the needs of local communities. As highlighted in the United States’ [National Security Strategy \(2022\)](#), USAID is “making development assistance more accessible and equitable by increasing engagement with and shifting 25 percent of funding to local partners, and doubling USAID’s work on empowering women and girls.” This includes a keen focus on building equitable partnerships with local women leaders and gender equality organizations to inform the U.S. government’s implementation of the WPS Act. As highlighted in the Agency’s newly released [Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy \(2023\)](#), the Agency’s gender equality and WPS activities continue to elevate the importance of advancing underserved and underrepresented groups’ rights through inclusive development.

Under the auspices of the National Security Council, USAID continues to work closely with its interagency partners, including the Departments of State, Defense, and Homeland Security (State, DOD, and DHS), to apply our collective expertise to respond to active and emerging conflicts in **Sudan, Ethiopia, and Ukraine**, where conflict and war continue to affect women and girls disproportionately.

The following report highlights implementation results from recent USAID WPS activities, as well as transparent reflections of lessons learned, challenges, and opportunities for next steps. This report is informed by USAID’s monitoring, evaluation, and learning data for the reporting period of Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. *\*The following report is reflective of the progress of FY 2022 WPS activities in USAID Missions and Operating Units. But may include FY 2021 new funding announcements for planned activities.\**

## Agency Highlights

During the reporting period of FY 2022, the Agency demonstrated the following notable achievements and also learned from the implementation of the WPS Strategy:



- **Increasing Investments in Activities that Support the Implementation of the WPS Strategy:** Since FY 2012, USAID’s dedicated WPS funding supported activities that promote women’s full and meaningful participation in peace and security processes. During the reporting period, the Agency continued implementation efforts with dedicated WPS funds in Yemen, Pakistan, Albania, West Africa, South Africa, Central Asia Regional Missions, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- **Integrating WPS within the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS) and the U.S. Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities:** The 2019 Global Fragility Act (GFA), and the associated U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS) is the U.S. Government’s (USG) framework for engaging with partners to address the drivers of fragility, prevent violence, and advance stability in conflict-affected areas. The SPSCPS incorporates decades of lessons learned from past and current USG approaches to and resourcing of stabilization and prevention efforts. Through USAID’s implementation of the U.S. Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent and Respond to Atrocities, the Agency recognizes the importance of the close overlap between atrocity prevention and policies related to WPS and GBV. Conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) can constitute an atrocity, and the disproportionate impact of GBV can forecast mass atrocities in areas of conflict and crisis. USAID is working with the interagency to incorporate a conflict, fragility, and gender lens across the spectrum of interagency policies and strategies. This includes the full spectrum of the Department of State’s diplomatic efforts and the Department of Defense’s security assistance and cooperation activities. Personnel will help ensure that Missions and programmatic efforts integrate that lens throughout the program lifecycle, from the choice of funding mechanism to analysis, program design and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). An early example of Department of Defense programming at the intersection of WPS and the Strategy is taking place in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). USAID works with the INDOPACOM team to conduct WPS programs in Papua New Guinea that strive to reduce GBV and promote the meaningful participation of women in its security forces.
- **USAID Remains the Leading Humanitarian Donor for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response Efforts Worldwide:** USAID provided more than 200 humanitarian assistance awards in the last year focused on GBV prevention and response efforts worldwide. Collectively, these interventions supported more than **3.7 million people in over 40 countries**. Interventions included psychosocial support, case management, health care for GBV survivors, and community-based prevention measures, such as safe spaces for women and girls. In FY 2022, USAID, jointly with the Department of State, launched the second phase of the USG flagship Safe from the Start ReVisioned program, which prioritizes, integrates, and coordinates GBV prevention and response across humanitarian responses from the outset of crises.
- **Increased USAID’s Staff Capacity and Core Capabilities on WPS, Gender Equality, Protection, and Women’s Empowerment:** The Agency continues to adjust and refine



its gender training. During the reporting period, USAID reached more than 2,200 staff with training that aligned with the requirements outlined in the WPS Act of 2017.

## USAID’s WPS Implementation Plan

USAID’s WPS Implementation Plan describes concrete steps to expand and strengthen the Agency’s work to empower women and girls in crisis, conflict, and fragile environments. The implementation plan highlights the foundational commitments under the WPS Strategy’s four core lines of effort. USAID fully recognizes the rich diversity of WPS interventions around the globe and, distinct from other implementing agencies, features regionally specific approaches to implementing the WPS Strategy. The Agency will continue to set goals to measure our progress and highlight core priorities in the forthcoming implementation plan (2024).

During the reporting period, Washington-based Operating Units and Missions measured the Agency’s progress using standard foreign-assistance indicators. These included the suite of cross-cutting gender indicators that address gender equality and women’s empowerment, GBV, and WPS. Additionally, U.S. interagency metrics help us measure our collective outcomes on the implementation of the WPS Strategy. USAID works in close coordination with the Gender Policy Council, the National Security Council, State, DOD, and DHS to achieve our shared commitments.

### Line of Effort 1: Participation

*Seek and support the preparation and meaningful participation of women around the world in decision-making processes related to conflict and crises.*

USAID recognizes that investing in women’s leadership and empowerment is critical to breaking cycles of conflict and instability that threaten global security and enhancing opportunities for social cohesion. Investment also builds lasting peace by supporting governments, civil society, and the private sector. Despite findings of correlations between the equity and equality of women and a community and nation’s stability; women remain critically underrepresented in conflict-prevention and conflict-resolution programming. USAID’s activities are tackling this omission and inequality and increasing women’s participation in peace and political processes.

**Regions: Middle East, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia**

**Countries: Yemen, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Tanzania, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, and Kyrgyz Republic**

- **Integrating WPS into the Agency’s Commitments to the Second Summit for Democracy:** USAID dismantles barriers to the political empowerment of women and girls by building the pipeline of women leaders and facilitating their safe and meaningful participation in political, peacebuilding, and transition processes. Through the **Advancing Women’s and Girls’ Civic and Political Leadership Initiative**, USAID will take an “ecosystem approach” to prevent and mitigate violence against women in



politics and public life, while simultaneously empowering women to fully participate in civic and political engagement and leadership. The Agency is providing more than \$15 million to this initiative and is beginning program implementation in nine focus countries: **Yemen, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, and Kyrgyz Republic.** The Agency is applying lessons learned on the unique challenges of women’s participation in areas of conflict and crisis. Relying on the expertise and lived experiences of local women leaders, WPS dedicated programming in **Yemen, Honduras, Nigeria, Kenya, and Côte d’Ivoire.** Additionally, the Agency attributed \$1 million of its dedicated WPS funding to increase the goals of the Second Summit for Democracy in **Yemen.**

- **Increasing Women’s and Girls’ Participation and Agency in Non-Presence USAID Missions:** In areas of active conflict, war, and crisis where USAID does not have a permanent presence due to dire security concerns, the Agency continues to implement multifaceted approaches to increase women’s meaningful participation, despite limited or no staff presence in high-threat locations.
- **Timely Interventions to Increase Ukrainian Women’s Meaningful Civic Participation in Local Government During the War:** With the objective of enhancing human rights, USAID in **Ukraine** prioritizes programming that increases women’s participation and protection from violence in defense efforts during the war. As women are particularly vulnerable in armed conflict settings, activities address such vulnerabilities by coordinating with concerned actors at the national, regional, and local levels of Ukrainian society. This included civil society representatives, human rights defenders, legal practitioners, and GBV survivors, with a focus on the role and importance of gender equity and equality in local government. The results were greater local government responsiveness to the gender-specific needs of the communities they serve, as well as increased lines of communication and trust between citizens and governments.
- **Preventing and Mitigating Violence Against Women in Politics and Public Life:** USAID’s Elections and Political Processes (EPP) Fund continued to support activities that address violence against women in politics and public life. For example, EPP funding helped prevent and mitigate violence against women during **Kenya’s** 2022 electoral cycle. The activities focused on strengthening early-warning and early-response mechanisms; building the capacity of local structures, networks, and institutions to promote and advocate for peaceful elections; training journalists on conflict and gender-sensitive reporting; and enhancing monitoring of election-related GBV as part of nationwide citizen and international election observation efforts.
- **Increasing Women’s Voice and Leadership in Humanitarian Settings:** USAID is working to increase the representation of women’s and girls’ unique needs and priorities in humanitarian settings through meaningful engagement and representation. “Women’s Voice and Leadership in Humanitarian Settings” is a five-year, \$5 million cooperative agreement with CARE that provides capacity strengthening, training, and technical



assistance to women-led organizations globally, with specific focuses on Colombia, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Nepal.

- **Supporting Women-Led Organizations in Ukraine and Haiti:** In direct and rapid response to crises, USAID partners with the United Nations Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) to support women’s organizations in crisis contexts. As part of WPHF’s emergency response efforts, it channels vital institutional and programmatic funding to local women’s organizations on the front lines of humanitarian and protection response efforts. WPHF’s approach supports women and girls and women’s organizations in its response in Ukraine and Haiti by: supporting women’s organizations with core and flexible funding; supporting internally displaced women and girls; and providing protection and psychological support to women and girls.

## **Line of Effort 2: Protection and Access**

*Promote the protection of women and girls’ human rights; access to humanitarian assistance; and safety from violence, abuse, and exploitation around the world.*

USAID is committed to protecting partners who receive U.S. foreign assistance and advancing human rights by supporting protection from all forms of GBV, sexual exploitation, and abuse. The Agency’s established survivor- and trauma-centered policies and programming advance women’s physical safety and mental health and lay the groundwork for a range of support services to survivors. Dedicated support to countries’ local and regional efforts helps protect women and girls from all forms of violence, and promotes their equal benefit from governmental and nongovernmental assistance, services, and development programs. Activities under Line of Effort 2 of the WPS Strategy directly align with the Agency’s commitments and three guiding principles under the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally](#) (2022). These are: to advance equity and inclusivity and address identity factors that increase the risks of GBV, particularly for the most marginalized groups; to support expanded approaches for addressing GBV priorities across a range of thematic areas; and to enhance our partnerships and improve our capacity to prevent and respond to GBV, including online.

The following interventions are a result of the latest evidence, research, and feedback from extensive consultations with civil society, academia, and survivors:

**Regions: Latin American and the Caribbean, Africa, Europe and Eurasia**

**Countries: Colombia, Guatemala, Cameroon, Kenya, and Georgia**

- **Addressing the Increase of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) on Women in Politics, Media, and Public Life:** USAID began implementation of the \$6 million “Transform Digital Spaces to Reflect Feminist Democratic Principles” Activity (Transform) to address TFGBV targeting women in politics and public life with implementing partners in **Kenya, Guatemala, and Georgia**. Through the Transform Activity, USAID will pilot practical, on-the-ground approaches to prevent, mitigate, and respond to TFGBV, then synthesize and share practical,



comparative knowledge to inform global efforts to address this problem. Transform's pilot projects will integrate expertise from women-led civil society organizations working to address GBV and women's political and civic participation, as well as organizations working on digital democracy. The Agency will address the deliberate violent attack of women in politics, media, and public life, on- and offline, especially in areas of conflict and crisis. In particular, the Agency will ensure the safety and protection of women journalists who are disproportionately attacked and harassed during war, natural disasters, and crises.

- ***Safe from the Start ReVisioned and the Urgent Need for Prioritizing Relief and Recovery Efforts Back into the WPS Strategy:*** The United States remains the leading donor of humanitarian assistance in the world. During the reporting period, USAID continued to prioritize GBV prevention and response, including through the expansion of the U.S. flagship initiative *Safe from the Start*, and allocated more than \$113 million in FY 2022. Through this funding, USAID supported 152 field-level GBV prevention and response personnel. The Agency also supported seven other personnel who contributed to global research, policy, and capacity-building for GBV in emergencies. Collectively, these interventions supported more than **3.2 million people in 40 countries**.
- ***Promoting Justice and Protection for Venezuelan Migrants, Returnees, and Receptor Communities in Colombia:*** USAID is supporting the prevention and protection of vulnerable populations of migrants in **Colombia**. The activity trained 1,430 people on trafficking in persons and 4,032 people on issues related to GBV. To institutionalize and integrate the importance of the protection of migrants into the community and government, the Agency trained 2,360 public officials and social leaders on self-protection, human rights, and digital security to address TFGBV and harassment for vulnerable populations.
- ***Protecting Women and Girls from the Destabilizing Effects of Violent Extremism:*** Dedicated WPS funding in **Cameroon** supports women in communities at risk of radicalization through activities aimed at reducing vulnerability to violent extremism. These include activities promoting community-based approaches that strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations, including women-led organizations, to engage communities, women, and girls in peacebuilding efforts. USAID activities also engage men and boys, with a focus on the populations in the far north, to combat GBV. For example, men are actively engaging in combating GBV by: providing emotional support to those affected by or at risk of violence; giving credence to survivors' experiences; and advocating for the rights of women and girls. In addition, male gender champions are challenging sexist and disrespectful behaviors and work to influence their peers and younger generations.

The Agency continues to put survivors at the forefront of WPS policy and programmatic interventions. The aforementioned activities are grounded in survivor-centered, culture- and conflict-sensitive, and trauma-informed approaches to provide assistance that meets survivor needs. USAID believes there is great power in storytelling and will continue to elevate the stories and lived experiences of survivors of GBV and CRSV in a safe and appropriate manner. Elevating survivor voices and stories is part of an



effort to generate global awareness, resources, and attention, as well as change the lives of the most vulnerable for generations to come. For example, the Agency's assistance to the **African Union's (AU) Campaign to End Child Marriage** supported the participation of the AU in the third African Girls' Summit, which provided a platform for sharing survivor stories, best practices, and data to galvanize action toward the elimination of GBV and promote the role of women and girls in peacebuilding processes.

### **Line of Effort 3: Internal U.S. Capabilities**

*Adjust United States international programs to improve outcomes in equality for, and the empowerment of, women.*

USAID is consistently increasing its internal capacity in Washington and at its Missions by offering a robust suite of training modules focused on gender equality and women's empowerment to all USAID staff. To increase the Agency's capacity on WPS, the Bureau of Conflict Prevention Stabilization (CPS) coordinates closely with USAID's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Hub in the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI/GenDev). This coordination ensures these Agency-level training modules integrate key WPS objectives including: the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding; the protection of women and girls from violence, exploitation, and abuse; and the safe, equitable access to relief and recovery assistance for women and girls.

#### **Highlighted Regions: Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.**

- **Required Gender Training for all USAID Staff:** The Agency continues to adjust and refine its gender training. During the reporting period, USAID reached more than 2,200 staff with training and self-led courses aligned with requirements in the WPS Act of 2017. In FY 2022, more than 200 USAID staff participated in elective online gender training courses (for example, a course on GBV and the Automated Directive System 205 course, which is USAID's mandatory directive on gender equality and women's empowerment).
- **Regional Focus WPS Trainings for Washington and Mission Staff:** USAID continues to prioritize strengthening and expanding the reach of its WPS training activities. During the reporting period, the Agency trained more than 150 Washington and Mission staff on USAID's implementation of the WPS Strategy. This includes tailored, regional-specific WPS 101 training sessions for USAID Missions in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Additionally, the WPS Training of Trainers (ToT) course is offered to staff who have completed the WPS 101 course in the last two years. The ToT aims to deepen USAID staff's understanding of the WPS Strategy and provide staff with best practices.
  - **Increasing Our Internal Capacity on Inclusive Development through New Training for All Agency Staff:** USAID recently launched a new required Inclusive Development training for all staff, regardless of staffing mechanisms. The training introduces staff to basic concepts needed to tailor programming to reach marginalized and underrepresented communities worldwide. The Inclusive Development Hub is also working on a new training that will be available to



guide all staff on advancing racial and ethnic equity in Agency programming, which is expected to be launched at the end of the calendar year.

After a robust set of consultations with civil society partners and Missions, the Agency learned that it must **go beyond programming to effectively institutionalize the WPS agenda**. As we continue to see a trend of declining dedicated WPS funding, Mission and Washington staff are eagerly looking for alternate opportunities to institutionalize WPS core objectives. In fact, FY 2022 USAID reporting mechanisms reflect that Operating Units (OUs) are increasingly integrating the components of the WPS Strategy with little dedicated WPS or gender equality funding. The uptick in reporting and higher funding attributions for GBV and WPS standalone programming is due to the commitment of the OU staff to WPS objectives and their **creative and entrepreneurial approaches** for socializing WPS across all of the Mission's efforts. However, USAID recognizes that the reporting, monitoring, evaluation, and learning of activities often fall on a very limited number of Gender, Social Inclusion, Technical Advisors, and committed Foreign Service National staff. The Agency will continue to look for opportunities to increase the availability of WPS subject matter experts (SMEs) and technical advisors to the Missions and invest in more training across OUs. **Increased training is strongly correlated with better reporting and higher funding attributions for WPS** and all sectors that integrate gender equality and women's empowerment across its activities.

#### **Line of Effort 4: Partner Support**

*Encourage partner governments to adopt policies, plans, and capacity to improve the meaningful participation of women in processes connected to peace and security and decision-making institutions*

The Agency values its partnerships with diverse stakeholders, particularly with host governments, to adopt policies, strategies, and plans that aim to increase women's participation and protection in peace, security, and CVE-related processes. This includes the development, implementation, and review of partner governments' National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS.

**Highlighted Regions: Africa, Europe, Asia**

**Highlighted Countries: AU Member States, United Kingdom, Korea**

- **Harnessing Political Will and Commitments on CRSV through the Agency's Longstanding Partnerships with the African Union and the Office of the Special Envoy on WPS:** In part through USAID's funding support to the African Union's (AU) WPS Continental Results Framework program and broader WPS efforts, the Agency has demonstrated its commitment to eliminating CRSV. As part of the AU's Annual Open Session on WPS and CRSV, the AU's Special Envoy on WPS invited the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to brief and advocate that AU member states harness its political will and leadership in ending CRSV in Africa. Following the brief by the Office of the Special Envoy on WPS (OSE) and the Special Representative on CRSV, the AU Peace and Security Council committed to institutionalize an annual open session to serve as a forum to take stock of progress made in eradicating CRSV on the continent. This effort further supports the AU's OSE for a technical advisor to assist





member states and regional organizations in the development and subsequent implementation of additional NAPs on WPS and Regional Action Plans on WPS. Other USAID-supported activities include WPS stakeholder mapping, development of WPS case studies, support for publication of the AU's annual WPS report, and ongoing rollout of the use of AU's Continental Results Framework by member states in the delivery of their commitments on the WPS Agenda.

- **Advancing U.S. Leadership in the WPS Focal Points Network:** The Women, Peace, and Security Focal Points Network was created to assist Member States and regional organizations to improve and strengthen the implementation of the WPS agenda at the origin of decision-making processes. The initiative stems from a commitment made by Spain during the high-level review of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) in 2015. The United States proudly serves as the 2023 Co-Chair with Romania and hosted the network's 100 countries, which included multilateral organizations in Washington this year. USAID will lead the integration of WPS and development with network partners.

USAID values its partnerships and trusted relationships at the local and national levels. Our long-standing bilateral relationships and commitments with multilateral organizations helps to broaden our reach, influence, and impact to implement WPS effectively around the world. The Agency continues to seek additional opportunities for USAID's technical advisors to engage with their bilateral and multilateral counterparts to share lessons learned and best practices in an effort to avoid duplication of efforts in countries of interest. For example, USAID developed a work plan with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) on WPS and Women's Economic Empowerment, in which we share best practices on our shared WPS equities.

## Lessons Learned

As the United States prepares to release the forthcoming Strategy and National Action Plan on WPS, USAID looks forward to developing a new implementation plan that holds the Agency accountable for supporting women and girls adversely affected by conflict through concrete, effective, and coordinated action across our development and humanitarian-assistance efforts. The Agency continues to face numerous challenges in insecure operating environments. For example, trends of closing civic and democratic space have led to more restrictions for civil society, including women leaders, human rights defenders, and activists. Additionally, ongoing insecurity due to closing civic spaces, violent extremism, and climate and food insecurity crises continue to decrease women's access to education and health services. USAID remains committed to inclusive development and support of all marginalized populations, such as individuals who identify as LGBTQI+, persons with disabilities, and indigenous communities, to ensure their needs and contributions are meaningfully included in peace and security efforts. The Agency will continue to pursue equitable partnerships through its keen focus on keeping local actors and all survivors at the center of our work to advance democracy and peace around the world.



## **Annex III – Acknowledgements**

The 2023 U.S. Strategy and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security reflects robust collaboration across multiple federal agencies and input from a diverse set of civil society actors around the world. The core drafting team was comprised of technical advisors from the Department of State’s Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues, the Department of Defense’s Office of the Secretary of Defense Policy and Joint Staff, the Department of Homeland Security’s Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, and U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization. Technical staff from the following bureaus also played a key role in the development of the Strategy: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations; and the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration; and the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. We sincerely thank all regional and functional bureau advisors who provided valuable feedback and suggestions throughout the strategy development process.

We are deeply grateful to representatives from civil society organizations and experts that participated in the consultations that informed the Strategy. In particular we would like to thank Mirsad “Miki” Jacevic and USAID advisors who organized interagency consultations and listening sessions with global civil society leaders. We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to the members of the U.S. Civil Society Working Group on WPS and countless other civil society organizations and experts who shared their time and valuable input to strengthen the Strategy.

Finally, and most importantly, we recognize the women who are on the frontlines of building peace in their communities, countries, and regions every day.