

Fact Sheet: the Obama Administration's Comprehensive Efforts to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women and Girls Worldwide

"When women succeed, nations are more safe, more secure, and more prosperous. Over the last year, we've seen women and girls inspiring communities and entire countries to stand up for freedom and justice, and I'm proud of my Administration's efforts to promote gender equality worldwide."

--President Barack Obama, March 8, 2013

President Obama has made promoting gender equality and advancing the status of women and girls central to our national security strategy and foreign policy, including by [leading through example at home](#). The Administration will continue to prioritize these efforts in the coming years, in collaboration with stakeholders throughout the world, recognizing that our journey is far from complete and that securing equal rights and opportunity for women and girls is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do.

Highlights of the Obama Administration's record to empower women and girls worldwide include:

Building Capacity and Enhancing Coordination and Accountability across the U.S. Government

- **Strengthening our leadership and coordination to enhance our impact abroad:** On January 30, 2013, President Obama signed a [Presidential Memorandum](#) directing that the Secretary of State designate a Coordinator at the Ambassador at Large level, reporting directly to the Secretary of State, to lead the Office of Global Women's Issues and to provide advice and assistance on issues related to promoting gender equality and advancing the status of women and girls internationally. In this Memorandum, President Obama also recognized the accomplishments and leadership of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)'s [Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#), and established an interagency working group led by the White House National Security Staff.
- **Bolstering agency policies, staffing, and training:** Agencies have issued policy and operational guidance, including at the Department of [State](#), the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and [USAID](#), to ensure a comprehensive approach on gender equality and women's empowerment. From the Department of Justice to the Department of Defense, the Administration has expanded training and created new positions, including on the National Security Staff, to advance these policies.
- **Holding ourselves accountable and monitoring our progress:** The MCC and its partners in compact countries have made significant progress in integrating gender equality into projects that support poverty reduction through growth. In March 2011, the MCC released guidelines for [gender integration](#) that make [MCC's Gender Policy](#) fully operational, and MCC will continue to work to improve both [global policy and practice](#). The Department of State and USAID are also launching new efforts to strengthen the evidence base on the importance of promoting [gender equality](#), including by improving [data collection](#) and strengthening [metrics](#).

Increasing Women's Roles in Conflict Prevention and Security Decision-making

- **Empowering women as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace:** On December 19, 2011, the Obama Administration released [Executive Order 13595](#) and the [U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security](#) to support women's voices and perspectives in decision-making in countries threatened and affected by war, violence, and insecurity. Agencies such as the Department of [State](#), [USAID](#), and [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) have begun to realize the goals of the National Action Plan through the development of detailed implementation plans. And on January 24, 2013, the Department of Defense announced its intent [to remove gender-based barriers to service](#) and fully integrate women into all occupational specialties.

Expanding Economic Opportunity for Women

- **Launching new initiatives to bolster women's economic empowerment:** The Administration has launched several signature regional programs to strengthen women's entrepreneurship and help spur economic growth worldwide, including the [Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation \(APEC\) Women and the Economy initiative](#), and the [Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas \(WEAmericas\)](#) initiative.
- **Empowering women farmers to advance food security:** In 2009, the Administration launched the [Feed the Future](#) initiative to advance food security worldwide, with a priority focus on [women agricultural producers](#) as critical drivers of economic growth in developing countries. The [New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition](#), launched at the Camp David G-8 Summit, invests in smallholder farmers, particularly women, who play a critical role in transforming agriculture and building thriving economies.
- **Leveraging U.S. trade and investment programs to support women in emerging markets:** The United States Trade Representative is helping countries empower women to participate in the global economy, for example through the establishment of Women's Economic Empowerment Working Groups in South and Central Asia, and along with the Departments of Commerce and State, through the African Women Entrepreneurs Program (AWEP). The Department of Commerce is also working to support women-owned businesses in emerging markets including Iraq and Afghanistan, and in 2012 led a roundtable with women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia as part of an ongoing conversation around business growth and competitiveness.
- **Promoting access to financial services for women:** [OPIC](#) works to expand economic opportunities for women, including through extensive support for microfinance and by providing incentives for banks to lend to female entrepreneurs, from Cambodia to Egypt to Turkey. The Treasury Department is also supporting the G20 Global Partnership on Financial Inclusion to document barriers faced by women entrepreneurs, and supports innovative lending models for women in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Inter-American Development Bank.
- **Expanding employment opportunities for women and strengthening protections for women workers:** The [Department of Transportation](#) is working to promote opportunities for women in transportation sectors abroad, for example through an [APEC](#)

[Women in Transportation initiative](#), and in Iraq through mentoring women in the Ministry of Transportation and the Civil Aviation Authority. The Department of Labor is funding efforts to expand legal protection for domestic workers, and also supports the International Labor Organization and International Finance Corporation's [Better Work](#) program, which protects worker rights and improves working conditions in the apparel industry worldwide.

Launching a Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence

- **Launching an executive order and U.S. strategy to address gender-based violence:** On August 10, 2012, President Obama issued [Executive Order 13623](#) directing departments and agencies to implement the first ever [United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally](#). The Department of State and USAID have led the United States' work to prevent and respond to gender-based violence by ensuring that this issue is integrated in [diplomacy](#) and [development](#) efforts. The Executive Order creates an interagency working group to establish a coordinated, government-wide approach to this issue.
- **Addressing the needs of marginalized women:** Agencies have also worked to ensure our approach to gender-based violence addresses the needs of women and girls from particularly marginalized groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender ([LGBT](#)) persons, refugees and other conflict and disaster-affected women and girls, and women and girls with disabilities.

Combating Trafficking in Persons

- **Taking new steps to end modern slavery:** On September 25, 2012, President Obama [announced unprecedented government action](#) to combat one of the greatest human rights abuses of our time—human trafficking — which affects more than 20 million people around the world, many of them women and children. In response to this challenge, the President signed [Executive Order 13627](#) to strengthen the U.S. Government's zero-tolerance policy on trafficking in government contracting, and launched [several new initiatives](#) to identify and assist survivors, increase resources, plan for future action, and grow public-private partnerships.

Promoting the Health of Women and Families

- **Promoting gender integration across all global health efforts:** President Obama has placed women, girls, and gender equality at the heart of his global health agenda, including through the [Global Health Initiative](#) (GHI). The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)) has ensured a [comprehensive approach](#) to gender issues in HIV prevention, treatment, and care. Over the last three years, PEPFAR has provided post-exposure prophylaxis to almost 85,000 survivors of sexual violence as part of post-rape care.
- **Advancing women's reproductive and maternal health:** USAID advances and supports voluntary family planning programs in more than 45 countries across the globe. This past year, [USAID's family planning programs](#) reached more than 84 million women and averted 21 million unintended pregnancies, preventing 15,000 maternal deaths and saving the lives of more than 230,000 infants. The U.S. Government has

also restored funding to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the largest multilateral provider of family planning and reproductive health information and services with programs in 150 countries. UNFPA's programs support maternal health care services and gender-based violence prevention and response including for refugees, disaster victims, and those in emergency situations. Since 2009, the U.S. Government has provided nearly \$165 million in core funding to UNFPA.

- **Engaging men and boys as allies to promote women's health and rights:** Agencies across the U.S. Government are focused on engaging men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality, for example through the Peace Corps' [programs](#) working with men and boys.
- **Expanding the use of clean cookstoves to protect the health of women and families:** In September 2010, Secretary Clinton launched the [Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves](#), a public-private partnership that will help 100 million homes adopt cleaner stoves and fuels by 2020, thereby reducing the deadly risks for women and girls associated with traditional cookstoves.

Expanding Education Opportunities and Promoting Leadership for Women and Girls

- **Promoting leadership of women and girls:** The Department of State and USAID have launched new efforts to promote women's leadership and political participation, including in countries in transition. The Department of State launched the [Women in Public Service Project](#) in 2011, and USAID has dedicated over \$30 million in funding to support women's leadership in a range of sectors. Peace Corps Volunteers around the world organize and lead [GLOW](#) (Girls Leading Our World) Camps to empower young women with leadership skills.
- **Harnessing technology and STEM education to promote women's empowerment:** The Department of State and USAID are expanding efforts to empower women with technology, including through the [GSMA mWomen program](#) designed to close the gender gap in mobile technology. Agencies including the Department of Education are also supporting global efforts to advance women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.
- **Expanding training for women in law enforcement fields:** The Departments of State, Homeland Security, and Justice are working to provide training to women law enforcement personnel from dozens of countries, including through the International Law Enforcement Academies.

Leading New Global Efforts to Advance Gender Equality and Strengthening Multilateral Organizations

- **Leveraging U.S. leadership in multilateral forums:** The United States is leading new efforts in a range of multilateral forums to advance women's empowerment, from brokering new commitments from the [G20](#) to the [G-8 and NATO](#) to our financial contributions and robust monitoring of UN agencies' policies and programs to advance gender equality. And as the largest shareholder at the World Bank, the United States works with the Bank to continue and strengthen its efforts to address gender issues throughout its work.

- **Building a new multilateral partnership on women's political and economic participation:** At the UN General Assembly in September 2012, the United States launched the [Equal Futures Partnership](#), a new network of countries making national commitments to expand women's political participation and economic opportunity, in response to President Obama's challenge.