October 2026

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Minority Report

Trump's War on Women

The Systematic Dismantling of Decades of Progress At Home and Abroad During the Administration's Second Term



Committee on Foreign Relations

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

October 29, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

For decades, the United States has recognized that the status of women and girls is closely tied to global stability and security.

Closing gender gaps in women's health, education and political participation is directly linked to a country's economic competitiveness.[1] In the United States, increases in women's labor force participation over the past 125 years have been linked to our country's macroeconomic growth, the health of American families and increased workplace productivity and safety.[2] Globally, closing gender gaps in women's economic participation would generate up to $28 trillion in additional Gross Domestic Product annually.[3] On matters of peace and security, the inclusion of women in peace processes increases the likelihood that peace agreements last 15 years by 35 percent.[4] Women's political leadership impacts community development and wellbeing as well as young women's career and educational aspirations, with effects that extend to future generations.[5] Women's access to healthcare and their ability to determine the timing and spacing of pregnancies enables them to participate more fully in their education and the economy, while healthier women and girls contribute to stronger families and communities.[6] Across all dimensions, investments in gender equality are both moral and strategic imperatives.

Congress has passed bipartisan laws to advance the role of women and girls in U.S. foreign policy, including the *Women, Peace and Security Act* and the *Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act*, both of which President Trump signed into law during his first term.[7]

During his first term, President Trump also launched the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative and said that investing in women meant investing in "families," "prosperity" and "peace."[8]

In his second term, President Trump abandoned these first-term initiatives to support women and dismantled most of the diplomatic and foreign assistance infrastructure built to carry out work mandated by law. President Trump eliminated the U.S. Agency for International

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1 International Monetary Fund (IMF), IMF Strategy Toward Mainstreaming Gender, IMF Policy Paper No. 2022/037 (July 2022), https://www.imf.org/-/media/files/publications/pp/2022/english/ppea2022037.pdf.

2 National Association of Home Builders, "The Power of Women in the Workforce," Eye on Housing, Apr. 22, 2025, https://eyeonhousing.org/2025/04/the-power-of-women-in-the-workforce/; Stefania Albanesi, "Changing Business Cycles: The Role of Women's Employment," National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) Working Paper No. 25655 (Mar. 2019), https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25655/w25655.pdf.

3 Jonathan Woetzel et al., The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women's Equality Can Add $12 Trillion to Global Growth, McKinsey Global Institute, at 9 (Sept. 2015), https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth.

4 UN Women, Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, at 9 (2015), https://wps.unwomen.org/participation/.

5 Benedict Clements et al., Women in Policymaking: Social Spending and Outcomes, National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), Working Paper No. 187 (Oct. 2025), https://ncaer.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/NC-WP-187.pdf; Lori Beaman et al., "Female Leadership Raises Aspirations and Educational Attainment for Girls: A Policy Experiment in India," Science, Jan. 12, 2012, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3394179/.

6 World Health Organization (WHO) & UNDP-UNFPA-UNICEF-WHO-World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP), Impact of Contraceptive Use on Women's Health and Socioeconomic Status, Evidence Brief (Sept. 2025), https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/06151e82-c377-4333-8f36-55f3ec07acb2/content.

7 Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, Pub. L. No. 115-68 (Oct. 6, 2017), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-115publ68/pdf/PLAW-115publ68.pdf; Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-428 (Jan. 9, 2019), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-115publ428/pdf/PLAW-115publ428.pdf.

8 The White House, "President Donald J. Trump Is Committed to Women's Economic Empowerment Around the World," Feb. 7, 2019, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-committed-womens-economic-empowerment-around-world.

Development (USAID), cut foreign assistance and reorganized the U.S. Department of State, ending programs that provided healthcare, kept girls in school and protected women and girls from violence and human trafficking. The Administration simultaneously fired the diplomatic personnel necessary to execute this work. The Administration now uses its participation in multilateral fora, such as the United Nations (UN), to restrict women's access to healthcare and participation in efforts to resolve conflict and negotiate peace.[9]

The consequences are already clear.

In Afghanistan, where a woman dies from pregnancy-related causes every two hours, U.S. foreign assistance cuts have shuttered health services across the country. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates the loss of U.S. funding will result in 1,200 additional maternal deaths by 2028.[10]

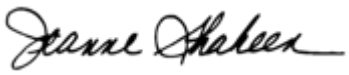
Afghanistan is not an isolated case. As this report documents, cuts across U.S. foreign assistance have disproportionately harmed women and girls and eliminated tools that the United States previously used to support women and girls to prevent conflict, strengthen economies, combat trafficking and extremism and reduce instability.

These cuts have also created an opening for U.S. competitors. In 2025, China hosted a Global Leaders' Meeting on Women to mark the 30th anniversary of the landmark Beijing World Conference on Women, positioning itself as a global leader on women's equality.[11]

We commissioned this report to document how the Trump Administration's changes to U.S. foreign policy have targeted women and girls and, in doing so, weakened American security and influence.

The evidence is clear that supporting women and girls is not separate from advancing American interests. It is one of the ways we prevent conflict, strengthen our partners and compete for influence around the world. Congress should not allow those tools to disappear.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

[9] Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), *A Year of Harms: The Impact of US Foreign Aid Cuts on Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises* (Jan. 2026), https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/YearofHarms_Report.pdf.

[10] UN News, "US Funding Pause Leaves Millions 'in Jeopardy,' Insist UN Humanitarians," Feb. 4, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/02/1159746.

[11] Reuters, "China's Xi Calls for More Women in Governance Despite Overseeing Decline," NBC News, Oct. 13, 2025, https://www.nbcnews.com/world/asia/china-xi-calls-more-women-governance-despite-overseeing-decline-rcna237474.

Executive Summary

The empowerment of women and girls is among the smartest investments the United States can make in advancing peace, security and stability globally. Women's involvement in peace processes is associated with more durable peace agreements, and their representation in local government brings tangible benefits to communities and families. Women's safety and wellbeing are tied to safer communities, economic productivity, growth and family health and wellbeing, while women's economic security boosts growth, supports development and contributes to healthy families.

This report documents how changes to United States foreign policy during the second Trump Administration targeted women and girls and in doing so, weakened tools that the United States has used to advance its national security. It was developed by the Minority staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and is based on academic research, public reporting, staff travel and meetings and communications with former U.S. officials, civil society organizations and experts.

For more than three decades, advancing women's and girls' participation has been a bipartisan U.S. foreign policy priority. That commitment continued during President Trump's first term when he signed the *Women, Peace and Security Act* and *Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act*, launched the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative and issued the first U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace and Security.

This report finds a sharp reversal during President Trump's second term. The Trump Administration's elimination of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), drastic cuts to foreign assistance and changes across the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Defense and other federal agencies have dismantled programs, offices and expertise built over decades.[12] These changes have harmed women and girls and weakened U.S. national security capabilities and influence abroad.

Key Findings

1. **U.S. Investments in Women and Girls Deliver Outsized Benefits; Ending Them Is Imposing Far-Reaching Costs**: Investing in women and girls delivers outsized benefits for their families, communities and future generations. Investments in women and girls' education, health and economic opportunities increase women's productivity and earnings and improve maternal and child health, nutrition and educational outcomes.[13] These benefits are mutually reinforcing and, over time, contribute to greater labor force participation, higher productivity and stronger economic growth.[14] Because healthier and more educated women are also better positioned to invest in their children's wellbeing, the benefits can carry across generations, creating a multiplier

[12] Kathy Spillar, "This Is Not Just a Budget. It's a War on Women," Ms. Magazine, May 31, 2025, https://msmagazine.com/2025/05/31/republican-budget-cuts-women-medicaid-snap/.

[13] Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH), Knowledge Summary #24: The Economic Benefits of Investing in Women's and Children's Health, World Health Organization (WHO) (Mar. 2013), https://pmnch.who.int/resources/publications/m/item/pmnch-knowledge-summary-24-the-economic-benefits-of-investing-in-women-s-and-children-s-health.

[14] World Economic Forum (WEF) & McKinsey Health Institute, Closing the Women's Health Gap: A $1 Trillion Opportunity to Improve Lives and Economies, in partnership with the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH) (Jan. 2024), https://pmnch.who.int/resources/publications/m/item/closing-the-women-s-health-gap/.

effect.[15] These investments have widespread economic consequences. A failure to invest in girls' education and the prevention of child marriage, for example, could result in losses of up to $2.5 trillion by 2040.[16] Closing gaps in women's labor force participation could add as much as $7 trillion to global GDP.[17] Such investments also yield dividends for countries' security. Peace agreements are 64 percent less likely to fail when women and civil society participate in them.[18] Eviscerating U.S. programs and diplomatic efforts that advance gender equality and empower women and girls is an unforced error with far-reaching consequences for women, their families, communities and global security.

2. **Foreign Assistance Cuts Were Designed to Harm Women and Girls**: In cutting U.S. foreign assistance, the Trump Administration disproportionately eliminated funding for programs benefiting women and girls, including 88 percent of funding for maternal and child health, 94 percent of funding for sexual and reproductive health and nearly 80 percent of funding to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.[19] Women-led organizations were also hit hard: a 2025 United Nations (UN) Women survey found that 90 percent of women-led and women's rights organizations surveyed in humanitarian settings had been affected by funding cuts, and nearly half expected to close within six months if funding levels did not improve.[20] Deliberate cuts also had a devastating ripple effect across families and communities globally, imposing "systems-level shocks" across public health and finance systems.[21]

3. **Cuts to Global Health Programs Are Increasing Risks to Women and Children**: In 2025, deaths among children under five were projected to increase for the first time this century, reversing decades of progress.[22] U.S. funding cuts have disrupted maternal and child health services in some of the world's most vulnerable countries. In Afghanistan alone, 800 health clinics closed,[23] and UNFPA estimates the loss of U.S. funding will result in 1,200 additional maternal deaths by 2028.[24] Cuts to contraceptive and family planning services in 2025 are estimated to have left 47.6 million people without access to contraceptives and resulted in 17.1 million unintended pregnancies and 34,000 maternal deaths.[25]

4. **Dismantling a Generation of U.S. Expertise on Women and Girls**: The elimination of USAID and reorganization of the State Department closed offices, terminated personnel and dispersed expertise on women and girls. These changes included eliminating the White House Gender Policy Council and the positions of National Security Council Senior Director for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues and USAID's

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[15] Michelle Remme et al., "Investing in the Health of Girls and Women: A Best Buy for Sustainable Development," The BMJ, June 2, 2020, at m1175, https://www.bmj.com/content/369/bmj.m1175.

[16] Rachel Vogelstein & Jennifer Klein, Accelerating Efforts to End Child Marriage, Columbia SIPA Institute of Global Politics Women's Initiative, at 11 (Mar. 2026), https://igp.sipa.columbia.edu/sites/igp/files/2026-03/Accelerating%20Efforts%20to%20End%20Child%20Marriage.pdf.

[17] Kia Guarino, "Gender Equality Is Smart Economics. It's Time to Invest Accordingly," World Economic Forum, Mar. 16, 2026, https://www.weforum.org/stories/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/gender-equality-smart-economics/.

[18] Rachel B. Vogelstein et al., "New CFR Interactive Report Explores Women's Participation in Peace Processes," Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Nov. 2, 2017, https://www.cfr.org/articles/new-cfr-interactive-report-explores-womens-participation-peace-processes.

[19] Refugees International, "No One Cares About Us Anymore": How U.S. Aid Cuts Have Intensified the Crisis for Women and Girls in Afghanistan, https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/no-one-cares-about-us-anymore/.

[20] UN Women, At a Breaking Point: The Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts on Women's Organizations in Humanitarian Crises Worldwide, (May 2025), p. 11, https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/at-a-breaking-point-the-impact-of-foreign-aid-cuts-on-womens-organizations-in-humanitarian-crises-worldwide-en.pdf.

[21] Sarah Branoff et al., "Global Health Consequences of the 2025 US Foreign Aid Freeze: Rapid Assessments in Colombia, Kenya and Nepal," BMJ Public Health, July 2026, https://bmjpublichealth.bmj.com/content/4/3/e004904.

[22] Lauren Kent, "Child Deaths Projected to Rise for First Time This Century, as Aid Cuts Reverse Decades of Progress," CNN, Dec. 4, 2025, https://www.cnn.com/2025/12/04/world/child-deaths-projected-rise-gates-foundation-intl.

[23] Leila Molana-Allen & Eric O'Connor, "A Look at the Devastating Impact of USAID Cuts in Rural Afghanistan," PBS News Hour, Aug. 25, 2026, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/a-look-at-the-devastating-impact-of-usaid-cuts-in-rural-afghanistan.

[24] UN News, "US Funding Pause Leaves Millions 'in Jeopardy,' Insist UN Humanitarians," Feb. 4, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/02/1159746.

[25] Elizabeth A. Sully & Amy Friedrich-Karnik, "Foreign Aid Cuts Will Lead to 34,000 More Pregnancy-Related Deaths in Just One Year," Guttmacher Institute, Mar. 18, 2025, https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2025/03/foreign-aid-cuts-will-lead-34000-more-pregnancy-related-deaths-just-one-year.

Senior Coordinator for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality.[26] This also included the elimination of the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues, which led efforts to champion women and girls globally, including through women's economic security; advancing women, peace and security, the empowerment of adolescent girls and the prevention of and response to gender-based violence.

5. **Policy Changes Bypassed Congressional Directives and Relied on Broad Keyword Searches**: In its efforts to identify programs and policies for review or elimination, the Administration used keyword searches for terms associated with diversity, equity and inclusion and other topics, including women, female, disability, diversity, discrimination, equity, gender, gender-based violence, minorities, victims and vulnerable populations.[27] This arbitrary and inchoate process affected policy planning and terminated programs authorized and funded by Congress.

6. **Women's Representation in Senior U.S. National Security Positions Has Declined**: Women now hold just 17.4 percent of Cabinet and Cabinet-level positions.[28] The decline in women's representation is also evident in diplomatic and military leadership. When President Trump took office, nearly half of Senate-confirmed U.S. ambassadors were women; today, fewer than 25 U.S. diplomatic missions are led by women.[29] At the Department of Defense, there are no female four-star officers on active duty and none in pending appointments for three- or four-star roles. The result is the lowest percentage of women among nominees to high-ranking positions in 25 years.[30]

> *"This report is a sobering and exhaustive account of the Trump Administration's deliberate actions to undermine women's progress in the United States and globally, and represents the diminishment of America, our ideals and our standing in the world. The Administration's actions are immoral and backward with serious consequences for the well-being of women and girls everywhere, harming our national security and economic prosperity. The report should serve as a call to action—to undo what has been destroyed and to restore America's commitment to human rights, peace and justice. America is better than this."*
>
> — MELANNE VERVEER, FIRST U.S. AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE FOR GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES.

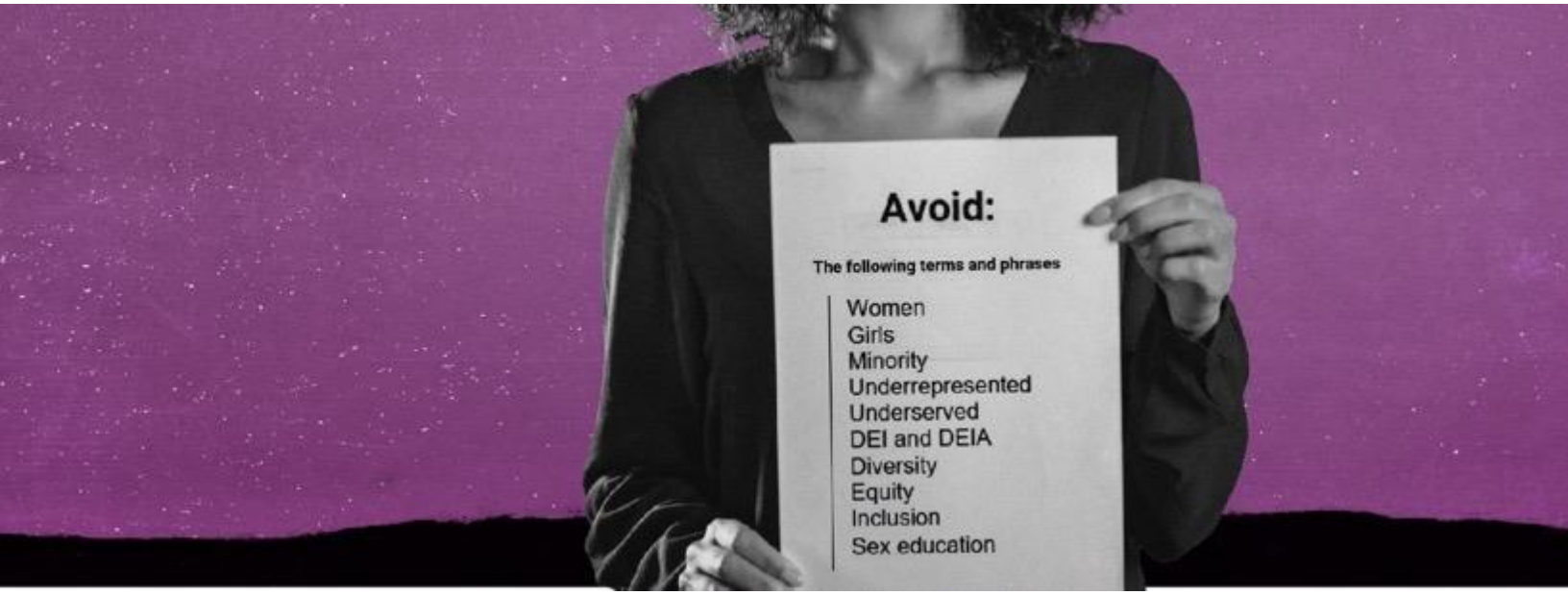
[26] Exec. Order No. 14168, "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government," 90 Fed. Reg. 8615 (Jan. 20, 2025), https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/30/2025-02090/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal; Catherine Powell & Ranen Miao, "A Conversation With Jennifer Klein: The History of Gender Policy at the White House and Where We Go From Here?," Council on Foreign Relations, Aug. 31, 2026, https://www.cfr.org/articles/a-conversation-with-jennifer-klein-the-history-of-gender-policy-at-the-white-house-and-where-we-go-from-here.

[27] Eileen AJ Connelly, "Federal Government's Growing Banned Words List Is Chilling Act of Censorship," PEN America, Dec. 22, 2025, https://pen.org/banned-words-list/.

[28] CAWP Staff, "Women in Presidential Cabinets and High-Level Staff in the Executive Office of the President," Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, June 26, 2026, https://cawp.rutgers.edu/blog/women-presidential-cabinets-and-high-level-staff-executive-office-president.

[29] American Foreign Service Association, "Tracker: Current U.S. Ambassadors," last visited September 14, 2026, https://afsa.org/list-ambassadorial-appointments; American Foreign Service Association, "Appointments: Joseph R. Biden," July 29, 2026, https://afsa.org/appointments-joseph-r-biden. Figures reflect author's calculations based on AFSA data; AFSA does not publish gender breakdowns; Senate Foreign Relations Committee assessment of diplomatic posts.

[30] Ellen Mitchell, "Hegseth's ousting of female leaders may have 'chilling effect' at Pentagon," The Hill, July 27, 2025, https://thehill.com/policy/defense/5421346-pentagon-reassigns-women-leadership/.



THE SYSTEMATIC ERASURE OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT AT HOME AND ABROAD

The Trump Administration's war on women was devised by Project 2025, a playbook outlining regressive policies on women, girls and American families.[31] Although President Trump distanced himself from Project 2025 on the campaign trail, he embraced its radical proposals once in office.

On his first day back in the White House in 2025, President Trump signed executive orders to roll back "illegal and immoral discrimination programs, going by the name 'diversity, equity, and inclusion' (DEI)."[32] The "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity" Executive Order (E.O.) rescinded a 60-year-old Executive Order providing civil rights protections for federal contractors by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity.[33] A second E.O.—*"Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing"*—instructed "the termination of all discriminatory programs, including 'diversity, equity, inclusion' (DEI) mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities in the Federal Government, under whatever name they appear."[34] These top-down directives were interpreted to require every U.S. department and agency to eliminate references to DEI activities and policies, as well as images

[31] Paul Dans and Steven Groves, eds., *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, The Heritage Foundation (2023), https://www.project2025.org/.

[32] The White House, "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing," Executive Order, Jan. 20, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/.

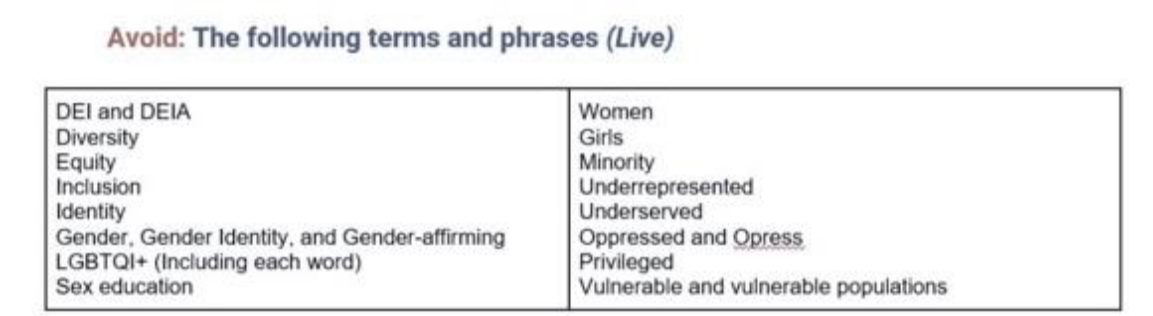
[33] National Women's Law Center, "Trump's Executive Order Revoking Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Requirements for Federal Contractors," Jan. 31, 2025, https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/NWLC-Fact-Sheet-EO-OFCCP-1.31.25.pdf.

[34] The White House, "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing," Executive Order, Jan. 20, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/.

and stories about women, people of color, and the LGBTQI+ community from government websites.[35] **At the State Department and USAID, the mandates of the Executive Orders were broadly incorporated into a review of foreign assistance, resulting in the termination of staff, initiatives, programs and even dialogue regarding women and girls.**[36] For instance, on May 28, 2025, President Trump proposed a $9.4 billion rescission package to Congress which perversely described global health rescissions as "eliminat[ing] programs that are antithetical to American interests and worsen the lives of women and children, like 'family planning' and reproductive health,' LGBTQI+ activities, and 'equity' programs."[37]

The Trump Administration used a reductive keyword-based approach rather than an objective, evidence-based process, to target programs and policies related to women and girls, undermining the United States' credibility and national security while harming women and girls globally.

PEN America has compiled a growing list of 350 words and phrases considered to be unacceptable to the Trump Administration, including women, female, disability, diversity, discrimination, equity, gender, gender-based violence, minorities, victims and vulnerable populations.[38] In practice, the Administration's opaque approach has caused confusion and program terminations. For example, employees of EducationUSA, a State Department program that recruits international students to come to U.S. schools, initially received guidance on a list of terms and phrases to avoid when engaging with international students, which includes the words "women" and "girls." The list was later rescinded, but left EducationUSA uncertain about how to recruit the more than one million international students who contribute billions of dollars to U.S. colleges and universities annually.[39]



Avoid: The following terms and phrases *(Live)*

DEI and DEIA	Women
Diversity	Girls
Equity	Minority
Inclusion	Underrepresented
Identity	Underserved
Gender, Gender Identity, and Gender-affirming	Oppressed and Opress
LGBTQI+ (Including each word)	Privileged
Sex education	Vulnerable and vulnerable populations

In a screenshot of a since-rescinded State Department document, obtained by NPR, titled "EducationUSA Messaging Guidance: America First," employees were encouraged to avoid phrases in their external and internal communication that included "women," "girls" and "underserved." Source: Jenna McLaughlin, NPR, "State Dept. Staffers Get Mixed Messages on How to Serve International Students," March 4, 2025.[40]

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[35] Meg Anderson, "Trans People, Women, People of Color Erased from Federal Sites," NPR, Mar. 19, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/03/19/nx-s1-5317567/federal-websites-lgbtq-diversity-erased.

[36] Kayla McGill & Rachel Wein, The Elimination of the Women, Peace, and Security Implementation Capacity at the Department of State, New Lines Institute (Jan. 2026), https://newlinesinstitute.org/gender-peace-security/the-elimination-of-the-women-peace-and-security-implementation-capacity-at-the-department-of-state/.

[37] Special Message on Proposed Rescissions, The White House, May 28, 2025. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Proposed-Rescissions-of-Budgetary-Resources.pdf.

[38] Eileen AJ Connelly, "Federal Government's Growing Banned Words List Is Chilling Act of Censorship," PEN America, Dec. 22, 2025, https://pen.org/banned-words-list/.

[39] Jenna McLaughlin, "State Dept. staffers get mixed messages on how to serve international students," NPR, Mar. 4, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/03/04/nx-s1-5316196/state-dept-staffers-get-mixed-messages-on-how-to-serve-international-students.

[40] Id.

From Trump Executive Orders to Erasure: Five Consequences for Women and Girls and U.S. National Security

1. Hollowing Out Senior U.S. Defense and Diplomatic Leadership

Around the world, the status of women and girls is a bellwether of peace and stability; countries that undo progress for women and girls are less resilient, more unstable and insecure.[41] The Trump Administration's drastic reduction in the number of women decision-makers risks eroding institutional expertise, narrowing perspectives and weakening the United States' capacity to achieve its national security priorities.

Women now make up only 17.4 percent of Cabinet or Cabinet-level appointments—far below the 52 percent reached under the Biden Administration—with historic turnover of women in Cabinet-level positions.[42] As of September 2026, just 63 of 323 confirmed presidential nominees across the federal government were women.[43] Targeted cuts to defense and diplomatic leadership have harmed military readiness, institutional performance and morale.[44]

At the Department of Defense, Secretary Hegseth conducted a flawed review of women's participation in ground combat roles, dismissed high-ranking and qualified women and eliminated a long-standing advisory committee dedicated to advising the Secretary on recruitment and treatment of women in the military using inflammatory rhetoric, including by condoning violence against women.[45]

- Secretary Hegseth systematically removed senior female officers, and all women were purged from the military's top jobs.
- Only "[e]ight of 201 candidates for high-ranking posts this year have been women, or four percent — less than half the average percentage of the past 10 years."[46]
- There are no female four-star officers on active duty and none in pending appointments for three- or four-star roles. The result is the lowest percentage of nominations of women to high-ranking positions in 25 years.[47]

The hollowing out of the U.S. diplomatic corps has had particular emphasis on removing women from senior leadership positions even as the Trump Administration nominated individuals whose professional record and past statements would be disqualifying for prior Administrations.[48]

- Fewer than 25 U.S. diplomatic missions around the world are led by a female Ambassador, with women accounting for just 13 percent of the leadership at Embassies around the world.[49] In

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[41] Futures Without Violence (FWV), Linking Security of Women & Security of States: Blueprint (May 2017), https://futureswithoutviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FWV_blueprint_1-Evidence.pdf.

[42] CAWP Staff, "Women in Presidential Cabinets and High-Level Staff in the Executive Office of the President," Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, June 26, 2026, https://cawp.rutgers.edu/blog/women-presidential-cabinets-and-high-level-staff-executive-office-president

[43] The Washington Post and Partnership for Public Service, "Tracking Trump's Cabinet and Administration Nominations," Washington Post, last visited Sept. 15, 2026, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/interactive/2025/trump-appointee-tracker/.

[44] Eleanor Watson, "With ousting of admiral to NATO, Trump administration has fired at least 9 senior officers," CBS News, Apr. 8, 2025, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/shoshana-chatfield-admiral-to-nato-fired-senior-military-officers-ousted/.

[45] National Partnership for Women & Families and Areeba Haider, "One Year In, 53 Ways the Second Trump Administration Is Harming Women and Families," Jan. 16, 2026, https://nationalpartnership.org/one-year-in-53-ways-the-second-trump-administration-is-harming-women-and-families/.

[46] C.J. Robinson, "Under Hegseth, Women's Share of Top Military Promotions Plunged This Year," The New York Times, Aug. 6, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/06/upshot/military-promotions-women-hegseth.html.

[47] Ellen Mitchell, "Hegseth's ousting of female leaders may have 'chilling effect' at Pentagon," The Hill, July 27, 2025, https://thehill.com/policy/defense/5421346-pentagon-reassigns-women-leadership/.

[48] Clyde McGrady, "Trump Nominates an Apostle of 'White Erasure' for the State Department," The New York Times, Feb. 13, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/13/us/politics/jeremy-carl-claremont-institute-senate-hearing.html.

[49] American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), "Tracker: Current U.S. Ambassadors," last updated Oct. 20, 2026, https://afsa.org/list-ambassadorial-appointments (last visited Oct. 26, 2026); The Washington Post and Partnership for Public Service, "Tracking Trump's Cabinet and

contrast, on January 19, 2025, the day before President Trump assumed office, almost half of all Senate-confirmed U.S. Ambassadors were women.[50]

- Women account for just 17 percent of all nominees submitted by President Trump to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.[51] Of the 206 nominees submitted to the Senate for State Department positions as of October 25, 2026, only 35 have been women.[52]
- In a similar timeframe in the first Trump Administration, 212 nominees were submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for consideration and 26 percent of those nominees were women.[53] By contrast, in the first twenty-two months of President Biden's term, 245 State Department nominees were submitted to the Senate and 113 of them – or 46 percent, almost half – were women.[54]
- More than half of all Ambassadors recalled by President Trump and Secretary Rubio throughout the second Trump Administration have been women.[55]
- Career nominees account for less than 10 percent of all State Department nominations under the second Trump Administration.[56] Of the 32 career nominations sent to the Senate between January 2025 and October 2026, only seven are women.[57]

Under Secretary Rubio, the State Department has actively pushed women out of senior posts while appointing officials with significantly less expertise and creating additional barriers to women's advancement.

- The Trump Administration eliminated the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (S/ODI) which advised the Secretary of State on building a competitive workforce, responding to statute and congressional inquiry.[58]
- Secretary Rubio removed diversity as a factor in Foreign Service Officer tenure and promotion criteria, a formal mechanism to track inclusive leadership and address barriers affecting women.
- The State Department dismantled peer and mentorship initiatives and employee affinity groups like Executive Women @ State that facilitated networking and tracked data on hiring, promotion and retention of women.
- Despite commitments to Congress,[59] the State Department halted applications to congressionally mandated merit-based talent development pipeline programs like Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Graduate[60] and Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Fellowship Programs,[61] while terminating the Donald M. Payne International Development Graduate Fellowship. The Administration abruptly announced a resumption of the three programs in October 2026, but the new programs will not include a focus on improving diversity in hiring.[62]

Administration Nominations,"; Washington Post, accessed Sept. 15, 2026, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/interactive/2025/trump-appointee-tracker/.

[50] American Foreign Service Association, "Tracker: Current U.S. Ambassadors," last visited September 14, 2026, https://afsa.org/list-ambassadorial-appointments; American Foreign Service Association, "Appointments: Joseph R. Biden," July 29, 2026, https://afsa.org/appointments-joseph-r-biden. Figures reflect author's calculations based on AFSA data; AFSA does not publish gender breakdowns.

[51] Internal Senate Foreign Relations Committee records last visited Oct. 26, 2026.

[52] Id.

[53] Id.

[54] Id.

[55] Id.

[56] Id.

[57] Id.

[58] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *State Department: Additional Steps Are Needed to Identify Potential Barriers to Diversity*, GAO-20-237, Jan. 2020, https://files.gao.gov/reports/GAO-20-237/index.html.

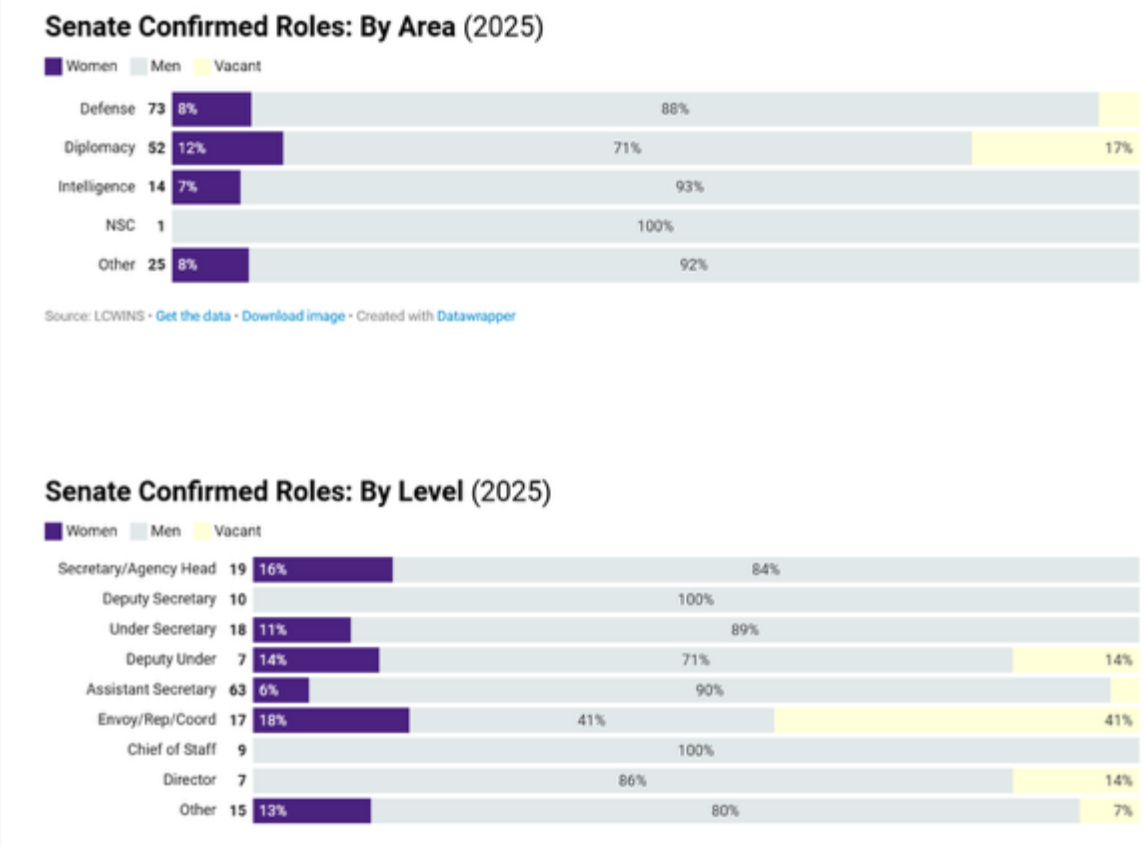
[59] Press Release, Rep. Gregory W. Meeks, "Meeks Demands Answers from Rubio on State Department's Failure to Accept New Fellowship Cohorts," Aug. 20, 2026, https://democrats-foreignaffairs.house.gov/2026/8/meeks-demands-answers-from-rubio-on-state-department-s-failure-to-accept-new-fellowship-cohorts.

[60] Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Graduate Fellowship Program, "Welcome," https://apply.pickeringfellowship.org/ (last visited Sept. 14, 2026).

[61] Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program, "Welcome," https://apply.rangelprogram.org/ (last visited Sept. 14, 2026).

[62] Christopher Landau, "A New Chapter of American Statecraft," U.S. Department of State (Substack), Oct. 22, 2026, https://statedept.substack.com/p/a-new-chapter-of-american-statecraft.

This erasure undermines women and harms institutional decision making. For instance, Defense officials noted Secretary Hegseth's focus on "the American warfighter" has come at the cost of U.S. tactical adaptability and military modernization.[63] Collectively, the Administration's actions send a chilling message to young recruits and staff regarding future career prospects and undermine the United States' moral authority as a leader on human rights globally.



The Trump Administration's failure to nominate women to senior national security positions has undermined institutional readiness and decision-making, undermining U.S. national security. Source: Leadership Council for Women in National Security (LCWINS), "Assessing Women's Participation in National Security Decision-Making,"[64]

2. Elimination of U.S. leadership on women's issues internationally

In contrast with his first term, President Trump has eliminated, and failed to nominate or appoint key positions charged with integrating women's issues in U.S. foreign policy, including but not limited to:

- The **White House Gender Policy Council (GPC),** previously co-chaired by a Senior Advisor to the President, the GPC guided the strategic integration of women and girls' issues across the United States government.
- The **U.S. Ambassador-at-Large (AAL)** for the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues at the State Department guided the integration of women and girls' issues as a U.S. foreign policy priority globally.

[63] Haley Britzky and Zachary Cohen, "Pete Hegseth's culture war fixation disrupting Army progress, sources say," CNN, Sept. 2, 2026, https://www.cnn.com/2026/09/02/politics/hegseths-army-leadership-void-culture-war.

[64] Leadership Council for Women in National Security (LCWINS), "Assessing Women's Participation in National Security Decision-Making," https://lcwins.org/tracker-2025/ (last visited Oct. 26, 2026).

- The **National Security Council Senior Director for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** which guided the integration of gender as a cross-cutting priority in U.S. national security; and
- The **Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** at USAID guided the formulation of U.S. development assistance with a gender lens.

The duties performed by these officials were not absorbed by the reorganized State Department, despite their responsibility for implementing laws on women's issues and the legal requirement, standing since 1994, for the Administration to designate a senior U.S. official at the State Department responsible for advancing women's issues globally.[65] More broadly, the loss of U.S. foreign policy and security capabilities across the White House, the National Security Council, State Department, USAID and wider interagency arbitrarily handicaps the United States' source of information, networks, access within countries and credibility, without any alternative offered by the Trump Administration for filling these vital functions.

3. The State Department Reorganization Dismantled Offices and Expertise Focused on Women and Girls

> *"All bureaus and offices will have increased responsibility for ensuring promotion of women's rights and empowerment."*
>
> – CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION ON THE STATE DEPARTMENT REORGANIZATION.[66] THE ADMINISTRATION'S CLAIM HAS YET TO BE SUBSTANTIATED.

Secretary Rubio's reorganization of the State Department in September 2025 eviscerated the State Department's capacity to implement congressionally mandated policies, programs and reports on the advancement of gender equality, terminating staff while dismantling and de-prioritizing offices and vital lines of effort. Secretary Rubio justified the reorganization claiming he would distribute responsibility for women's issues across the State Department, even as he dismissed the staff responsible for that work.[67] The State Department has been unable to substantiate progress toward integrating women's issues throughout its work, including before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.[68]

The elimination of dedicated offices and staff responsible for women's and girls' issues, coupled with significant cuts to programming, has weakened the State Department's capacity to advance the rights of women and girls and integrate their needs into U.S. foreign policy. As a result, critical perspectives and priorities risk being overlooked in national security decisions, undermining efforts to promote stability and security both at home and abroad.

[65] Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Section 142 of Pub.L.No.103-236 (22 U.S.C. 2651 note).
[66] U.S. Department of State, Congressional Notification Transmittal Letter, 25-032 (May 2025), https://federalnewsnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/CN_25_032.pdf.
[67] Briefings by Department of State Regional Bureaus to Senate Foreign Relations Committee Staff on the Fiscal Year 2027 President's Budget Request, Multiple Dates.
[68] Id.

STATE DEPARTMENT REORGANIZATION

Lost Bureau and Office Expertise on Women and Girls

Lost Bureau and Office Expertise	Capacity Lost
Senior positions eliminated	• U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues • Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights • U.S. Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls and Human Rights • USAID Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
Eliminated functional bureaus that led the implementation of women's issues strategies, policies and/or major programs	• The Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues • Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations • Office of Global Criminal Justice • Bureau of Energy Resources • Secretary's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Regional bureaus in which key policy and/or programmatic experts on women and girls were terminated	• Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs • Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
Functional bureaus or operating units in which key policy or programmatic experts on women and girls were terminated	• Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor • Bureau of International Organization Affairs • Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration • Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons • Bureau of Counterterrorism
Development experts on women and girls eliminated by the closure of USAID	• All regional and functional bureau gender advisors and USAID Mission gender advisors

4. Ending "Identity-Based" Initiatives for Women and Girls

"Women of courage are standing up for freedom and human dignity, and the United States stands with them. We must not forget that the advance of women's rights and the advance of human liberty go hand in hand."

– SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE, SPEAKING AT THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE AWARDS, MARCH 7, 2007.[69]



On March 7, 2007, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice inaugurated the first International Women of Courage Award. Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of International Women's Issues, "2007 International Women of Courage Awards Ceremony," Mar. 7, 2007.[70]

[69] U.S. Department of State, Office of International Women's Issues, "2007 International Women of Courage Awards Ceremony," Mar. 7, 2007, https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/wi/iwoc/c25463.htm.

[70] Id.

The State Department's classification of initiatives to empower women and girls as "identity-based" resulted in the arbitrary erasure of women and girls from President Trump's foreign policy and the termination of hundreds of millions of dollars in training and programs. Initiatives that were terminated include:

- The **Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative** (W-GDP) announced in 2019 by then Senior Advisor to the President Ivanka Trump and later expanded and renamed the Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund by President Biden. The initiative had bipartisan support and mobilized U.S. government resources and public-private partnerships to advance women's economic empowerment globally.[71]

- The **Voices Against Violence: Gender-based Violence Initiative** launched during President Trump's first term and led by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor with support from the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues. The initiative assisted survivors of gender-based violence with rapid response funding and networks providing shelter, financial assistance and survivor services.[72]

- The annual **International Women of Courage Awards (IWOC),** formerly administered by the State Department's Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, "recognizes women from around the world who have demonstrated exceptional courage, strength, and leadership in advocating for peace, justice, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls."[73] Since its launch by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2007, more than 200 women have received IWOC awards.[74] First Lady Melania Trump and Secretary Rubio held an IWOC awards ceremony in 2025 but did not hold one in 2026.

- **Dedicated grants** supporting women's education globally, including support for the **Asian University for Women**, a Bangladesh-based university that has provided young women from Asia and the Middle East with an opportunity to pursue a university degree, especially Afghan women who fled after the Taliban came to power in 2021.[75]

- The newly named Office of Foreign Assistance Oversight at the State Department has not clarified how it absorbed the functions ascribed to the now-eliminated **USAID Office of the Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** which oversaw, among other key roles, implementation of the *Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment (WEEE) Act* signed by President Trump in his first term.

- The State Department has ignored additional congressional directives, including directives supporting women's political participation around the world, by failing to implement in 2025 and 2026 the Study of U.S. Institutes' **Madeleine K. Albright Young Women Leaders Program** which brings American and international undergraduate women together for academic exchanges in the United States.[76] The State Department's newly revised program will no longer be only for women.[77]

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[71] Press Release, Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, "Shaheen, Graham Introduce New Bipartisan Legislation to Elevate Global Women's Issues Across the State Department, Prioritize Rights of Women and Girls Around the World," Feb. 13, 2020, https://www.shaheen.senate.gov/news/press/shaheen-graham-introduce-new-bipartisan-legislation-to-elevate-global-womens-issues-across-the-state-department-prioritize-rights-of-women-and-girls-around-the-world.

[72] U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Women's Issues, "Foreign Assistance Programs," https://2021-2025.state.gov/gwi-foreign-assistance-programs/ (last visited Sept. 14, 2026).

[73] U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, "Secretary of State's 2025 International Women of Courage Award Recipients Announced," Apr. 1, 2025, https://www.state.gov/secretary-of-states-2025-international-women-of-courage-award-recipients-announced/.

[74] U.S. Department of State, "2017 International Women of Courage Award," https://2017-2021.state.gov/2017-international-women-of-courage-award/(last visited Sept. 14, 2026).

[75] Masood Farivar, "How Pause in US Foreign Aid Is Impacting South, Central Asia," Voice of America, Feb. 11, 2025, https://www.voanews.com/a/how-pause-in-us-foreign-aid-is-impacting-south-central-asia/7971248.html.

[76] U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, FY 2026 Study of the U.S. Institutes Madeleine K. Albright Young Women Leaders Program, Notice of Funding Opportunity (May 2026), https://files.simpler.grants.gov/opportunities/4a9e1270-9794-44a7-ba67-399d29d48d25/attachments/772c2a0d-605b-4840-be7c-9df30337cc36/02._FY26_SUSI_Albright_NOFO_Solicitation.pdf.

[77] U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), FY 2026 Study of the U.S. Institutes Madeleine K. Albright Young Women Leaders Program, Notice of Funding Opportunity No. DFOP0018387 (May 19, 2026), https://simpler.grants.gov/opportunity/4a9e1270-9794-44a7-ba67-399d29d48d25.



Members of the Classes of 2020, 2021 and 2022 of the Asian University for Women (AUW). U.S. support was cut when the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues was eliminated. AUW has provided higher education to almost 2,000 women, with 75 percent of graduates returning to their home countries to impact their communities. Source: Katrina Fotovat, "Empowering Women through U.S. Foreign Policy: A Year in Review," DipNote, U.S. Department of State, Mar. 27, 2023.[78]

5. Abandoning Statutory Obligations

For decades, and on a bipartisan basis, Congress has enacted legislation to protect and advance opportunities for women and girls, recognizing the link between support for women and girls and U.S. interests in peace and stability overseas. *The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Act; Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment (WEEE) Act; the Global Fragility Act and the International Trafficking Victims Protection Act* were enacted with robust bipartisan support, including the support of then-Senator Marco Rubio. Yet under the second Trump Administration, the Executive Branch has curtailed implementation of legislation related to women and girls, even laws that carry President Trump's signature including *the WPS* and *WEEE Act*s.

[78] Katrina Fotovat, "Empowering Women through U.S. Foreign Policy: A Year in Review," DipNote, U.S. Department of State, Mar. 27, 2023, https://2021-2025.state.gov/empowering-women-through-u-s-foreign-policy-a-year-in-review/; Asian University for Women, "Impact," https://asian-university.org/impact/ (last visited Sept. 15, 2026).

Status of Implementation of Select Legislation That Supports Women and Girls

Statute	Actions Required	Status of Implementation by Trump Administration
Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995	Declares that the State Department should designate a senior advisor to promote international women's human rights within the overall human rights policy of the United States.	The Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI) which led efforts to integrate women's issues across U.S. foreign policy at the State Department was eliminated. Statutory responsibilities that were implemented by S/GWI have not been implemented by other State Department entities.
The Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017 (WPS Act) **Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)**	Requires a government-wide strategy promoting women's participation in all aspects of overseas conflict prevention and resolution. Mandates agency implementation plans and a report to Congress on progress and outcomes on *WPS Act* implementation. Extends authorization of an expansion of WPS activities at the Department of Defense to 2027.	The State Department eliminated S/GWI, responsible for overseeing implementation of the *WPS Act* per E.O. 13595 and did not submit a report on *WPS Act* implementation by a required deadline of October 31, 2025. The State Department has not utilized $112.5 million in Fiscal Year 2026 funding to implement "a multi-year strategy to expand, and improve coordination of, United States Government efforts to empower women as equal partners in conflict prevention, peace building, transitional processes, and reconstruction efforts in countries affected by conflict or in political transition, and to ensure the equal provision of relief and recovery assistance to women and girls."[79] The majority of U.S. Combatant Commands are not implementing WPS activities.
Women's Entrepreneurship & Economic Empowerment Act of 2018 (WEEE Act)	Requires gender equality and women's empowerment to be integrated in U.S. development policies and programs.	The State Department has not utilized $150 million in Fiscal Year 2026 funding to implement the *WEEE Act*, including to "expand economic opportunities for women by increasing the number and capacity of women-owned enterprises, improving property rights for women, increasing women's access to financial services and capital, enhancing the role of women in economic decision-making at the local, national, and international levels, and improving women's ability to participate in the global economy."[80] The State Department has not designated a focal point for *WEEE Act* implementation and eliminated S/GWI which had previously led the development and implementation of a 14-agency strategy on women's economic security.

[79] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, Pub. L. No. 119-75 (Feb. 3, 2026), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-119publ75/pdf/PLAW-119publ75.pdf.

[80] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, Pub. L. No. 119-75, div. F, § 7059(e) (Feb. 3, 2026), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-119publ75/pdf/PLAW-119publ75.pdf.

"Percy Amendment" to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961	Requires that U.S. foreign assistance funds integrate women into the national economies of developing countries.	Not being implemented following the elimination of USAID and S/GWI which coordinated implementation of efforts to integrate women's issues across U.S. economic statecraft and implementation of the U.S. Strategy on Global Women's Economic Security.
International Trafficking Victims Protection Act	Establishes numerous elements of the U.S. foreign policy response to human trafficking, including the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office). Requires the TIP Office to lead the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking and carry out overseas programming to help victims of human trafficking.	Moved the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) from having a direct line to the Secretary of State to now reporting to an Assistant Secretary while concurrently cutting more than 70 percent of the office's workforce, leading to less support for women and girls at risk of or experiencing human trafficking.
The Global Fragility Act (GFA)	Requires the U.S. to adopt a long-term, integrated strategy for conflict prevention and stabilization, including by addressing gender inequality, with clear roles for federal agencies, prioritized country plans, coordinated implementation, regular reporting to Congress and sustained funding. The *GFA* mandates that U.S. stabilization and conflict prevention strategies explicitly integrate the safety, rights and empowerment of women.	Not being implemented by the Department of State or its interagency partners. The Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO), which was the lead for the law's implementation, was eliminated in the Department's reorganization.
The Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2018	Requires the U.S. to pursue a whole-of-government strategy to prevent and respond to atrocities. As implemented, it recognized gender-based violence as an early warning sign of mass atrocities.	Not being implemented. The Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, the anchor for interagency implementation, was eliminated during the State Department reorganization.
The Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act of 2017	The *READ Act*, which mandates a U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education was reauthorized on December 23, 2024, for five years. Implemented by USAID, in its initial five years U.S. foreign assistance programs supported by the *READ Act* trained 2.9 million teachers and educators, supplied 176 million textbooks and reached 34 million learners.	Funding for international basic education programs was halted during the foreign assistance review and the Administration rescinded $594 million of Fiscal Year 2025 funding. The Administration has not resumed funding for basic education.

SPOTLIGHT: THE DEPARTMENTS OF DEFENSE AND STATE FAIL TO COMPLY WITH THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY ACT

> *"At the State Department and under President Trump, we try to take every opportunity to defend and to promote women and girls across the world...During his first term... President Trump also signed the Women, Peace, and Security Act, a bill that I was very proud to have been a co-sponsor of when I was in the Senate, and it was the first comprehensive law passed in any country in the world—the first law passed by any country anywhere in the world—focused on protecting women and promoting their participation in society."*
>
> — SECRETARY OF STATE MARCO RUBIO SPEAKING AT THE 19TH INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE AWARDS CEREMONY AT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, APRIL 2025.[81]

For years, the United States led the international community on implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which champions integrating a gender lens in all aspects of efforts to respond, resolve and prevent conflict and instability. In 2011, the Obama Administration released the first-ever U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and signed an Executive Order directing the Plan be implemented. In 2017, President Trump signed into law the landmark, bipartisan *WPS Act* to codify U.S. efforts to promote the meaningful participation and leadership of women in all aspects of overseas conflict prevention, management and resolution, and post-conflict relief and recovery efforts, making the United States the first country globally to do so. The bipartisan effort grew out of decades-long efforts following the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which recognized the unique role women play in conflict and their untapped role as material agents of peace and security.[82]

The *WPS Act* was led by Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Shelley Moore Capito—and co-sponsored by then-Senator Rubio—and Representatives Jan Schakowsky and Kristi Noem. On October 6, 2017, President Trump signed the *WPS Act* into law, making the United States the first and only country to legislatively enact its WPS agenda. Pursuant to the law, the White House released a U.S. Strategy on WPS in 2019 and 2023, as well as implementation plans for the State Department, the Department of Defense, USAID and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2020 and 2024.[83]

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[81] Remarks of Secretary of State Marco Rubio, 19th Annual International Women of Courage (IWOC) Awards Ceremony, U.S. Department of State, Apr. 1, 2025, https://www.state.gov/secretary-of-state-marco-rubio-at-the-19th-annual-international-women-of-courage-iwoc-awards-ceremony/.

[82] Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, Pub. L. No. 115-68, 131 Stat. 1202 (Oct. 6, 2017), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-115publ68/html/PLAW-115publ68.htm.

[83] See U.S. Strategy and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, The White House, Oct. 31, 2023, https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/U.S.-Strategy-and-National-Action-Plan-on-Women-Peace-and-Security.pdf; U.S. Department of State (DOS), "The Department of State's Plan to Implement the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security," 2020, https://www.state.gov/the-department-of-states-plan-to-implement-the-u-s-strategy-on-women-peace-and-security; DOS, "Department of State Implementation Plan for the U.S. Strategy and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security," 2024, https://www.state.gov/reports/department-of-state-implementation-plan-for-the-u-s-strategy-and-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security; U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), "2024 Department of Defense Women, Peace, and Security Implementation Plan," Dec. 30, 2024, https://media.defense.gov/2024/Dec/31/2003619968/-1/-1/1/2024-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-WOMEN-PEACE-AND-SECURITY-IMPLEMENTATION-PLAN.PDF. The 2023 Strategy builds on Executive Order 13595 mandating the first U.S. National Action Plan on WPS, the 2011 National Action Plan, the 2015 National Action Plan Review, the 2016 National Action Plan, and the 2019 WPS Strategy.

The longstanding, bipartisan support for the WPS agenda reflected the clear security benefits of engaging women in all aspects of peace and conflict.[84] Women remain significantly underrepresented in formal conflict negotiations. Between 1992 and 2019, women represented only 13 percent of negotiators, six percent of mediators and six percent of signatories in major peace processes.[85] Yet, women's meaningful participation in efforts to end conflict leads to more durable and inclusive peace agreements. Women's participation in peace negotiations increases the likelihood that the resulting agreement will last more than 15 years by 35 percent.[86] Women negotiators bring new perspectives to the table, raising questions of women's protection in conflict, including conflict-related sexual violence, a crime that fuels instability.[87]

Despite the clear evidence of the benefit of the WPS agenda and President Trump's own historical support for WPS, the second Trump Administration has repeatedly undermined the programs that support the WPS agenda.

The Trump Administration's Executive Orders targeting the federal workforce, foreign assistance and the elimination of DEI programs significantly eroded the Executive Branch's capacity to implement key provisions of the *WPS Act*, weakening democratic norms and undermining U.S. national security.

While initially a proud endorser of the *WPS Act*, Secretary Rubio eviscerated the State Department's capacity to implement the law while Defense Secretary Hegseth boasted that he had "ended" implementation of the law at the Department of Defense.[89]



On April 29, 2025, Secretary Hegseth celebrated ending implementation of the *WPS Act* at the Department of Defense on X, despite President Trump's role in enacting the historic law in 2017.[88]

[84] Melanne Verveer & Rebecca Turkington, "Reflecting on 25 Years of Women, Peace, and Security," Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, Oct. 8, 2025, https://gjia.georgetown.edu/conflict-security/reflecting-on-25-years-of-women-peace-and-security/.

[85] Jamille Bigio, "New Data on Women's Roles at the Peace Table," Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Oct. 19, 2020, https://www.cfr.org/articles/new-data-womens-roles-peace-table.

[86] Council on Foreign Relations, "Women's Participation in Peace Processes," https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/ (last visited Sept. 14, 2026); Melanne Verveer & Rebecca Turkington, "Reflecting on 25 Years of Women, Peace, and Security," Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, Oct. 8, 2025, https://gjia.georgetown.edu/conflict-security/reflecting-on-25-years-of-women-peace-and-security/.

[87] Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), "Why It Matters," Women's Participation in Peace Processes, https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/why-it-matters.

[88] Pete Hegseth (@PeteHegseth), "This morning, I proudly ENDED the 'Women, Peace & Security' (WPS) program inside the @DeptofDefense. WPS is yet another woke divisive/social justice/Biden initiative that overburdens our commanders and troops — distracting from our core task: WAR-FIGHTING. WPS is a UNITED NATIONS program pushed by feminists and left-wing activists. Politicians fawn over it; troops HATE it. DoD will hereby executive the minimum of WPS required by statute, and fight to end the program for our next budget. GOOD RIDDANCE WPS!," X, Apr. 29, 2025, https://x.com/PeteHegseth/status/1917203362396639518.

[89] Id.

THE IMPACTS OF THE *WPS ACT* IMPLEMENTATION

Executive Order	Summary	Impact on U.S. WPS Act Implementation
EO 14151 – "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing" **(Jan. 20, 2025)**	Mandated the elimination of all DEI and DEI and Accessibility (DEIA) offices, staff, grants and performance measures across federal agencies.	Deepened confusion between DEI and WPS initiatives. Although WPS focuses externally on women's roles in peace and security abroad, it was included in DEI-related compliance reviews because both efforts reference "women's issues." This led to WPS program pauses and personnel reviews.
EO 14168 – "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism" **(Jan. 20, 2025)**	Redefined "sex" strictly as biological male or female, removing recognition of gender identity across all federal policies and programs.	Initiated broad keyword searches for terms like "gender" and "gender-based violence," which overlap with WPS work. Despite WPS using "gender" analytically (to understand/assess differences in men's and women's roles in conflict affected regions and peace building), the order led to the review and removal of key terminology from WPS guidance, training, programs and other key documents.
EO 14169 – "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid" **(Jan. 20, 2025)**	Ordered an immediate freeze on all U.S. foreign assistance pending review. Empowered the new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to dismantle the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).	Disrupted humanitarian, stabilization and development programs, many of which were critical to women and girls. Eliminated USAID's WPS experts and halted integration of WPS into foreign assistance. Initiated department-wide foreign assistance reviews at the Departments of State and Defense; the outcomes are not publicly available.

EO 14173 – "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity" **(Jan. 21, 2025)**	Extended the DEI changes to hiring practices across federal agencies and contractors, revoking affirmative action safeguards.	Reinforced conflation between DEI and WPS concepts due to shared terminology. DOGE's compliance searches flagged WPS activities as potentially noncompliant, leading to further bureaucratic scrutiny and pauses on funding for WPS personnel and programming.
EO 14185 – "Restoring America's Fighting Force" **(Jan. 27, 2025)**	Directed the Department of Defense to remove all hiring or promotion considerations based on sex, race or ethnicity, eliminate DEI programs and ban instruction on "divisive concepts" or "gender ideology."	Intensified confusion between WPS and DEI initiatives within the Defense Department. Created varied interpretations across Defense Department organizations regarding WPS programs, with only some successfully demonstrating WPS as an operationally mandated initiative distinct from DEI.
EO 14210 - "Implementing the Department of Government Efficiency Workforce Optimization Initiative" **(Feb. 11, 2025)**	Ordered large-scale federal workforce reductions, prioritizing DEI-related positions for elimination. Military personnel were exempt; agencies retained discretion over civilian cuts.	Facilitated the termination of WPS offices and personnel at the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as WPS functions were misclassified as DEI-related.

President Trump's Executive Orders undermined the Executive Branch's capacity to implement the WPS Act signed by President Trump in his first term. Source: Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, "The Future of Women, Peace and Security Belongs to America's Allies," December 16, 2025.[90]

[90] Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, "The Future of Women, Peace and Security Belongs to America's Allies," table, "Understanding the U.S. Policy Change on WPS: The Role of Executive Orders," Dec. 16, 2025, https://giwps.georgetown.edu/2025/12/16/the-future-of-women-peace-and-security-belongs-to-americas-allies/.



Under President Trump, women have been sidelined from efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, undermining those efforts' effectiveness and long-term sustainability. A February 2025 meeting between Russia and the United States to discuss the status of Ukraine failed to include any women leaders or representatives from Ukraine. Source: Chris Boccia et al., "US and Russia agree to try to end war without Ukraine at the table," ABC News, Feb. 18, 2025. [91]

The Consequences of the Trump Administration's Attacks on Women, Peace and Security Act Implementation

- **Devastated the lives of women and girls globally:** War has become more deadly for women and girls since the start of the second Trump Administration. At the time President Trump terminated support for *WPS Act* implementation, the number of women and girls killed in conflicts over the preceding two years had quadrupled and conflict-related sexual violence had increased by 25 percent, victimizing 4,600 women.[92] One million women and girls lost access to humanitarian aid as a result of the cuts to U.S. humanitarian assistance. While the Trump Administration has started new conflicts around the world, his foreign policy has made conflict worse for women and girls.
- **Created an environment of chaos, fear and confusion:** Executive Order 14168, titled "*Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government*," and released on January 20, 2025, halted U.S. interagency efforts to implement or proactively propose programs, policies, training or international engagement focused on women and girls, shuttering gender analysis, policy planning, forecasting and conflict modeling, among other key lines of effort to support implementation of the *WPS Act*, with U.S. Government Departments and Agencies left unclear about what constituted prohibited activity under the Executive Order.[93] As a result, the State Department and broader interagency no longer engage in what were commonplace consultations with women focused civil society organizations, academics and grassroots women leaders to support *WPS Act* implementation, foster transparency and inform the United States' strategic approach to conflict resolution.[94]

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[91] Chris Boccia et al., "US and Russia agree to try to end war without Ukraine at the table," ABC News, Feb. 18, 2025, https://abcnews.com/Politics/us-russia-set-begin-high-stakes-talks-ukraines/story?id=118900923.

[92] U.N. Secretary-General, Women and Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General, U.N. Doc. S/2025/556 (Sept. 5, 2025), https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/report/united-nations-security-council-women-and-peace-and-security-report-of-the-secretary-general/n2523645-1.pdf; UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Women, Peace, and Security*, https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security (last visited Sept. 14, 2026).

[93] Exec. Order No. 14168, "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government," 90 Fed. Reg. 8615 (Jan. 20, 2025), https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/30/2025-02090/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal; Alexandra Gopin, "The Future of Women, Peace and Security Belongs to America's Allies," Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, Dec. 16, 2025, https://giwps.georgetown.edu/2025/12/16/the-future-of-women-peace-and-security-belongs-to-americas-allies/; Kayla McGill & Rachel Wein, "The Elimination of the Women, Peace, and Security Implementation Capacity at the Department of State," New Lines Institute, Jan. 12, 2026, https://newlinesinstitute.org/gender-peace-security/the-elimination-of-the-women-peace-and-security-implementation-capacity-at-the-department-of-state/.

[94] See U.S. Civil Society Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security, "The U.S. Civil Society Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security," Alliance for Peacebuilding, accessed October 14, 2026, https://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/cswg; McGill and Wein, "Elimination of the Women, Peace, and Security Implementation Capacity"; Sebastián Molano, "From Commitment to Retreat: The Erosion of the Women, Peace, and

- **Eroded women's participation in efforts to resolve conflict, resulting in more instability**: The Trump Administration has used its influence at the UN Security Council to erode support for WPS, removing references to gender in UN documents and aligning with Russia on UN Security Council outcomes.[95] More broadly, the Administration's elimination of S/GWI coupled with funding cuts and rescissions eviscerated the State Department's diplomatic and programmatic capacity to support WPS priorities. Similarly, the Department of Defense dramatically scaled back activities, training and staffing expertise on WPS.[96] This retrenchment has far-reaching consequences, from halting military planning on WPS with foreign governments to ending diplomatic outreach to include women in efforts to prevent or resolve war, conflict and violent extremism. Fiscal Year 2026 funding for *WPS Act* implementation has not been utilized, further magnifying these losses.[97]
- **Defied congressional intent:** While the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026* requires the Trump Administration to expand and improve coordination of U.S. Government efforts to support women in conflict and instability,[98] the State Department has not expended funds on *WPS Act* implementation. And while the *2025 National Defense Authorization Act* expands and extends the Department of Defense's authorities to implement the WPS Act through 2027,[99] Secretary Hegseth has significantly rolled back WPS implementation.[100] This is despite recommendations from senior U.S. military leadership to continue to support *WPS Act* implementation as a strategic advantage.[101]
- **Weakened Agency Implementation:** The Department of Defense continues to have a WPS implementation plan on its books; however, the Department is carrying out implementation at the lowest level of effort required to comply with the *WPS Act*. For example, the Department has reduced by half the number of required trainings on WPS.[102] Outside of INDOPACOM, none of the combatant commands executed WPS programming in Fiscal Year 2025, despite prior plans to do so.[103] The State Department did not provide Congress with a legally required report on U.S. efforts to implement the *WPS Act* in 2025, despite a congressional directive to do so.[104] The loss of gender expertise at the White House, State Department, the Defense Department, and USAID coupled with the elimination of the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at the Department of Homeland Security has left agencies with no central node or capacity to guide and monitor *WPS Act* implementation.[105]

Security Agenda in the U.S. and the Challenges Faced in Colombia and Lebanon," Oxfam America, June 11, 2026, https://politicsofpoverty.oxfamamerica.org/erosion-of-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda/.

[95] Security Council Report, "Women, Peace and Security," June 2026 Monthly Forecast, June 1, 2026, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2026-06/women-peace-and-security-20.php.

[96] U.S. Department of War, Report on the Department of War's Implementation Update on the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, Report to Congress (June 11, 2026).

[97] Security Council Report, "Women, Peace and Security," June 2026 Monthly Forecast, June 1, 2026, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2026-06/women-peace-and-security-20.php.

[98] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, Pub. L. No. 119-75, div. F, § 7059(e), https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/7148/text.

[99] Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, Pub. L. No. 118-159, § 1206, https://www.congress.gov/118/plaws/publ159/PLAW-118publ159.pdf.

[100] U.S. Department of War, Report on the Department of War's Implementation Update on the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, Report to Congress (June 11, 2026).

[101] Tyler McBrien, "Secretary Hegseth Ends WPS Program Despite Joint Staff Support," Lawfare, Apr. 30, 2025, https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/secretary-hegseth-ends-wps-program-despite-joint-staff-support; Statement of Lieutenant General John D. Caine, USAF (Retired), Nominee for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, To Consider the Nomination of: Lieutenant General John D. Caine, USAF (Retired) to be General and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, Apr. 1, 2025, at 30, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/412025fullnom1.pdf.

[102] U.S. Department of War, Report on the Department of War's Implementation Update on the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, Report to Congress (June 11, 2026).

[103] Andrew Matthews, "Secretary Hegseth Ends WPS Program Despite Joint Staff Support," Lawfare, Apr. 2025, https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/secretary-hegseth-ends-wps-program-despite-joint-staff-support; U.S. Department of Defense, 2024 Department of Defense Women, Peace, and Security Implementation Plan, Dec. 31, 2024, https://media.defense.gov/2024/Dec/31/2003619968/-1/-1/1/2024-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-WOMEN-PEACE-AND-SECURITY-IMPLEMENTATION-PLAN.PDF; U.S. Department of Defense, Fiscal Year 2026 Security Cooperation Justification Book, https://comptroller.war.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2026/FY2026_Security_Cooperation_Justification_Book.pdf.

[104] Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS), "U.S. Government Fails to Report to Congress on WPS Progress," Nov. 1, 2025, https://giwps.georgetown.edu/2025/11/01/u-s-government-fails-to-report-to-congress-on-wps-progress/.

[105] Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, "The Future of Women, Peace and Security Belongs to America's Allies," Dec. 16, 2025, https://giwps.georgetown.edu/2025/12/16/the-future-of-women-peace-and-security-belongs-to-americas-allies/; Kayla McGill and Rachel Wein, "The Elimination of the Women, Peace, and Security Implementation Capacity at the Department of State," New Lines Institute, Jan. 12, 2026, https://newlinesinstitute.org/gender-peace-security/the-elimination-of-the-women-peace-and-security-implementation-capacity-at-the-department-of-state/.



President Trump's Foreign Assistance Cuts Target Women and Girls

"The 2025 U.S. aid cuts disproportionately targeted women and girls globally, canceling 88 percent of maternal and child health funding, 94 percent of sexual and reproductive health funding, and nearly 80 percent of GBV prevention and response funding."

- REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL, "NO ONE CARES ABOUT US ANYMORE: HOW U.S. AID CUTS HAVE INTENSIFIED THE CRISIS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN AFGHANISTAN".[106]

The Trump Administration's Retrenchment and Restructuring of U.S. Foreign Assistance

As the world faced converging crises—humanitarian disasters, armed conflicts, food insecurity and climate change—the Trump Administration imposed the largest cuts to U.S. foreign assistance in modern history and decimated the United States' capacity to respond to global

[106] Refugees International, "No One Cares About Us Anymore": How U.S. Aid Cuts Have Intensified the Crisis for Women and Girls in Afghanistan, Jan. 2026, https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/no-one-cares-about-us-anymore/.

challenges directly impacting U.S. national security and global stability, with far-reaching impacts on women and girls, in particular.[108]

From the first day of his second Administration, President Trump took immediate actions to gut U.S. foreign assistance. On January 20, 2025, he executed Executive Order 14169, "*Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid*,"[109] imposing a 90-day pause on U.S. foreign assistance programs and initiating a review of all U.S. assistance, declaring that the "foreign aid industry and bureaucracy…serve to destabilize world peace by promoting ideas in foreign countries that are directly inverse to harmonious and stable relations."[110]



PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

REEVALUATING AND REALIGNING UNITED STATES FOREIGN AID

The White House | January 20, 2025

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1. Purpose. The United States foreign aid industry and bureaucracy are not aligned with American interests and in many cases antithetical to American values. They serve to destabilize world peace by promoting ideas in foreign countries that are directly inverse to harmonious and stable relations internal to and among countries.

Sec. 2. Policy. It is the policy of United States that no further United States foreign assistance shall be disbursed in a manner that is not fully aligned with the foreign policy of the President of the United States.

Sec. 3. (a) *90-day pause in United States foreign development assistance for assessment of programmatic efficiencies and consistency with United States foreign policy.* All department and agency heads with responsibility for United States foreign development assistance programs shall immediately pause new obligations and disbursements of development assistance funds to foreign countries and implementing non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and contractors pending reviews of such programs for programmatic efficiency and consistency with United States foreign policy, to be conducted within 90 days of this order. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) shall enforce this pause through its apportionment authority.

President Trump's Executive Order pausing all U.S. foreign assistance programs.

Source: The White House, "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid," Executive Order, Jan. 20, 2025.[107]

On January 24, 2025, four days after the Executive Order paused foreign assistance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued a stop-work order on foreign assistance, disrupting programs, including life-saving humanitarian activities. Although Secretary Rubio subsequently issued a waiver[111] intended to allow "lifesaving humanitarian assistance" to continue, many programs covered by the waiver remained unable to operate as the Department of Government Efficiency, or "DOGE," overrode the Secretary's guidelines.[112] Additionally, Secretary Rubio's waiver explicitly excluded family planning programs, despite the fact that U.S. investments in family planning and reproductive health save 34,000 lives annually.[113]

Beginning on February 1, 2025, the Administration illegally dismantled USAID—which worked in 80 countries to reduce gender gaps, address gender-based violence (GBV) and empower women and

[107] The White House, "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid," Executive Order 14169, Jan. 20, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/reevaluating-and-realigning-united-states-foreign-aid/.

[108] Better World Campaign, "The Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts," Impact Stories Map, https://betterworldcampaign.org/impact-of-foreign-assistance-cuts (last visited Sept. 14, 2026).

[109] The White House, "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid," Executive Order, Jan. 20, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/reevaluating-and-realigning-united-states-foreign-aid/.

[110] Id.

[111] Marco Rubio, Secretary of State, "Emergency Humanitarian Waiver to Foreign Assistance Pause," U.S. Department of State (DOS), Jan. 29, 2025, https://www.state.gov/emergency-humanitarian-waiver-to-foreign-assistance-pause.

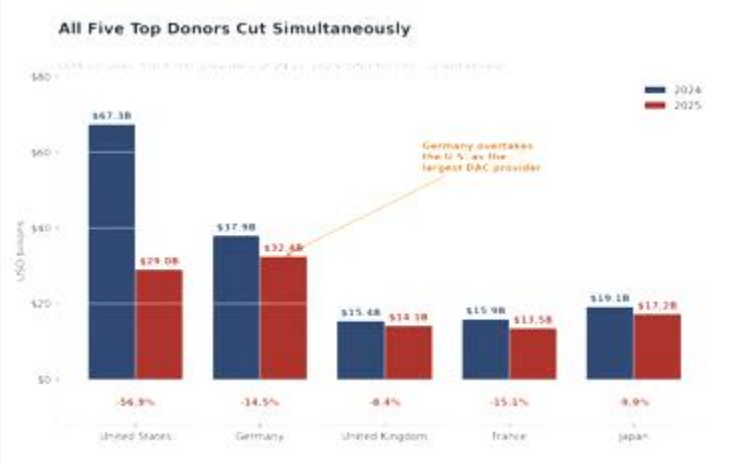
[112] Nicholas Enrich, interview by Vittoria Elliott, "USAID Whistleblower Says It Was Even Worse Than People Knew," WIRED, Apr. 22, 2026, https://www.wired.com/story/usaid-whistleblower-says-it-was-even-worse-than-people-knew/.

[113] Samira Damavandi et al., "Just the Numbers: The Impact of US International Family Planning Assistance, 2024," Guttmacher Institute, Feb. 18, 2025, https://www.guttmacher.org/2025/02/just-numbers-impact-us-international-family-planning-assistance-2024.

girls through programs providing critical health services, education, economic opportunities, technology and political opportunities[114]—with

Elon Musk declaring: "we spent the weekend feeding USAID into the woodchipper."[116] In March 2025, Secretary Rubio announced that the Administration was cancelling 83 percent of USAID's programs.[117]

Heading into 2025, a global decline in funding for development and humanitarian assistance was already underway, but the unprecedented 56.9 percent cut in U.S. foreign assistance under President Trump resulted in the largest contraction on record with U.S. aid volumes globally falling by $38 billion—a 23.1 percent decline since 2024.[118] The Center for Global Development linked these cuts to 500,000 to one million deaths in 2025 alone and the medical journal, *The Lancet*, forecast that funding cuts "could lead to more than 14 million additional deaths by 2030," including four to five million children under the age of 5.[119]



Germany overtook the United States as the largest provider of assistance among the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) providers. Bilateral Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for core development programming fell by 26.3 percent, the largest decline ever recorded.

Source: OECD Preliminary ODA Statistics, April 2026; Randy Flay, The Future of Foreign Assistance.[115]

> *"The cuts were so severe that Americans would collectively spend more on their Halloween candy in 2025 than their government did on life-saving humanitarian aid."*
>
> – SAM VIGERSKY, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, THE GREAT AID RECESSION: 2025'S HUMANITARIAN CRASH IN NINE CHARTS.[120]

[114] Together Women Rise, "U.S. Foreign Aid, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment," Oct. 26, 2017, https://togetherwomenrise.org/u-s-foreign-aid-gender-equity-and-womens-empowerment/.

[115] Randy Flay, "The Future of Foreign Assistance," LinkedIn, May 7, 2026, https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/future-foreign-assistance-philanthropys-role-randy-flay-kfoxe/.

[116] Elon Musk (@elonmusk), "We spent the weekend feeding USAID into the wood chipper. Could have gone to some great parties. Did that instead," X, Feb. 3, 2025, https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1886307316804263979.

[117] Marco Rubio, @marcorubio, "After a 6 week review we are officially cancelling 83% of the programs at USAID. The 5200 contracts that are now cancelled spent tens of billions of dollars in ways that did not serve, (and in some cases even harmed), the core national interests of the United States. In consultation with Congress, we intend for the remaining 18% of programs we are keeping (approximately 1000) to now be administered more effectively under the State Department. Thank you to DOGE and our hardworking staff who worked very long hours to achieve this overdue and historic reform.," Mar. 10, 2025, https://x.com/marcorubio/status/1899021361797816325.

[118] Randy Flay, "The Future of Foreign Assistance: Philanthropy's Role," LinkedIn, May 7, 2026, https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/future-foreign-assistance-philanthropys-role-randy-flay-kfoxe/.

[119] Charles Kenny and Justin Sandefur, "Update on Lives Lost from USAID Cuts," Center for Global Development (blog), Dec.16, 2025, https://www.cgdev.org/blog/update-lives-lost-usaid-cuts; Daniella Medeiros Cavalcanti et al., "Evaluating the Impact of Two Decades of USAID Interventions and Projecting the Effects of Defunding on Mortality up to 2030: A Retrospective Impact Evaluation and Forecasting Analysis," The Lancet, 2025, https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736(25)01186-9/fulltext.

[120] Marco Rubio, @marcorubio, "After a 6 week review we are officially cancelling 83% of the programs at USAID. The 5200 contracts that are now cancelled spent tens of billions of dollars in ways that did not serve, (and in some cases even harmed), the core national interests of the United States. In consultation with Congress, we intend for the remaining 18% of programs we are keeping (approximately 1000) to now be administered

Impact of Foreign Assistance Cuts on Women and Children

"USAID has saved the lives of 4.6 million children and 200,000 women since 2008..."

- TOGETHER WOMEN RISE, U.S. FOREIGN AID, GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT.[121]

The Trump Administration's foreign assistance cuts disproportionately targeted women and children worldwide. In addition to slashing overall aid funding, the Trump Administration specifically cut or terminated programs combating gender-based violence including efforts to prevent child, early and forced marriage; support for family planning; girls' education and advancing maternal and child health. Women and girls, particularly those in humanitarian crises or refugee settings, are bearing the brunt of the negative impacts of these cuts.[122]

Among other consequences, the Trump Administration's foreign assistance cuts drastically:

- Reduced access to life-saving healthcare;[123]
- Increased women's and girls' exposure to violence and exploitation;[124]
- Reduced access to education and economic opportunity;[125]
- Disrupted services in humanitarian and conflict settings;[126] and
- Weakened women's organizations and civic participation.[127]

The Trump Administration's actions also irrevocably harmed the organizations and ecosystem best positioned to respond to women and girls most in need. In April 2025, UN Women found that 90 percent of surveyed women-led and women's rights organizations at the time were financially impacted by the cuts, with 47 percent expecting to shut down within 6 months and 51 percent suspending programming.[128]

more effectively under the State Department. Thank you to DOGE and our hardworking staff who worked very long hours to achieve this overdue and historic reform.," Mar. 10, 2025, https://x.com/marcorubio/status/1899021361797816325.

[121] Together Women Rise, "U.S. Foreign Aid, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment," Oct. 26, 2017, https://togetherwomenrise.org/u-s-foreign-aid-gender-equity-and-womens-empowerment/.

[122] Refugees International, *"No One Cares About Us Anymore": How U.S. Aid Cuts Have Intensified the Crisis for Women and Girls in Afghanistan*, https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/no-one-cares-about-us-anymore/.

[123] Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), "New Report: How US Aid Cuts Harm Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises," Jan. 20, 2026, https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/press-releases/new-report-how-us-aid-cuts-harm-women-and-girls-in-humanitarian-crises/.

[124] Charles Kenny, "Women Have Been Disproportionately Harmed by Trump Administration Aid, Migration, and Trade Policies," Center for Global Development (CGD), Nov. 25, 2025, https://www.cgdev.org/blog/women-have-been-disproportionately-harmed-trump-administration-aid-migration-and-trade.

[125] Id.

[126] Id.

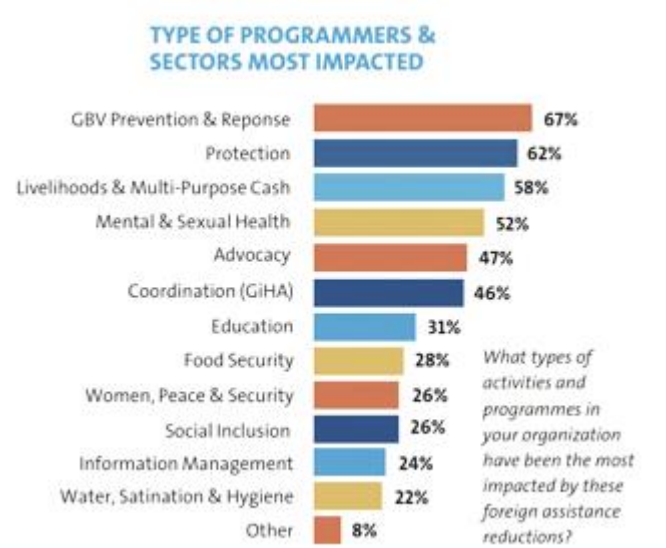
[127] Id.

[128] Outright International, Breaking Point: The Urgent Need to Invest in Global LGBTIQ Movements (Sept. 2026), https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/Breaking_Point_Outright_International_Funding_LGBTIQ.pdf.

These cuts significantly harmed Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer (LBQ) women, exacerbating their marginalization and vulnerability, while leading to a "structural disruption" to LBQ communities globally as U.S. government funding cuts and Administration Executive Orders on DEI and foreign assistance catalyzed an overall retrenchment in support from corporate, institutional and philanthropic donors while horrifically demonizing LGBTQI+ populations.[130]

"The arithmetic is simple: when an LBQ women's organization is defunded, psychological support, safety, shelter, and food disappear altogether."

– OUTRIGHT INTERNATIONAL, "BREAKING POINT: THE URGENT NEED TO INVEST IN LGBTIQ MOVEMENTS," 2026.[131]



The services most impacted by U.S. cuts affected services were gender-based violence responses (67 percent), protection (62 percent), livelihoods and multi-purpose cash assistance (58 percent) and healthcare (52 percent). Source: UN Women, "Type of Programmers & Sectors Most Impacted," chart, in At a Breaking Point: The Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts on Women's Organizations in Humanitarian Crises Worldwide (UN Women, May 2025), 11.[129]

For LBQ serving organizations, often the hubs for concurrent services supporting populations that are neither supported through mainstream organizations nor LGBTQI-focused funding, these cuts eliminated multiple services concurrently.[132] For example, CHADALA, an organization funded by USAID, lost 100 percent of its funding in 2025, resulting in the organization relocating and cutting vital services, including shelter for women reporting violence.[133]

[129] UN Women, "Type of Programmers & Sectors Most Impacted," chart, in At a Breaking Point: The Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts on Women's Organizations in Humanitarian Crises Worldwide (UN Women, May 2025), 11, https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/at-a-breaking-point-the-impact-of-foreign-aid-cuts-on-womens-organizations-in-humanitarian-crises-worldwide-en.pdf.

[130] UN Women, At a Breaking Point: The Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts on Women's Organizations in Humanitarian Crises Worldwide, Apr. 2025, p. 11, https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/at-a-breaking-point-the-impact-of-foreign-aid-cuts-on-womens-organizations-in-humanitarian-crises-worldwide-en.pdf.

[131] Outright International, Breaking Point: The Urgent Need to Invest in Global LGBTIQ Movements (Sept. 2026), https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/Breaking_Point_Outright_International_Funding_LGBTIQ.pdf.

[132] Id., at 53, 67.

[133] Id., at 53.

KEY AREAS IN WHICH WOMEN AND GIRLS GLOBALLY HAVE BEEN DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED BY U.S. CUTS TO FOREIGN AID:

Foreign Assistance Program Cuts	Impact on Women and Girls	Trump Administration Actions
Maternal and Child Healthcare & Family Planning and Reproductive Health *Lifesaving access to maternal and child healthcare and family planning and reproductive-health services*	USAID's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programs decreased annual maternal deaths by 40 percent between 2020 and 2023 and child mortality for children under the age of five by 50 percent since 1990.[134] In 2025, deaths among children under five were projected to increase for the first time this century, reversing decades of progress.[135] Meeting contraceptive needs reduces unintended pregnancy and maternal and child mortality. Cuts to contraceptive and family planning services in 2025 are estimated to have resulted in 47.6 million people losing access to contraceptives, 17.1 million unintended pregnancies and 34,000 maternal deaths. [136]	The Trump Administration's *America First Global Health Strategy* that guides U.S. global health assistance and policies abroad does not mention reproductive or maternal healthcare. The term "women" does not appear once in the entire strategy.[137] The 2025 foreign assistance terminations included 86 percent of maternal and child health programs and the closure of hundreds of health centers, cutting care for as many as 16.8 million women annually.[138] The Administration continues to withhold $1.3 billion in Fiscal Year 2025 Global Health Programs funding that Congress appropriated for specific disease and other health programs. The Administration aims to use this money to fund its illegal closure of USAID, including $320 million meant for maternal and child health programs and all remaining Fiscal Year 2025 Family Planning and Reproductive Health funding. [139] In October 2026, the Administration used an emergency authority to divert $49 million in family planning funds for global energy diversification.[140] For Fiscal Year 2027, the Administration is seeking a 45.6 percent reduction in global health funding and requesting the elimination of disease and program-specific allocations, including for maternal and child health and family planning and reproductive health.[141]

[134] World Health Organization (WHO) et al., Trends in Maternal Mortality 2000 to 2023, (Apr. 2025), https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/9789240108462-eng.pdf.

[135] Lauren Kent, "Child Deaths Projected to Rise for First Time This Century, as Aid Cuts Reverse Decades of Progress," CNN, Dec. 4, 2025, https://www.cnn.com/2025/12/04/world/child-deaths-projected-rise-gates-foundation-intl.

[136] Elizabeth A. Sully & Amy Friedrich-Karnik, "Foreign Aid Cuts Will Lead to 34,000 More Pregnancy-Related Deaths in Just One Year," Guttmacher Institute, Mar. 18, 2025, https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2025/03/foreign-aid-cuts-will-lead-34000-more-pregnancy-related-deaths-just-one-year.

[137] U.S. Department of State, America First Global Health Strategy (Sept. 2025), https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/America-First-Global-Health-Strategy-Report.pdf.

[138] Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), "The Trump Administration's Foreign Aid Review: Status of U.S. Global Maternal and Child Health Efforts," Sept. 22, 2026, https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/the-trump-administrations-foreign-aid-review-status-of-u-s-global-maternal-and-child-health-efforts/.

[139] Letter from Sen. Brian Schatz et al. to Sec. Marco Rubio, Dir. Russell Vought and Eric Ueland, Apr. 24, 2026, https://www.schatz.senate.gov/download/usaid-funding-letter-04-24-26?download=1.

[140] Notification to Congress of Determination Pursuant to Section 451 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, September 30, 2026.

[141] Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), "Global Health Funding in the FY 2027 President's Budget Request," Apr. 6, 2026, https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/global-health-funding-in-the-fy-2027-presidents-budget-request/; Population Action International (PAI), "Zero Sum Game—Trump Budget Request Proposes Zeroing Out Family Planning Funds and Continues to Starve Global Health Programs," PAI Washington Memo, Apr. 10, 2026, https://pai.org/resources/trump-fy-2027-budget-request/.

Preventing and Responding to Gender-based Violence (GBV) *Investments in GBV prevention, survivor services, healthcare, legal assistance and justice*	Every year, nearly one in three women—736 million women globally—experience some form of physical or sexual violence.[142] Violence reduces productivity and generates healthcare and social costs. It imposes costs of up to 3.7 percent of a country's GDP in lower- and middle-income countries due to lost productivity, healthcare costs, and lost days of work.[143] U.S. assistance formerly supported women's access to shelters, safe spaces, legal and health services.	In Fiscal Year 2025, Congress appropriated $250 million to support efforts to combat GBV, of which $188 million was rescinded by the Administration.[144] Overall, the Trump Administration has cut $400 million in foreign assistance awards that mentioned "gender-based violence" in their name or description, including 78 percent of gender-based violence funding for the humanitarian sector.[155] The Administration rescinded the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence and has failed to implement the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally or a multi-year strategy to prevent and respond to gender-based violence as required by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026.[145]
Supporting Adolescent Girls *Keeping girls in school and preventing child, early and forced marriage, among other forms of gender-based violence, supports girls' access to economic opportunity*	As of 2025, an estimated 133 million girls remain out of school worldwide,[146] putting them at greater risk of early marriage, child labor, female genital mutilation and other forms of abuse while depriving them of opportunities for long-term economic stability.[147] An estimated twelve million girls worldwide are married before they are eighteen each year, exposing them to rape, early pregnancy, risk of early death, abuse and limited economic opportunities.[148] The estimated economic cost of failing to protect girls from early marriage is $175 billion per year in lost economic productivity and increased health risks.[149]	The Trump Administration defied congressional directives by suspending and rescinding Fiscal Year 2025 foreign assistance to support adolescent girls, including programming to address female genital mutilation, efforts to address child, early and forced marriage and global education programs. To combat child, early and forced marriage, Congress appropriated $20 million in Fiscal Year 2025, which the Administration rescinded.[150] To address the practice of Female Genital Mutilation, Congress appropriated $5 million for UNICEF for Fiscal Year 2025, which was rescinded.[151] For basic education, the Administration rescinded $594 million of Fiscal Year 2025 funds and has not obligated any of the $691.5 million for basic education programs.[152] President Trump's Fiscal Year 2027 budget request to Congress proposed no funding for global education programs.[153]

[142] World Health Organization (WHO), "Devastatingly Pervasive: 1 in 3 Women Globally Experience Violence," Mar. 9, 2021, https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence.

[143] Daniel Halim, Diego Ubfal & Rigzom Wangchuk, Policy Lessons on Reducing Gender-Based Violence: Gender Innovation Lab Federation Evidence Series, World Bank, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099441101252333859/pdf/IDU01c8a0d310876a04acc0af720169b8e92ac18.pdf.

[144] Information from Senate Appropriations Committee, State and Foreign Operations Appropriations.

[145] Committee Minority Staff Communication with former U.S. Officials, Aug. 2026.

[146] UNESCO, "Gender Equality and Education," https://www.unesco.org/en/gender-equality/education (last visited Sept. 14, 2026).

[147] U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Millennium Challenge Corporation, and Peace Corps, "United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls," U.S. Department of State, March 2016, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/254904.pdf.

[148] Rachel Vogelstein & Jennifer Klein, *Accelerating Efforts to End Child Marriage*, Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), Institute of Global Politics, Mar. 2026, https://igp.sipa.columbia.edu/sites/igp/files/2026-03/Accelerating%20Efforts%20to%20End%20Child%20Marriage.pdf.

[149] Id.

[150] Information from Senate Appropriations Committee, State and Foreign Operations Appropriations.

[151] Id.

[152] Letter from Sen. Brian Schatz et al. to Sec. Marco Rubio, Dir. Russell Vought, and Eric Ueland, Apr. 24, 2026, https://www.schatz.senate.gov/download/usaid-funding-letter-04-24-26?download=1.

[153] Global Campaign for Education–US (GCE-US), "Statement from GCE-US on the President's FY27 Budget Request," Apr. 6, 2026, https://gce-us.org/statement-from-gce-us-on-the-presidents-fy27-budget-request/.

Funding Cuts for Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning and Reproductive Health Are Increasing Maternal and Child Deaths

> *"2025 is the first year of this century where child deaths will increase."*
>
> GATES FOUNDATION, GOALKEEPERS REPORT, 2025.[154]

What Is Happening

U.S. Global Health Policy Rolls Back Progress on Women's Access to Healthcare

- In September 2025, the Trump Administration released its *America First Global Health Strategy* to guide U.S. global health assistance and policies abroad. The strategy does not mention reproductive or maternal healthcare.[155] In fact, the words "women" or" girls" do not appear once in the entire strategy.[156] The *America First Global Health Strategy* is emblematic of the Trump Administration's gutting of U.S. support for women and girls' access to healthcare including maternal and child health, access to nutrition and access to family planning and contraceptives.[157]

Declining U.S. Global Health Funding

- Under the Trump Administration, the majority of U.S. global health programming was suspended and ultimately terminated in favor of direct bilateral assistance that was been slow to be delivered. Abrupt pauses and disruptions in service have led to a loss of life, wastage of resources and reputational damage to the United States.[158] Women could not pause their pregnancies while the United States reconsidered its funding and children perished absent lifesaving assistance, as documented in Dr. Atul Gawande's short-film, *Rovina's Choice,* about the impact of funding cuts on maternal and child health in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.[159]
- Looking ahead, the Trump Administration is seeking a 45.6 percent reduction in total global health funding for Fiscal Year 2027 and requested the elimination of disease and program-specific allocations, including for maternal and child health and family planning and reproductive health.[160]
- Global funding to combat HIV in low- and middle-income countries fell by a staggering $2.1 billion in 2025 and will likely lead to a resurgence of the epidemic with disproportionate impacts on adolescent girls.[161]

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[154] The Gates Foundation, "We Can't Stop at Almost," 2025 Goalkeepers Report, https://goalkeepers.gatesfoundation.org/report/2025-report/#WeCantStopAtAlmost (last visited Sept. 14, 2026).

[155] U.S. Department of State, *America First Global Health Strategy*, September 2025, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/America-First-Global-Health-Strategy-Report.pdf.

[156] Devex, "US Pulls Away from Family Planning. What About the $600M Saved for It?," https://www.devex.com/news/us-pulls-away-from-family-planning-what-about-the-600m-saved-for-it-112058; U.S. Department of State, America First Global Health Strategy, (Sept. 2025), https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/America-First-Global-Health-Strategy-Report.pdf.

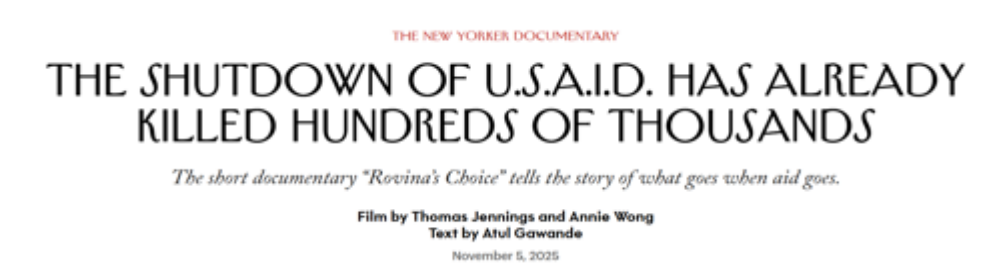
[157] U.S. Department of State (DOS), *America First Global Health Strategy*, Sept. 2025, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/America-First-Global-Health-Strategy-Report.pdf.

[158] Atul Gawande, "The Shutdown of U.S.A.I.D. Has Already Killed Hundreds of Thousands," The New Yorker, Nov. 5, 2025, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-documentary/the-shutdown-of-usaid-has-already-killed-hundreds-of-thousands; "Despite the Deadline, US Bilateral Health Deals Not Ready for Implementation," Health Policy Watch, 2026, https://healthpolicy-watch.news/despite-the-deadline-us-bilateral-health-deals-not-ready-for-implementation/.

[159] Thomas Jennings and Annie Wong, dirs., Rovina's Choice, Mortal Pictures and 2 Over 10 Media, 2025, https://rovinaschoice.com/; Atul Gawande, "The Shutdown of U.S.A.I.D. Has Already Killed Hundreds of Thousands," The New Yorker, Nov. 5, 2025, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-documentary/the-shutdown-of-usaid-has-already-killed-hundreds-of-thousands.

[160] KFF, The Trump Administration's Foreign Aid Review: Status of U.S. Global Maternal and Child Health Efforts, Aug. 6, 2026, https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/the-trump-administrations-foreign-aid-review-status-of-u-s-global-maternal-and-child-health-efforts/.

[161] Adam Wexler et al., Donor Government Funding for HIV in Low- and Middle-Income Countries in 2025, KFF and UNAIDS, July 27, 2026, https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/donor-government-funding-for-hiv-in-low-and-middle-income-countries-in-2025/#ae116f65-98f7-4489-



THE NEW YORKER DOCUMENTARY

THE SHUTDOWN OF U.S.A.I.D. HAS ALREADY KILLED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS

The short documentary "Rovina's Choice" tells the story of what goes when aid goes.

Film by Thomas Jennings and Annie Wong
Text by Atul Gawande

November 5, 2025

The documentary film produced by The New Yorker with Dr. Atul Gawande highlights the haunting choice faced by one mother impacted by United States funding cuts at Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Source: Atul Gawande, "The Shutdown of U.S.A.I.D. Has Already Killed Hundreds of Thousands," The New Yorker, Nov. 5, 2025.[162]

Family Planning and Reproductive Health Programs Halted; Commodities Wasted

- Despite congressional appropriations and requirements, the Trump Administration rescinded or has not implemented more than $1 billion in bipartisan funding for family planning programs for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026.[163] The President's Fiscal Year 2027 budget request does not include any funding for family planning programs.[164]
- In 2025, the Trump Administration moved to destroy nearly $10 million in already-purchased, viable family planning commodities by moving them from a climate-controlled warehouse rather than accepting offers to donate or sell the supplies.[165] According to a USAID Inspector General report, the cost to the U.S. taxpayer will exceed $10 million, including $24,000 a month for storage costs.[166] As of October 2026, it is unclear what has happened to these commodities because the State Department has repeatedly declined to provide information on their status and disposition to Congress.[167]
- The Trump Administration discontinued all funding for the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), which provides access to safe and voluntary family planning resources to women and families in over 150 countries and strengthens health systems to protect women from preventable maternal deaths.[168]

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ad86-250dfd0c8caa; UNAIDS, UNAIDS Special Report for the 26th International AIDS Conference, July 27, 2026, https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2026/20260727_special_report_AIDS2026.

[162] Atul Gawande, "The Shutdown of U.S.A.I.D. Has Already Killed Hundreds of Thousands," The New Yorker, Nov. 5, 2025, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-documentary/the-shutdown-of-usaid-has-already-killed-hundreds-of-thousands.

[163] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, Pub. L. No. 119-75, div. F, § 7019(d), 140 Stat. 173, 554 (Feb. 3, 2026), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-119publ75/pdf/PLAW-119publ75.pdf.

[164] U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification, Fiscal Year 2027: Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, (Apr. 2026), https://www.state.gov/fy-2027-international-affairs-budget/.

[165] Adam Taylor & Meg Kelly, "Emails Detail Confusion in State Department Over Trump Plan to Destroy Contraceptives," The Washington Post, July 14, 2026, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/07/14/emails-detail-confusion-state-department-over-trump-plan-destroy-contraceptives/.

[166] USAID Office of Inspector General, Family Planning Commodities: USAID Must Provide Final Disposition Instructions to Stop Accruing Storage Costs for $8 Million in Unusable Items and $1.7 Million in Nearly Expired Items in Belgium, Management Advisory, June 2026, https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2026-06/Management%20Advisory_Family%20Planning%20Commodities%20in%20Belgium%20Need%20Final%20Disposition%20Instructions.pd.

[167] Senate Foreign Relations Committee Minority Staff

[168] United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "Statement by UNFPA Executive Director on the United States Government Funding Cuts," Feb. 28, 2025, https://www.unfpa.org/press/statement-unfpa-executive-director-united-states-government-funding-cuts; UNFPA, "About Us," https://www.unfpa.org/about-us (last visited Sept. 14, 2026); UNFPA, "Where We Work," https://www.unfpa.org/where-we-work (last visited Sept. 14, 2026).

Maternal and Child Health Programs Harmed by Foreign Assistance Cuts and Award Terminations

- USAID's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programs were effective in decreasing annual maternal deaths by 40 percent between 2020 and 2023 and child mortality for children under the age of five by 50 percent since 1990.[169]
- The 2025 foreign assistance terminations included 86 percent of maternal and child health programs and the closure of hundreds of health centers, cutting care for as many as 16.8 million women annually.[170]
- The Administration continues to withhold $1.3 billion in Fiscal Year 2025 Global Health Programs funding that Congress appropriated for specific disease and other health programs. The Administration aims to use this money to fund its illegal closure of USAID, including $320 million meant for maternal and child health programs.[171]

> *"We all know and agree that without health, no country can flourish and develop, and without the health of mothers and children, none of us would be here."*
>
> – DR. BABATUNDE OSOTIMEHIN, THEN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND, 2013.[172]

CASE STUDY: AFGHANISTAN

Women in Afghanistan face one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world, with a woman dying in childbirth every two hours.[173] U.S. foreign assistance cuts for Afghanistan resulted in the closure of 800 local health clinics and 300 nutrition treatment centers that served 80,000 malnourished children and mothers.[174] UNFPA estimates the loss of U.S. funding in Afghanistan will result in an additional 1,200 maternal deaths between 2025 and 2028.[175]



A doctor carries out a C-section at Ghazni provincial hospital in August 2025, after USAID cuts led to the suspension of health facilities across Afghanistan. Source: Elise Blanchard, photograph, August 2025, Getty Images.[176]

[169] FF, The Trump Administration's Foreign Aid Review: Status of U.S. Global Maternal and Child Health Efforts, Aug. 6, 2026, https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/the-trump-administrations-foreign-aid-review-status-of-u-s-global-maternal-and-child-health-efforts/.

[170] Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), "The Trump Administration's Foreign Aid Review: Status of U.S. Global Maternal and Child Health Efforts," Sept. 22, 2026, https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/the-trump-administrations-foreign-aid-review-status-of-u-s-global-maternal-and-child-health-efforts/.

[171] Letter from Sen. Brian Schatz et al. to Sec. Marco Rubio, Dir. Russell Vought, and Eric Ueland, Apr. 24, 2026, https://www.schatz.senate.gov/download/usaid-funding-letter-04-24-26?download=1.

[172] Babatunde Osotimehin, "Statement by Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund, at the High-Level Event on the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA)," 20th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Jan. 27, 2013, https://au.int/en/speeches/20130127-6.

[173] Mudabbir Maajid et al., "Afghanistan Maternal Health Crisis: How CARE Clinics Save Young Mothers in Remote Villages," CARE, Feb. 4, 2026, https://www.care.org/news-and-stories/afghanistan-maternal-health-crisis/.

[174] Leila Molana-Allen & Eric O'Connor, "A Look at the Devastating Impact of USAID Cuts in Rural Afghanistan," PBS News Hour, Aug. 25, 2026, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/a-look-at-the-devastating-impact-of-usaid-cuts-in-rural-afghanistan.

[175] United Nations, "US Funding Pause Leaves Millions 'in Jeopardy,' Insist UN Humanitarians," UN News, Feb. 4, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/02/1159746.

[176] Azada Azada et al., "Inside the Deadly Collapse of Maternity Care in Afghanistan," openDemocracy, July 23, 2026, https://www.opendemocracy.net/afghanistan-maternity-care-collapse-taliban-usaid-cuts-trump-women-dying-birth-babies/.

Case Study: The State Department's DREAMS Partnership Terminated

The Trump Administration terminated funding for PEPFAR's Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-Free, Mentored, and Safe (DREAMS) Partnership. Established in 2014, DREAMS focused on reducing HIV incidents in adolescent girls and young women and included protection from physical and sexual violence, education and economic empowerment.[177] Approximately seven out of ten new HIV infections among adolescents aged 15-19 occur among girls and young women.[178] DREAMS, funded in partnership with foundations and the private sector, developed evidence-based prevention interventions to address high HIV rates of young women and was credited with a 25 percent reduction in new HIV diagnoses among adolescent girls and young women across nearly all of its geographic regions.[179] In 2023, DREAMS reached 2.5 million adolescent girls and young women across 15 countries, 10 of which were in Africa.[180]

Why It Matters

2025 was the first year in the 21st Century in which child mortality increased due to pregnant women losing access to essential healthcare.[181] A combination of funding cuts for maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS response, and sexual and reproductive healthcare have had devastating impacts on women and girls, particularly those living in conflict or humanitarian crisis settings.[182] A nearly 90 percent cut to U.S. foreign aid for maternal and child health, in addition to the closure of hundreds of health centers, could cut care for as many as 16.8 million women annually.[183] Cuts to contraceptive and family planning services in 2025 alone are estimated to have resulted in 47.6 million people losing access to contraceptives, 17.1 million unintended pregnancies and 34,000 maternal deaths.[184]

[177] KFF, The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), May 22, 2026, https://www.kff.org/facade/3ad72eb.

[178] UNICEF, "FAST FACTS: Critical Gains in HIV Response, but Adolescents — Especially Girls — Remain Disproportionately Affected, UNICEF Warns on World AIDS Day," Nov. 29, 2024, https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/fast-facts-critical-gains-hiv-response-adolescents-especially-girls-remain.

[179] U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), DREAMS Partnership Fact Sheet, U.S. Department of State, [Dec. 2019], https://2017-2021.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/DREAMS-Partnership-Fact-Sheet_WAD_2019.pdf.

[180] Amunga, V. (2026, February 13). *Life after DREAMS: Kenya's girls navigate HIV risk without US support*. Devex. https://www.devex.com/news/life-after-dreams-kenya-s-girls-navigate-hiv-risk-without-us-support-111837

[181] Gates Foundation. (2025). *2025 Goalkeepers report*. https://goalkeepers.gatesfoundation.org/report/2025-report/#WeCantStopAtAlmost

[182] Women's Refugee Commission, *A Year of Harms: The Impact of U.S. Foreign Aid Cuts on Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises*, Jan. 2026, p. 10, https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/YearofHarms_Report.pdf.

[183] Id.

[184] Guttmacher Institute, "Foreign Aid Cuts Will Lead to 34,000 More Pregnancy-Related Deaths in Just One Year," Mar. 2025, https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2025/03/foreign-aid-cuts-will-lead-34000-more-pregnancy-related-deaths-just-one-year.

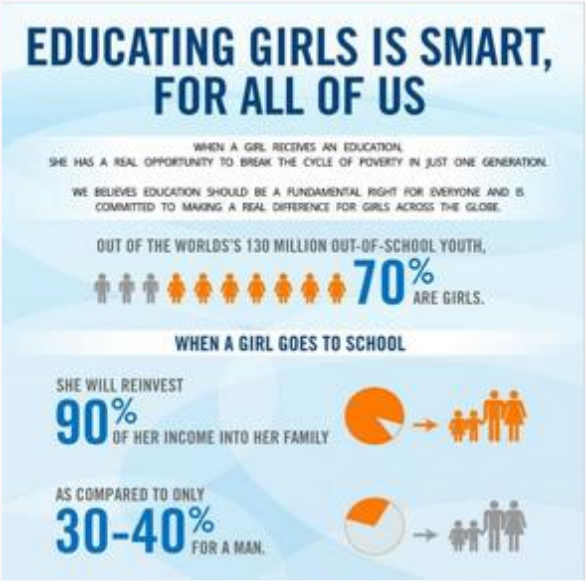
Cuts to Girls' Education Programs and Child, Early and Forced Marriage Prevention and Response

"About 167 million adolescent girls growing up in countries with the widest gender equality gaps are among those worst hit by this year's aid cuts, with the massive fall in global aid having a disproportionate impact on countries where it is hardest to be a girl."

-SAVE THE CHILDREN CANADA ANALYSIS, "GIRLS PAY THE PRICE AS AID CUTS HIT COUNTRIES WITH DEEPEST GENDER INEQUALITY," 2025.[185]

What Is Happening

- The Trump Administration has undermined efforts to implement the U.S. Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls and seeks to terminate U.S. basic education funding globally. In fact, the Administration's Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027 budget requests to Congress fail to include funding for basic education or to address child, early and forced marriage.[187]
- The erasure of child, early and forced marriage as a foreign policy priority comes on the heels of successive years of defying congressional directives to address this form of violence against children. In Fiscal Year 2024, Congress appropriated $20 million to support efforts to combat child, early and forced marriage. The Trump Administration illegally withheld nearly all funding, ultimately only programming $1.2 million for these efforts.[188]
- In Fiscal Year 2025, Congress appropriated $20 million to support efforts to combat child, early and forced marriage. The Trump Administration rescinded all of those funds, ultimately programming nothing to combat child, early and forced marriage in Fiscal Year 2025.[189]



Source: World Economic Forum (@wef). "Educating Girls Is Smart, for All of Us." Infographic. X, January 9, 2015.[186]

[185] Press Release, Save the Children Canada, "Girls Pay the Price as Aid Cuts Hit Countries with Deepest Gender Inequality," Oct. 11, 2025, https://www.savethechildren.ca/article/girls-pay-the-price-as-aid-cuts-hit-countries-with-deepest-gender-inequality/.

[186] World Economic Forum (@wef), "A 10% rise in girls' education boosts GDP by 3%. How technology can help," X, Jan. 9, 2015, https://x.com/wef/status/553642541607047168.

[187] President's Budget Requests for FY2026 and FY2027: Congressional Research Service, Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs: FY2026 Budget and Appropriations, R48624, July 15, 2026, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R48624.html; Office of Management and Budget, Appendix, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2027: Department of State and Other International Programs, Apr. 3, 2026, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BUDGET-2027-APP/pdf/BUDGET-2027-APP-2-15.pdf.

[188] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, Pub. L. No. 118-47, div. F, § 7059, https://www.congress.gov/118/plaws/publ47/PLAW-118publ47.pdf.

[189] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, Pub. L. No. 118-47, div. F, § 7059, https://www.congress.gov/118/plaws/publ47/PLAW-118publ47.pdf (continued into FY2025 by the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025, Pub. L. No. 119-4, https://www.congress.gov/119/plaws/publ4/PLAW-119publ4.pdf).

- The Administration's position in 2025 and much of 2026 starkly contrasts with the State Department's work to implement the U.S. Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls during the President's first term and Secretary Rubio's record championing support for basic education and ending child, early and forced marriage as a U.S. Senator, when he regularly recognized both as interrelated priorities connected with poverty, maternal and infant health and violence.[190]

International Basic Education

- U.S. foreign assistance cuts coincided with tremendous need as the global education sector faces $3.2 billion in funding cuts.[191] In 2026, global education assistance for girls faces a 28 percent cut, including funding for tuition subsidies, safe and private toilets and skills programs, risking the reversal in progress for tens of millions of girls.[192]
- As part of its sweeping foreign assistance freeze and review in 2025, the Trump Administration abruptly suspended U.S. assistance for education programs abroad and rescinded all remaining funding for basic education previously obligated between Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025, with the exception of Jordan.[193] Remaining funding for basic education was set aside to cover costs associated with the illegal closure of USAID awards, rather than for the intended purposes of advancing basic education worldwide.[194]
- In Fiscal Year 2026, Congress, on a bipartisan basis, appropriated $691.5 million for basic education programs globally, but as of September 2026, no funds have been spent for basic education programs.[195] President Trump's Fiscal Year 2027 budget request to Congress proposed no funding for global education programs.[196]

Early and Forced Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation and/or Cutting (FGM/C)

- Between 2025 and throughout much of 2026, the Trump Administration discontinued, rescinded and cut funding for initiatives to combat child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation, including:[197]
    - In Fiscal Year 2024, Congress appropriated $20 million to support efforts to combat child, early and forced marriage. The Administration illegally withheld nearly all funds, ultimately only programming $1.2 million of those funds.[198]
    - In Fiscal Year 2025, Congress appropriated $20 million to support efforts to combat child, early and forced marriage. The Administration rescinded all of those funds, programming none of them.[199]
    - In Fiscal Year 2025, Congress appropriated $5 million for UNICEF to support efforts to combat FGM/C. The Administration rescinded all funds, including an additional $137 million for UNICEF's other program to support children.[200] Only in October 2026 did the Administration restore funding to counter FGM/C among other protection priorities.[201]

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[190] U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification: Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Fiscal Year 2019, Appendix 2, https://2017-2021.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/FY-2019-Department-of-State-Foreign-Operations-Congressional-Budget-Justification-Appendix-2-.pdf; Office of Senator Dick Durbin, "Durbin, Rubio Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Extend Authorization on Global Basic Education," U.S. Senate, https://www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-rubio-introduce-bipartisan-legislation-to-extend-authorization-on-global-basic-education; U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Protecting Girls: Global Efforts to End Child Marriage, hearing, September 14, 2016, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/09%2014%2016%20Protecting%20Girls%20–%20Global%20Efforts%20to%20End%20Child%20Marriage.pdf.

[191] UNICEF, "Global Funding Cuts Could Force 6 Million More Children Out of School in the Coming Year," Oct. 2025, https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/global-funding-cuts-could-force-6-million-more-children-out-school-coming-year.

[192] UNICEF USA, *Education Aid Cuts*, Sept. 2025, https://www.unicefusa.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/UNICEF-Education-Aid-Cuts.pdf.

[193] Internal Senate Foreign Relations Committee records last visited Oct. 26, 2026.

[194] Executive Order 14169, "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid," Jan. 20, 2025; Letter from Sen. Brian Schatz et al. to Sec. Marco Rubio, Dir. Russell Vought, and Eric Ueland, April 24, 2026, https://www.schatz.senate.gov/download/usaid-funding-letter-04-24-26?download=1.

[195] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, Pub. L. No. 119-75, div. F, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-119publ75/pdf/PLAW-119publ75.pdf; Conversation with House and Senate Appropriations Committee staff.

[196] U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification: Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Fiscal Year 2027, (Apr. 2026), https://www.state.gov/fy-2027-international-affairs-budget/.

[197] Information from Senate Appropriations Committee, State and Foreign Operations Appropriations.

[198] Internal Senate Foreign Relations Committee records last visited Oct. 26, 2026.

[199] Internal Senate Foreign Relations Committee records last visited Oct. 26, 2026.

[200] Id.

[201] Id.

"Child marriage rarely receives the attention it deserves, especially given the frequency with which it occurs. There are roughly 250 million women alive today who were married before the age of 15, and the devastating impact it has on girls and sometimes boys is impossible to overstate. It perpetuates poverty, it has lasting maternal and infant health ramifications, and it often contributes to violence. It is not limited just to distant lands. It happens even in our own hemisphere. Child marriage cuts across countries, regions, and cultures."

– MARCO RUBIO, U.S. SENATOR, SEPTEMBER 14, 2016.[202]

Why it Matters

Child, early and forced marriage is a gross violation of human rights that devastates women and girls and imposes an estimated $175 billion in losses per year in lost economic productivity alongside increased health risks.[203] As of 2025, an estimated 133 million girls remain out of school worldwide,[204] putting them at greater risk of early marriage, child labor, female genital mutilation and other forms of abuse while depriving them of opportunities for long-term economic stability.[205] According to UNICEF, global funding cuts could push six million more children out of school by the end of 2026, with approximately one third of them in humanitarian settings.[206] At the same time, an estimated twelve million girls worldwide are married before they are eighteen each year, exposing them to rape, early pregnancy, risk of early death, abuse and limited economic opportunities.[207] Education has been a powerful tool to prevent child, early and forced marriage with evidence showing rates are highest in countries where girls have the least education.[208] In 2024, UNICEF's Global Programme to End Child Marriage reached 16 million girls. In contrast, in 2025, the Programme was only able to support four million girls, due to funding cuts, including from the loss of support from the State Department's Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, which announced a $500,000 investment in the program during the Biden Administration.[209]

[202] Statement of Marco Rubio, Chairman, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues, *Protecting Girls: Global Efforts to End Child Marriage*, Hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 114th Cong., 2d Sess., Sept. 14, 2016, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg39435/html/CHRG-114shrg39435.html.

[203] Press Release, Columbia SIPA Institute of Global Politics, "Child Marriage Is a Human Rights Crisis — and Costs the World $175 Billion a Year. New Research Provides a Strategy to End It," Mar. 4, 2026, https://igp.sipa.columbia.edu/news/child-marriage-human-rights-crisis-and-costs-world-175-billion-year-new-research-provides.

[204] UNESCO, "Gender Equality and Education," https://www.unesco.org/en/gender-equality/education (last visited Sept. 14, 2026).

[205] U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Millennium Challenge Corporation, and Peace Corps, "United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls," U.S. Department of State, March 2016, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/254904.pdf.

[206] UNICEF, "Global Funding Cuts Could Force 6 Million More Children Out of School in the Coming Year," Sept. 2, 2025, https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/global-funding-cuts-could-force-6-million-more-children-out-school-coming-year.

[207] Rachel Vogelstein & Jennifer Klein, Accelerating Efforts to End Child Marriage, Columbia SIPA Institute of Global Politics Women's Initiative, at 10 (Mar. 2026), https://igp.sipa.columbia.edu/sites/igp/files/2026-03/Accelerating%20Efforts%20to%20End%20Child%20Marriage.pdf.

[208] UNICEF, The Power of Education to End Child Marriage, at 5 (2022), https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/The-power-of-education-to-end-child-marriage.pdf.

[209] U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Women's Issues, "Year Three of Executive Order 14020: The Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues 2023 Accomplishments," Apr. 23, 2024, https://2021-2025.state.gov/year-three-of-executive-order-14020-the-secretarys-office-of-global-womens-issues-2023-accomplishments/; UNICEF, Protecting Progress: The Global Impact of Funding Cuts on Ending Child Marriage, Nov. 5, 2025, https://www.unicef.org/media/176031/file/ECM%20Advocacy%20Brief_5%20Nov%202025.pdf.



US aid cuts yank Nepal's girls out of school and into child marriage

A short-lived U.S.-funded education program brought teachers to villages where girls had never been allowed to attend school. Its abrupt end has left many of those girls without a path back to learning — and under increased pressure to marry.

Source: Devex, "US Aid Cuts Yank Nepal's Girls Out of School and into Child Marriage," December 23, 2025.[210]

Cuts to these programs have vast consequences.

- Previously in Nepal, USAID tackled the 35 percent national child marriage rate by doubling the female literacy in three decades, reaching around 300,000 children.[211]
- In Nigeria, the State Department's Dignity and Security project had supported survivors of child marriage among other forms of gender-based violence and supported advocacy to pass the *Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act and Child Protection Law* in Yobe State in April 2022.[212]

The termination of funding in these and other countries across the world has left women and girls without essential services, including education. In Burma, the link between funding cuts and the surge of child, early and forced marriage trends is clear. In 2025 alone, aid cuts increased child marriage by 21 percent in the first eight months of the year, leaving them more vulnerable to forced manual labor and sex work.[213]

[210] Sunita Neupane, "US Aid Cuts Yank Nepal's Girls Out of School and into Child Marriage," Devex, Dec. 23, 2025, https://www.devex.com/news/us-aid-cuts-yank-nepal-s-girls-out-of-school-and-into-child-marriage-111580.

[211] Id.

[212] U.S. Department of State, Report to Congress on Actions Taken to Implement the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls, https://2021-2025.state.gov/reports/report-to-congress-on-actions-taken-to-implement-the-u-s-global-strategy-to-empower-adolescent-girls/.

[213] Kristen Gelineau, "Trafficked, Exploited, Married Off: Rohingya Children's Lives Crushed by Foreign Aid Cuts," Associated Press, Dec. 17, 2025, https://apnews.com/article/usaid-rohingya-exploitation-trump-budget-cuts-ebd7a05e2f507b810194e71ae6b3c515.



Complex emergencies like the Rohingya refugee crisis compound the risk of child, early and forced marriage. In the Cox's Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh, SFRC Minority staff heard how schools and learning centers offer a lifeline to young girls. The Trump Administration's foreign assistance cuts in 2025 affected more than 6,000 learning centers, with school closures accelerating child marriage rates.[214]
Source: Internal Senate Foreign Relations Committee records last visited Oct. 26, 2026.

[214] Press Release, Save the Children, "About 300,000 Children Risk Losing Education as Learning Centers in Rohingya Camps Shut Due to Funding Cuts," June 5, 2025, https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2025-press-releases/about-300000-children-risk-losing-education-learning; "School Closures Push Rohingya Refugee Children into Marriage and Work," Reuters, Aug. 22, 2025, https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/school-closures-push-rohingya-refugee-children-into-marriage-work-2025-08-22/.

Weakening Efforts to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence

"The reduction of these services has been associated with increased rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, child marriage, intimate partner violence, trafficking, and the exploitation of women and girls."

– WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION, A YEAR OF HARMS: THE IMPACT OF U.S. FOREIGN AID CUTS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES, JANUARY 2026.[215]



Rohingya refugee girls from Burma at a Women-Friendly Space at Cox's Bazar Refugee Camp in Bangladesh. Source: Allison Joyce, *Young Girls at a Women-Friendly Space at a Rohingya Refugee Settlement in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh*, photograph, 2018, UNFPA Bangladesh, enclosed in United Nations, "Women-Friendly Spaces for Rohingya Refugees: A Place for Protection and Care," *UN News*, July 3, 2018[216]

What's Happening

- Women in urban and rural communities globally experience sexual harassment and violence, drastically reducing their freedom of movement, ability to access education and pursue livelihoods, as well as limiting access to essential services, such as food distribution or sanitation latrines.[217]
- Every year, nearly one in three women—736 million women globally—experience some form of physical or sexual violence.[218]
- Despite women and girls facing a heightened risk of violence and congressional directives mandating the development and funding for a multi-year strategy to prevent and respond to gender-

[215] Women's Refugee Commission, *A Year of Harms: The Impact of U.S. Foreign Aid Cuts on Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises*, Jan. 2026, https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/year-of-harms/.

[216] United Nations, "Women-Friendly Spaces for Rohingya Refugees: A Place for Protection and Care," *UN News*, July 2018, https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1013892.

[217] UN Women, "Creating Safe and Empowering Public Spaces with Women and Girls," https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces.

[218] Women's Refugee Commission, *Unfunded and Unsafe: How U.S. Aid Cuts Are Threatening Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response in Humanitarian Crises*, June 2025, https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/How-US-Aid-Cuts-Are-Threatening-GBV-Prevention-and-Response.pdf.

based violence, the Trump Administration cut $400 million in foreign assistance awards that mentioned "gender-based violence" in their name or description, including 78 percent of gender-based violence funding for the humanitarian sector.[219] The Trump Administration also terminated implementation of the Biden Administration's National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence while failing to implement the first U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally, first launched during the Obama Administration.[220]

- Approximately 80 percent of 350 women-led organizations expressed a decrease in their ability to help survivors of violence and nearly 59 percent reported a perceived increase in impunity and the normalization of violence as a result of U.S. assistance cuts.[221]



A UNFPA-supported Women-Friendly Space at Cox's Bazaar Refugee Camp, which is home to 1.3 million mostly Rohingya refugees. Women's movements in the camp are limited, and they spend most of their time in a four-to-six-meter shelter. Adolescent girls move very little beyond home, latrines and school, but do not identify any of these as being 'safe'. Girls are not allowed to step outside their homes, unless accompanied by their mothers. Mothers fear that their daughters will be preyed upon; to prevent this, girls are often married off as soon as they reach puberty and start menstruating.[222] Safe spaces for women allow access to education, protect girls and prevent child marriage. Funding for UNFPA's work has been terminated by the Trump Administration. Source: Allison Joyce, Two women exit a Women-Friendly Space at a Rohingya refugee settlement in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, photograph, 2018, UNFPA Bangladesh, enclosed in United Nations, "Women-Friendly Spaces for Rohingya Refugees: A Place for Protection and Care," *UN News*, July 3, 2018[223]

[219] Id.

[220] U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally, Aug. 2012, announced at The White House, "Fact Sheet: Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Women and Girls Globally," Aug. 10, 2012, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/08/10/fact-sheet-preventing-and-responding-violence-against-women-and-girls-gl.

[221] UN Women, At Risk and Underfunded, Oct. 2025, https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2025/10/one-in-three-organizations-have-suspended-or-shut-down-programmes-on-ending-violence-against-women-due-to-funding-cuts.

[222] Saferworld, *Doing Right by Women and Girls in Cox's Bazar: Gendering Perspectives on Social Cohesion*, https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1353-doing-right-by-women-and-girls-in-coxas-bazar-gendering-perspectives-on-social-cohesion.

[223] United Nations, "Women-Friendly Spaces for Rohingya Refugees: A Place for Protection and Care," *UN News*, July 2018, https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1013892.

Why it Matters

The United States was the largest bilateral donor to efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence globally at the start of President Trump's second term.[224] U.S. funding cuts for this work have directly impacted women's access to and availability of shelters, safe spaces, legal and health services, among broader survivor support services. Cuts to U.S.-funded gender-based violence programs in humanitarian crises have resulted in more than 3 million women and girls losing access to prevention and response services, including in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Sudan and Ukraine.[225] Critical safe spaces designed to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of women and girls are shutting down at an alarming rate.

Impacts of cuts to gender-based violence prevention and response efforts include:[226]

- 1 million women and girls in Sudan lost access to centers for gender -based violence; [227]
- 623,000 women and girls in Yemen lost access to safe spaces;[228]
- 30,240 women and girls lost access to safe spaces in Lebanon;[229]
- 12 safe spaces for women were closed in Nigeria; and[230]
- Child survivors of rape lost access to outreach services.[231]
- Ethiopian organizations that were able to provide post-rape care materials at no cost were forced to charge fees.[232]
- In Ukraine, over 10,000 women and girls found themselves without critical protection services.[233]
- In Yemen, women and girls "lost access to critical services like safe houses, legal aid, and psychosocial support"[234]
- In Iraq, support centers that employed women and also supported women's economic empowerment lost capacity or closed.[235]

Without dedicated, women-led safe spaces, organizations, and/or shelters among other services, women and girls remain trapped in unsafe environments and more easily victimized, including in areas affected by conflict, trafficking and other violence, fueling broader insecurity and crime.

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[224] Julianne Deitch, Unfunded and Unsafe: How US Aid Cuts Are Threatening Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response in Humanitarian Crises, Women's Refugee Commission, (May 2025), https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/How-US-Aid-Cuts-Are-Threatening-GBV-Prevention-and-Response.pdf.

[225] Women's Refugee Commission, A Year of Harms: The Impact of US Foreign Aid Cuts on Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises, (Jan. 2026), https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/year-of-harms/.

[226] Women's Refugee Commission, *Women and Girls Are Less Safe from Violence*, Jan. 2026, https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/2-Women-and-girls-are-less-safe-from-violence.pdf.

[227] Id.

[228] Id.

[229] Id.

[230] Id.

[231] Id.

[232] Julianne Deitch, A Year of Harms: The Impact of US Foreign Aid Cuts on Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises, Women's Refugee Commission, 2026, 15, https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/YearofHarms_Report.pdf.

[233] Women's Refugee Commission, *A Year of Harms: The Impact of U.S. Foreign Aid Cuts on Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises*, Jan. 2026, https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/YearofHarms_Report.pdf.

[234] UNICEF, *Protecting progress: The global impact of funding cuts on ending child marriage*, Nov. 5, 2025, https://www.unicef.org/media/176031/file/ECM%20Advocacy%20Brief_5%20Nov%202025.pdf.pdf.

[235] Women's Refugee Commission, A Year of Harms: The Impact of U.S. Foreign Aid Cuts on Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises, Jan. 2026, https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/YearofHarms_Report.pdf.

CASE STUDY: KENYA

During official travel in August 2025, Committee Democratic staff met with teen refugee girls in Nairobi (ages 14-17) and single female-headed refugee households from Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo who had previously benefited from U.S. refugee assistance and protection programs.[236] Due to U.S. funding cuts, several teens and women had turned to negative survival mechanisms, including survival sex to support their families. One 17-year-old girl, Lulu, said that after the Trump Administration's earlier stop-work order, she lost her shelter with a USAID partner organization and had no choice but to engage in survival sex, which resulted in a pregnancy. An HIV-positive woman with a young child described returning home to her violent husband because she lost shelter due to U.S. funding cuts. Her greatest fear was protecting her HIV-negative child from her HIV-positive husband, who had threatened to sexually assault her daughter. Because of unreliable U.S. Government funding, international partners reported seeking support from non-traditional foreign assistance donors, including China and the United Arab Emirates.[237]



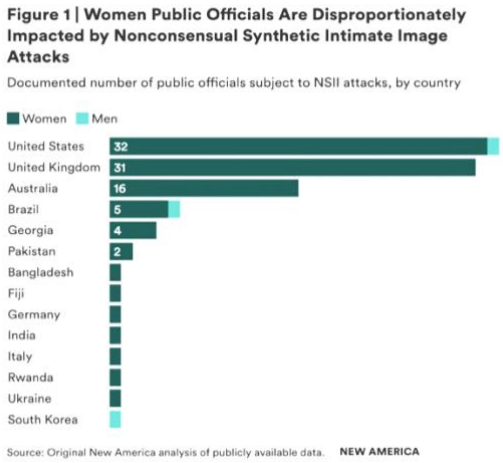
Demonstrators carry a coffin during a march against rising cases of femicide, in downtown Nairobi, Kenya, Monday, June 1, 2026. Source: Patrick Ngugi, Protesters Carrying a Coffin During Demonstrations Against Gender-Based Violence in Kenya, photograph, June 1, 2026, enclosed in Associated Press, "Protesters in Kenya Call for National Crisis Declaration over Gender-Based Violence," *AP News*, June 1, 2026.[238]

[236] Meetings of Committee Democratic staff with refugee girls (ages 14–17) and female heads of refugee households from Sudan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nairobi, Kenya, Aug. 2025.
[237] Meetings of Committee Democratic staff with international humanitarian partner organizations, Nairobi, Kenya, Aug. 2025.
[238] Associated Press, "Protesters in Kenya Call for National Crisis Declaration over Gender-Based Violence," AP News, June 1, 2026, https://apnews.com/article/kenya-protests-gender-based-violence-de43444d8f9b45be10e6813a0977130f.

CASE STUDY: TECH-FACILITATED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

A growing form of gender-based violence occurs in digital spaces: technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV).[239] With a goal of silencing women,[240] it targets women politicians and civil society leaders, forcing them to reduce or cease their participation in public life.[241] TFGBV impacts an estimated 85 percent of women,[242]including 70 percent of women human rights defenders, journalists and activists.[243]

Artificial intelligence is facilitating and accelerating TFGBV, particularly through the proliferation of image-based abuse and deepfake pornographic videos.[244] An estimated 95 percent of AI-powered deepfakes are non-consensual pornographic images, of which 99 percent target women.[245]



Source: Adriana Stephan, Women Public Officials Are Disproportionately Impacted by Nonconsensual Synthetic Intimate Image Attacks, chart, New America, enclosed "A Weapon Against Women in Politics: Reining in Nonconsensual Synthetic Intimate Imagery," New America, September 18, 2025.

The Trump Administration has terminated efforts to address TFGBV including by eliminating the "Supporting Women In Facing TFGBV (SWIFT)," a first of its kind rapid response funding mechanism previously led by the State Department to support women in public and political leadership.[246] It withdrew the United States from the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse (the Partnership), a coalition of governments, international organizations, businesses and civil society organizations working to address TFGBV[247] which the United States founded and initially led. [248] In December 2025, Secretary Rubio barred leadership from HateAid, a legal advocacy organization that supports victims of TFGBV, from entering the United States, deeming them leaders of a "global censorship-industrial complex."[249]

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[239] UN Women, UN Women Strategy on Preventing and Eliminating Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls, at 5 (2025), https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/un-women-strategy-preventing-and-eliminating-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf, Note: According to the UN, this form of violence "refers to any act that is committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified by the use of information communication technologies or other digital tools, that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm, or other infringements of rights and freedoms."

[240] Kristine Baekgaard, "Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence," Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, June 18, 2024, https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence/.

[241] Kristine Baekgaard, Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: An Emerging Issue in Women, Peace and Security, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, at [page] (2024), https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/GIWPS-TFGBV-Report-2025.pdf.

[242] Economist Intelligence Unit, Measuring the Prevalence of Online Violence Against Women, 2021, https://onlineviolencewomen.eiu.com/.

[243] Julie Posetti et al., Tipping Point: The Chilling Escalation of Online Violence Against Women in the Public Sphere, UN Women, (Dec. 2025), https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/tipping-point-the-chilling-escalation-of-violence-against-women-in-the-public-sphere-in-the-age-of-ai-en.pdf.

[244] UNESCO, "Your Opinion Doesn't Matter, Anyway": Exposing Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in an Era of Generative AI, at page 17 (2023), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387483.

[245] Ana Carmo, "AI and Anonymity Fuel Surge in Digital Violence Against Women," UN News, Nov. 20, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166411.

[246] U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Women's Issues, "The U.S. Government and Partners Reach Over $900 Million in Commitments to Women LEAD, an Initiative to Advance Women's Political Participation," fact sheet, Oct. 2, 2024, https://2021-2025.state.gov/the-u-s-government-partners-reach-over-900-million-in-commitments-to-women-lead-an-initiative-to-advance-womens-political-participation/; Andrea Gillespie et al., "U.S. State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor," Politics & Gender 22 (2026): 291–312, at 296, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X26100701.

[247] The White House, "Launching the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse," Mar. 18, 2022, https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/gpc/briefing-room/2022/03/18/launching-the-global-partnership-for-action-on-gender-based-online-harassment-and-abuse/; Global Affairs Canada, "Joint Statement on the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse," June 2022, https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2022/06/joint-statement-on-the-global-partnership-for-action-on-gender-based-online-harassment-and-abuse.html.

[248] Cailin Crockett et al., "Gender at the National Security Council," Politics & Gender 22 (2026): 249-262, at page 256, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X26100671.

[249] Marco Rubio (@SecRubio), "For far too long, ideologues in Europe have led organized efforts to coerce American platforms to punish American viewpoints they oppose," X, Dec. 23, 2025, https://x.com/SecRubio/status/2003547575580815814.



Advancing a Political Ideology that Deliberately Excludes Women and Girls

The U.S. Abandons and Erodes Multilateral Support for Women and Girls

On the global stage, the Trump Administration is pushing an agenda to undermine the rights of women and girls worldwide.

At the UN, the Trump Administration withdrew the United States from the Executive Boards of the only two UN agencies strictly devoted to advancing women's rights, ending maternal mortality and countering gender-based violence, the UN Population Fund (or UNFPA) and UN Women.[250] UNFPA operates in more than 150 countries and is the only UN agency mandated to provide reproductive and maternal healthcare in humanitarian crises, ensuring women and families can access voluntary family planning, safe childbirth services and protection from gender-based violence such as child marriage.[251] UN Women is the lead UN agency on gender equality, working to advance the empowerment and rights of women and girls globally.[252] U.S. withdrawal is neither funding nor engaging with the work of these agencies globally, leaving women and girls, especially those in conflict zones, worse off.

The Trump Administration also withdrew the United States from the UN's Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Office of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children.[253] These offices advocate for the needs of women and children, especially in

[250] The White House, "Withdrawing the United States from International Organizations, Conventions, and Treaties That Are Contrary to the Interests of the United States," Presidential Memorandum, Jan. 7, 2026, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/01/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-international-organizations-conventions-and-treaties-that-are-contrary-to-the-interests-of-the-united-states/.

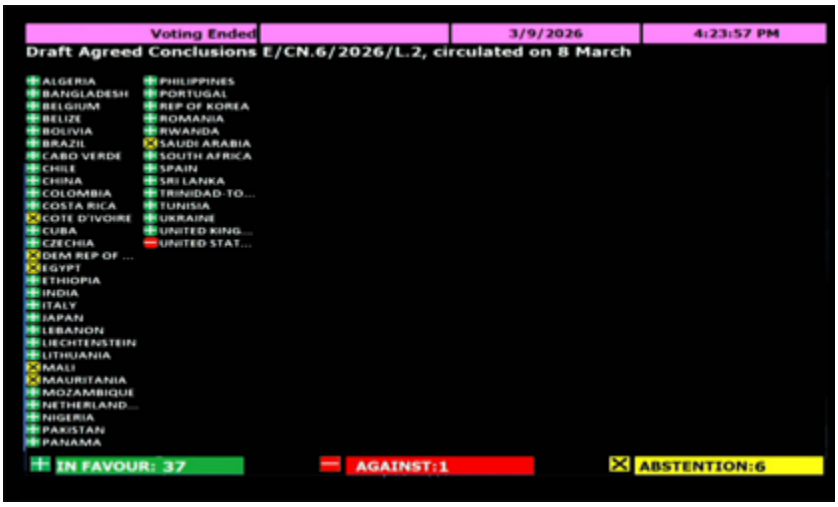
[251] Elissa Miolene, "UN Women's Conference Rejects US Resolution on Gender," Devex, Mar. 19, 2026, https://www.devex.com/news/un-women-s-conference-rejects-us-resolution-on-gender-112115.

[252] U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, Ensuring and Strengthening Access to Justice for All Women and Girls, Including by Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Legal Systems, Eliminating Discriminatory Laws, Policies and Practices, and Addressing Structural Barriers: Agreed Conclusions, U.N. Doc. E/CN.6/2026/L.2, 70th Session (Mar. 8, 2026), https://docs.un.org/en/E/CN.6/2026/L.2.

[253] Presidential Memorandum, "Withdrawing the United States from International Organizations, Conventions, and Treaties that Are Contrary to the Interests of the United States," The White House, Jan. 7, 2026, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/01/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-international-organizations-conventions-and-treaties-that-are-contrary-to-the-interests-of-the-united-states/.

conflict settings, gather data and present reports that contribute to accountability measures like UN Security Council sanctions and barring offenders from serving in UN peacekeeping missions.

The Trump Administration is not only abandoning multilateral institutions that support women and girls—it is actively seeking to undermine decades of global efforts to advance women's equality. In March 2026 at the Commission on the Status of Women, the largest gathering on women's rights in the world, the United States was the lone "no" vote on the annual guiding document for the Commission which sets forth guidelines for member states to promote women's rights in their own countries.[254] This year's guiding document emphasized "ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls" including calling on member states to commit to investigating and prosecuting all forms of exploitation and violence against women and girls.[255] U.S. opposition marked the first time in the Commission's seventy-year history that the document was not agreed to by consensus.[256] The U.S. call for a vote came after the Trump Administration put forward at least 90 proposed amendments during negotiations, including amendments seeking to remove language on gender equality or sexual and reproductive rights.[257] The vote showed how isolated the United States has made itself in multilateral fora; when the document was adopted, the UN General Assembly Hall erupted into applause.[258]



Source: Henry Tse, Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights, Harvard Kennedy School, Carr-Ryan Commentary, "The Tug-of-War on Trans Rights in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Session 70," Mar. 31, 2026[259]

In March 2026 at the Commission on the Status of Women —the largest gathering on women's rights in the world —the United States was the lone "no" vote on the annual guiding document for the Commission which sets forth guidelines for member states to promote women's rights in their own countries.[260]

[254] Elissa Miolene, "UN Women's Conference Rejects US Resolution on Gender," Devex, Mar. 19, 2026, https://www.devex.com/news/un-women-s-conference-rejects-us-resolution-on-gender-112115.

[255] U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, Ensuring and Strengthening Access to Justice for All Women and Girls, Including by Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Legal Systems, Eliminating Discriminatory Laws, Policies and Practices, and Addressing Structural Barriers: Agreed Conclusions, U.N. Doc. E/CN.6/2026/L.2, 70th Session (Mar. 8, 2026), https://docs.un.org/en/E/CN.6/2026/L.2.

[256] Elissa Miolene, "Special Edition: A Tale of Two Movements — All at the Same Time," Devex, Mar. 13, 2026, https://www.devex.com/news/special-edition-a-tale-of-two-movements-all-at-the-same-time-112072

[257] Colum Lynch & Elissa Miolene, "Exclusive: US Seeks to Scrap UN Efforts to Expand Women's Rights," Devex, Mar. 6, 2026, https://www.devex.com/news/exclusive-us-seeks-to-scrap-un-efforts-to-expand-women-s-rights-112005.

[258] Helen Murphy, "Devex Newswire: At UN Gathering on Women's Rights, Consensus Trumps US Power," Devex, Mar. 11, 2026, https://www.devex.com/news/devex-newswire-at-un-gathering-on-women-s-rights-consensus-trumps-us-power-112038.

[259] Henry Tse, Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights, Harvard Kennedy School, Carr-Ryan Commentary, "The Tug-of-War on Trans Rights in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Session 70," Mar. 31, 2026, https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/carr-ryan/our-work/carr-ryan-commentary/tug-war-trans-rights-united-nations-commission.

[260] Damilola Banjo, "How US Tried but Failed to Wipe Out 70 Years of Global Consent on Women's Rights," PassBlue, Mar. 10, 2026, https://passblue.com/2026/03/10/how-us-tried-but-failed-to-wipe-out-70-years-of-global-consent-on-womens-rights//.

"In a failed attempt to impose its domestic political agenda onto international human rights bodies, the Trump Administration adopted positions more extreme than some of the world's most repressive regimes and hit a new low in U.S. isolation on the world stage. The end result is diminished U.S. multilateral influence and a more hostile environment for U.S. and international civil society actors working tirelessly to combat gender discrimination and gender-based violence."

–UZRA ZEYA, PRESIDENT AND CEO, HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST STATEMENT ON U.S. VOTE AT THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, 2026.[261]

The Trump Administration has also continually sought to eliminate or weaken established language regarding advancing women's rights and equality in UN documents.[262] Last year, for example, in negotiations over the UN's peacekeeping priorities, the Trump Administration sought to remove previously agreed-upon language welcoming efforts to increase the number of women in UN peacekeeping operations and encouraging "increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict," in direct violation of the *WPS Act*.[263]

Upon taking office in 2025, the Trump Administration rejoined and now leads the so-called Geneva Consensus Declaration (GCD).[264] Established in 2020 under the first Trump Administration, the United States used the Declaration, which states there is no international right to abortion and focuses heavily on traditional gender roles for women, to build a coalition of anti-abortion countries to push for restrictions on abortion access and advance conservative norms around women's roles and rights.[265] The document was never formally adopted by the UN.[266]

[261] Press Release, Human Rights First, "Failed U.S. Efforts to Turn Back the Clock on Gender Equality at the United Nations Isolate America and Set Americans Back," Mar. 20, 2026, https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/library/failed-u-s-efforts-to-turn-back-the-clock-on-gender-equality-at-the-united-nations-isolate-america-and-set-americans-back.

[262] Damilola Banjo, "The US Wants to Reshape the UN's Gender Equality Agenda. It's Doing So Alone.," PassBlue, Dec. 30, 2025, https://passblue.com/2025/12/30/the-us-wants-to-reshape-the-uns-social-agenda-its-doing-so-alone/; Colum Lynch, "Scoop: Trump Admin Opposes UN Commitment to Broaden Women's Peace Role," Devex, Feb. 25, 2025, https://www.devex.com/news/scoop-trump-admin-opposes-un-commitment-to-broaden-women-s-peace-role-109495.

[263] Colum Lynch, "Scoop: Trump Admin Opposes UN Commitment to Broaden Women's Peace Role," Devex, Feb. 25, 2025, https://www.devex.com/news/scoop-trump-admin-opposes-un-commitment-to-broaden-women-s-peace-role-109495.

[264] Press Statement, U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, "United States Renewed Membership in the Geneva Consensus Declaration on Promoting Women's Health and Strengthening the Family," Jan. 24, 2025, https://www.state.gov/united-states-renewed-membership-in-the-geneva-consensus-declaration-on-promoting-womens-health-and-strengthening-the-family/.

[265] See Trump Administration Accomplishments, The White House, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/trump-administration-accomplishments/ (last visited Sept. 14, 2026); Media Note, U.S. Department of State, "Secretary Pompeo Participates in the Geneva Consensus Declaration Signing Ceremony," Oct. 21, 2020, https://2017-2021.state.gov/secretary-pompeo-participates-in-the-geneva-consensus-declaration-signing-ceremony/; U.N. General Assembly, Seventy-fifth session Agenda item 131 (2020), https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n20/344/30/pdf/n2034430.pdf; Jaime M. Gher et al., "The Ripple Effects of the US Retreat from International Reproductive Care," Guttmacher Institute, Oct. 2025, https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2025/10/ripple-effects-us-retreat-international-reproductive-care.

[266] Floriane Borel et al., Six Months In: How the Trump Administration Is Undermining Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Globally, Guttmacher Institute, Aug. 2025, https://www.guttmacher.org/2025/08/six-months-how-trump-administration-undermining-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights.

Human rights groups have raised the alarm regarding the GCD over concerns it is seeking to overturn decades of established human rights principles, erode women's access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and roll back rights for LGBTQI+ individuals.[267] The Biden Administration withdrew co-sponsorship and signature from the Declaration stating: "the United States is re-engaging multilaterally to protect and promote the human rights of all women and girls, consistent with the long-standing global consensus on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights."[268] In August 2026, the Trump Administration announced the United States would assume the Secretariat of the GCD.[269]

Erasing Women and Girls' Rights from State Department Reporting: Spotlight on the Human Rights Report

Empowering women and girls and building resilient democracies go hand-in-hand.[270] Following a review of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor's (DRL) engagement on the rights of women and girls, State Department leadership under Secretary Rubio eviscerated the majority of DRL's policy and programmatic gender experts, and global programs and diplomatic initiatives advancing U.S. support for women and girls, including to support documentation of sexual and gender-based violence, with vast repercussions for DRL efforts to champion women's human rights defenders and human rights policy globally. [271]

Lack of clarity regarding the boundaries of the DEI Executive Order created a cloud of confusion for staff unsure whether meeting with women's human rights defenders, civil society organizations, or survivors of human rights abuses and violations constituted a violation of White House guidance. More broadly, the loss of programmatic and policy staff coupled with the foreign assistance freeze and subsequent termination of awards led to the elimination of the bureaucratic and civil society foundation for the integration of women's rights in DRL's work.[272]

This chilling effect led directly to the erasure of women's voices in human rights policy—both within the State Department and from the normal integration of civil society's voices in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy. This silence was carried into the State Department's Annual Country Reports on Human Rights.[273]

Historically, the State Department's Annual Country Reports on Human Rights, mandated by Congress, have been a critical tool for the United States to hold foreign governments

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[267] See Floriane Borel et al., Six Months In: How the Trump Administration Is Undermining Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Globally, Guttmacher Institute, Aug. 2025, https://www.guttmacher.org/2025/08/six-months-how-trump-administration-undermining-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights; Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE), "Geneva Consensus Declaration: Institutionalizing Attacks on Women and LGBTQ+ Rights," May 28, 2026, https://globalextremism.org/post/geneva-consensus-declaration/; Press Release, Amnesty International USA, "Geneva Consensus Declaration Tramples on Every Person's Right to Choose," Oct. 22, 2020, https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/geneva-consensus-declaration-tramples-on-every-persons-right-to-choose/.

[268] Press Statement, Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, "Prioritizing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy," U.S. Department of State, Jan. 28, 2021, https://2021-2025.state.gov/prioritizing-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-reproductive-rights-in-u-s-foreign-policy/.

[269] Press Statement, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Secretary of Health and Human Services & Marco Rubio, Secretary of State, "Joint Statement by Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy and Secretary of State Marco Rubio: United States to Serve as Secretariat of the Geneva Consensus Declaration," U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, Aug. 12, 2026, https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/08/joint-statement-by-secretary-of-health-and-human-services-robert-f-kennedy-and-secretary-of-state-marco-rubio-united-states-to-serve-as-secretariat-of-the-geneva-consensus-declaration/.

[270] Elena Ortiz et al., Exploring the Links Between Women's Status and Democracy, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, Mar. 2023, https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Exploring-the-Links-between-Womens-Status-and-Democracy.pdf.

[271] Andrea Gillespie, Tambria Schroeder, and Mona Lena Krook, "U.S. State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor," Politics & Gender 22, no. 1 (2026): 291–312, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X26100701.

[272] Id.

[273] Graham Smith et al., "State Department Slashes Its Annual Reports on Human Rights," NPR, Aug. 12, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/08/12/nx-s1-5495621/state-department-human-rights-reports-slashed.

accountable for human rights abuses and as a resource for advocates, journalists, businesses and others to track trends in human rights over decades, and advance human rights worldwide.[274] Consistent reporting has been critical[275] to documenting human rights violations and abuses in individual countries and tracking human rights trends over time.[276] Under the Trump Administration, the State Department slashed key information from the reports, including a marked reduction, and in some cases complete, erasure of any mention of women's rights.[277]

As the State Department prepared its annual reports, internal guidance instructed employees to remove mentions of violations not "explicitly required by statute," which was interpreted by Department officials to exclude many issues related to women including gender-based violence like state-sponsored rape, female genital mutilation and cutting, domestic violence or gender discrimination.[278] References to these issues were cut under sections related to women.[279] For example, across the country reports, the section devoted to sexual and reproductive rights—which previously covered maternal health issues like maternal mortality or government discrimination in reproductive healthcare—only retained mentions of forced abortions and sterilizations.[280] In the 2024 reports, this language was replaced by a single sentence stating that there were "no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization."[281]

[274] See Anne Frederick et al., "What Are the U.S. Department of State Human Rights Reports?," Center for Strategic and International Studies, Apr. 25, 2025, https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-are-us-department-state-human-rights-reports.

[275] Government Accountability Office, Human Rights: State Department Followed an Extensive Process to Prepare Annual Country Reports, GAO-12-561R, (May 31, 2012), https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-12-561r.

[276] The Political Terror Scale, https://www.politicalterrorscale.org/ (last visited Sept. 14, 2026). The PTS measures state-inflicted political violence and compiles its annual index from three sources: the State Department's Human Rights Reports, Amnesty International's yearly country reports, and Human Rights Watch's World Reports. Anne Frederick et al., "What Are the U.S. Department of State Human Rights Reports?," Center for Strategic and International Studies, Apr. 25, 2025, https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-are-us-department-state-human-rights-reports.

[277] Graham Smith et al., "State Department Slashes Its Annual Reports on Human Rights," NPR, Aug. 12, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/08/12/nx-s1-5495621/state-department-human-rights-reports-slashed.

[278] Id.

[279] Id.

[280] Graham Smith & Michele Kelemen, "State Department Slashes Its Annual Reports on Human Rights," NPR, Aug. 12, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/08/12/nx-s1-5495621/state-department-human-rights-reports-slashed; U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Apr. 22, 2024, https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/.

[281] U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2024: Dominican Republic, at page 4 (Aug. 2025), https://do.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/117/2025/08/DOMINICAN-REPUBLIC-2024-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT-1.pdf.

ISSUES COVERED IN 2023 VS. 2024 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

Comparison of 2023 and 2024 State Department annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

Issue Generally Covered in 2023 Reports	Same Issue Generally Covered in 2024 Reports?
Abusive Physical Conditions; Administration; Independent Monitoring	No
Denial of Fair Public Trial ● Trial Procedures ● Political Prisoners and Detainees	No
Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media ● *Freedom of Expression; Violence and Harassment; Censorship or Content Restrictions for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media; Libel/Slander Laws; National Security; Nongovernmental Impact*	Partly - subsection on freedom of the press but not freedom of expression generally
Internet Freedom	No
Freedom of Peaceful Assembly	No
Freedom of Association	No - except in context of worker rights/collective bargaining
Freedom of Movement and the Right to Leave the Country	No
Status and Treatment of Internally Displaced Persons (if applicable)	No
Stateless Persons (if applicable)	No
Corruption in Government	No
Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Monitoring and Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights ● *Retribution against Human Rights Defenders; Government Human Rights Bodies; The United Nations or Other International Bodies*	No
Discrimination and Societal Abuses – Women ● *Rape and Domestic Violence; Other Forms of Gender-based Violence or Harassment; Discrimination; Reproductive Rights*	No - except for coercion in population control
Discrimination and Societal Abuses – Indigenous Peoples (if applicable)	No
Discrimination and Societal Abuses – Children ● *Education; Child Abuse; Child, Early, and Forced Marriage; Sexual Exploitation of Children*	No - except for child marriage
Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics ● *Criminalization; Violence and Harassment; Discrimination; Availability of Legal Gender Recognition; Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological Practices; Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly*	No
Discrimination and Societal Abuses – Persons with Disabilities	No

Source: Prepared by the Congressional Research Service using the 2023 and 2024 State Department annual Country Reports on Human Rights.

The 2025 Human Rights Report was due to Congress under statute on February 25, 2026; it has not yet been released as of September 2026. Leaked internal guidance shows that U.S. diplomats were instructed to scrutinize countries' records on abortion, affirmative action based on gender or race and gender-transition surgery among children.[282] This stands in contrast to a focus on torture, oppression of human rights defenders or persecution of minority groups.[283]

The State Department's decision to erase nearly all mention of women's rights from its annual human rights reporting will not erase the harms women experience globally. Instead, it will make those harms less visible and lead the Department to ignore these issues in U.S. bilateral relationships, actively contributing to further harm.

Weaponizing U.S. Foreign Assistance: Expanded Global Gag Rule Imposes an Ideological Litmus Test on Global Partners

> *"This sweeping expansion of the Global Gag Rule imperils funding for life-saving programs, particularly for women and girls who are already at greater risk because of the Trump's budget cuts to health, food, shelter and gender-based violence programs. The United States should lead with our values, not impose extreme ideological litmus tests that jeopardize global health and humanitarian efforts."*
>
> – SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN WHEN INTRODUCING THE "PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT," BICAMERAL LEGISLATION TO NULLIFY THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S SWEEPING EXPANSION OF THE GLOBAL GAG RULE.[284]

For years, Republican Administrations have put into effect the Global Gag Rule which prohibits U.S. global family planning assistance to any NGO unless it certifies that it will not "perform or actively promote abortion as a method of family planning" using funds from any source, including non-U.S. funds.[285] Under the first Trump Administration, the rule was expanded to cover most other U.S. global health assistance which meant that any foreign NGO that provided, counseled, referred or advocated for abortion, even with non-U.S. funding, could not receive U.S. global health funds. That expansion impacted $7.4 billion in global health assistance and led to devastating impacts for women and girls: the closure of health clinics and an increase in abortions, unplanned pregnancies and maternal and child deaths because women had less access to reproductive healthcare, HIV counseling, contraception and post-natal care.[286]

[282] Adam Taylor & Hannah Natanson, "Under Trump, U.S. Human Rights Reports Will Flag Abortion, Gender Care," The Washington Post, Nov. 20, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/11/20/trump-rubio-human-rights-report/.

[283] Adam Taylor & Hannah Natanson, "Under Trump, U.S. Human Rights Reports Will Flag Abortion, Gender Care," The Washington Post, Nov. 20, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/11/20/trump-rubio-human-rights-report/.

[284] U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (SFRC) Democrats, "Shaheen, Rosen Lead Bicameral Legislation to Overturn Trump Administration's Expanded Global Gag Rule," May 5, 2026, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/dem/release/shaheen-rosenleadbicameral-legislation-to-overturn-trump-administrations-expanded-global-gag-rule.

[285] KFF, "The Mexico City Policy: An Explainer," https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/the-mexico-city-policy-an-explainer/.

[286] Id, The first Trump Administration's expansion, rebranded Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance, applied the policy to all U.S. global health assistance rather than family planning funds alone, covering approximately $7.3 billion in FY2020 as against $300 to $600 million in family planning assistance under earlier administrations. See also Nina Brooks, Eran Bendavid, and Grant Miller, "USA aid policy and induced abortion in sub-Saharan Africa: an analysis of the Mexico City Policy," The Lancet Global Health, 2019, https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X1930267-0/fulltext.

IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MEXICO CITY POLICY IN THE LITERATURE

- Increased abortion rates
- Increased pregnancy
- Decreased contraceptive prevalence
- Disruption in family planning and other services
- Gaps in family planning and other services
- Reduced service integration
- Over-implementation and chilling effect
- Confusion
- Loss of civil society/NGO coordination and partnerships
- Increased administrative burden

SOURCE: KFF, "IMPACT OF THE MEXICO CITY POLICY: LITERATURE REVIEW," JULY 17, 2024.[287]

The second Trump Administration has overseen an unprecedented expansion of the Global Gag Rule through its "Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance" policy. The expanded Global Gag Rule impacts all non-military foreign assistance, applies to more organizations and streams of funding outside of U.S. funds, and expands prohibited activities beyond sexual and reproductive health and rights to include the promotion of gender equality, LGBTQI+ rights and DEI activities. [288] The policy has gutted U.S. assistance for women and girls, while imposing ideological restrictions on American and foreign NGOs, UN and multilateral partners and foreign governments if they carry out "woke" activities, even with non-U.S. dollars.[289]

President Trump's expansion of the Global Gag Rule to all non-military foreign assistance impacts as much as $40 billion in U.S. obligated foreign assistance, including support for emergency and humanitarian response activities.[290] This new policy will have an even more disastrous effect, while imposing new ideologically motivated administrative burdens on women-serving organizations.[291]

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[287] Jennifer Kates & Kellie Moss, KFF, "Impact of the Mexico City Policy: Literature Review," July 17, 2024, https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/impact-of-the-mexico-city-policy-literature-review/.

[288] U.S. Department of State (DOS), "Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance," "Combating Gender Ideology in Foreign Assistance," and "Combating Discriminatory Equity Ideology in Foreign Assistance," Federal Register, Jan. 27, 2026, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/01/27/2026-01516/combating-gender-ideology-in-foreign-assistance and https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/01/27/2026-01517/combating-discriminatory-equity-ideology-in-foreign-assistance-rules; See Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), "The Trump Administration's Latest Expansion of the Mexico City Policy: A Funding Analysis," Feb. 2026, https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/the-trump-administrations-latest-expansion-of-the-mexico-city-policy-a-funding-analysis/; See also Guttmacher Institute, "Weaponizing US Foreign Aid: Trump's New 2026 Global Gag Rule," Mar. 2026, https://www.guttmacher.org/2026/03/weaponizing-us-foreign-aid-trumps-new-2026-global-gag-rule.

[289] Id.

[290] Kellie Moss, Jennifer Kates, Anna Rouw, and Stephanie Oum, "The Trump Administration's Latest Expansion of the Mexico City Policy: A Funding Analysis," KFF, Jan. 28, 2026, https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/the-trump-administrations-latest-expansion-of-the-mexico-city-policy-a-funding-analysis/.

[291] Id.

According to the nonprofit Médecins Sans Frontières, "[b]y the US government's own estimate, implementing this new policy will collectively cost service providers at least $340 million annually in administrative burden—dollars spent not on health, but on ensuring alignment and compliance with the U.S. government's ideological standards."[292]

> *"[We] are deeply concerned that this policy will cause serious harm to communities in crisis and cut off the most marginalized people from essential and lifesaving healthcare. The policy is likely to result in barring or limiting access to essential health services for LGBTQIA+ individuals, women and girls, racial and ethnic minorities, and other marginalized groups."*
>
> - Doctors Without Borders/Medecins Sans Frontières (MSF), "MSF condemns sweeping expansion of the Global Gag Rule," Jan. 27, 2026.[293]

In advancing the expanded Global Gag Rule, the Trump Administration is alienating partners and allies around the world. Other countries, including Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Norway, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Spain, France and Sweden, publicly voiced objections to the policy, expressing "concern about the increasing questioning of internationally recognized human rights and about current attempts to undermine and hinder global and national investments in universal access to sexual and reproductive health services" and the scope of the restrictions on humanitarian actors, international organizations and foreign governments.[294]

[292] Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), "MSF condemns sweeping expansion of the Global Gag Rule," Jan. 27, 2026, https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/msf-condemns-sweeping-expansion-global-gag-rule.

[293] *Id.*

[294] Elissa Miolene, "'Values Are Not for Sale': The European NGOs Turning Down US Aid Funds," Devex, Oct. 15, 2026, https://www.devex.com/news/values-are-not-for-sale-the-european-ngos-turning-down-us-aid-funds-113491.

Conclusion

What began as a set of regressive policy proposals in Project 2025 became the Trump Administration's blueprint for an assault on women and girls at home and abroad.

Perversely cloaked in anti-discrimination rhetoric, the Administration diminished the number of American women serving in high-level national security positions and fired experienced career staff implementing bipartisan legislation, including the *Women, Peace and Security Act* and the *Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act*.

The State Department quickly dismantled offices, including the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, and terminated funding for programs based on keyword searches, ignoring congressional directives and mandates substantiating their work. The illegal closure of USAID and termination of 83 percent of its programs targeted women and girls including by significantly cutting U.S. support for women's economic security, maternal and child health, nutrition, basic education, family planning, the reduction of child, early and forced marriage and gender-based violence among other priorities. Women and girls died as a direct result of these abrupt funding cuts.

These actions eviscerated diplomatic tools that took decades to build and have left the United States flat-footed at a time when our soft power and credibility are urgently needed to forge lasting peace and address instability.

Congressional oversight is urgently needed to ensure compliance with policy statutes and appropriations laws. Congressional hearings with Trump Administration officials are critical to assess the damage inflicted on U.S. national security and to receive a full accounting of terminated programs, eliminated personnel and the uses of appropriated funds.

There are real-life consequences for the actions and policies pursued by the Trump Administration, but the consequences of further inaction can be avoided. On a bipartisan basis, Congress must restore a U.S. national security framework that recognizes the unique role that the empowerment of women and girls plays in advancing U.S. national security. This must start by re-establishing the roles and policies that harness women and girls' unique ability to advance peace and prosperity at home and abroad while holding the Trump Administration accountable for bypassing Congress and undermining laws that require the advancement of women and girls as a U.S. national security priority.