



USAID's WomenConnect Challenge awarded a grant to Heifer International to expand Nepal's first digital agricultural extension program and make it more useful and accessible for women farmers. Photo credit: Heifer International

USAID AND THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE INVEST \$2.6 BILLION IN GENDER EQUALITY

The U.S. government recognizes that advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls is essential to driving global progress, from reducing poverty to combating disease to strengthening democracy. A large body of research ties progress toward reaching gender equality to better development results, improved security, and more vibrant economies. To achieve these outcomes, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State invested \$2.6 billion in gender equality and women's empowerment programs using FY 2023 resources, which more than doubled the amount for such programs for FY 2022. These efforts strengthen women's economic opportunity; promote women, peace, and security; prevent and respond to gender-based violence; and much more.

PRIORITY INVESTMENTS

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY

[Closing the gender gap in the global economy](#) could add as much as \$28 trillion to global GDP. USAID and the Department of State are working to build a world in which women and girls are able to fully,

meaningfully, and equally contribute to and benefit from economic growth and global prosperity through implementation of the U.S. Strategy on Global Women’s Economic Security. In FY 2023, USAID and Department of State programs reached 4.7 million women with economic assistance programs, supporting their increased access to economic resources including assets, credit, income, or employment.

To advance women’s economic security, USAID and the Department of State committed to support women’s economic participation programs through the [Gender Equity and Equality Action \(GEEA\) Fund](#). Since its inception in 2021, the GEEA Fund has invested \$300 million in direct resources, including \$100 million in FY 2023, and an additional \$200 million in attributed indirect funding. GEEA funded activities reached over 686,000 people across 87 countries in FY 2023 alone. This includes supporting over 18,000 women to expand their entrepreneurial and digital skills, labor rights, and employment opportunities, and assisting more than 1,900 women-owned microenterprises to access loans, bank accounts, and other services.

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To help close the gender digital divide—which limits women’s economic participation and hampers their access to critical online services—USAID launched the [Women in the Digital Economy Fund \(WiDEF\)](#). WiDEF identifies, funds, and accelerates evidence-based solutions to close the gender digital divide, drawing on USAID’s contribution of up to \$50.5 million over four years, subject to availability of funds, and an additional over \$30 million from

partners since the creation of WiDEF. Building on the success of WiDEF, the [Women in the Digital Economy Initiative](#) brings together governments, the private sector, civil society, and multilateral organizations to accelerate progress toward the G-20 target of halving the gender digital divide by 2030, with partners pledging more than [\\$1 billion](#) to date, including \$59 million total (with WiDEF) from USAID.

USAID and the Department of State have invested in the [Women in the Sustainable Economy \(WISE\) Initiative](#), which seeks to advance women’s economic participation in green and blue industries such as energy, fisheries, waste recycling, and forest management, by expanding access to employment, training, leadership roles, and financial resources. To date, 33 governments, corporations, foundations, and civil society organizations have committed over \$2 billion towards the WISE Initiative, including \$173 million from USAID and the Department of State.

The United States is also addressing the barriers that hinder women’s full participation in the economy by expanding accessible, affordable, and high-quality child care services, strengthening care infrastructure, and valuing domestic work. USAID committed up to \$50 million over five years, subject to availability of

funds, to help launch the World Bank's Invest in Childcare Initiative. This initiative has since leveraged more than \$500 million in projected funding to boost women's employment by investing in child care.

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN FOOD SECURITY AND AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS

Women's contributions are critical to building inclusive, resilient food systems and achieving global food security goals. USAID is prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment in the agricultural sector, which lifts whole economies. In FY 2023, USAID reached 11.5 million women with food security programming, including 2.4 million women agricultural producers, and women and women-owned businesses accessed over \$228 million in agriculture-related financing.

Through the Generating Resilience and Opportunities for Women (GROW) commitment, USAID dedicated [\\$449 million in FY 2023](#) funds to tackle urgent challenges women are facing in food and water systems, while unlocking opportunities for women to advance economically. Through this commitment, [Feed the Future](#), the U.S. government's global hunger initiative, is now directing approximately one out of every four dollars to women in agrifood systems. These investments enhance women's productivity and resilience across the agricultural sector—both on and off the farm—ultimately benefiting them, their families, communities, and economies.

ADVANCING WOMEN, PEACE, SECURITY

When women and girls have a safe and enabling environment to meaningfully participate in political and public life, countries have more inclusive and effective policy outcomes, are more peaceful and stable, and have higher economic growth. USAID and the Department of State are advancing women's and girls' civic and political leadership, helping them to exercise their rights, achieve greater representation and decision-making power, and increase leadership, protection, support, and justice for women and girls in conflict and crises.

In 2024, as part of the Women Leading Effective and Accountable Democracy in the Digital Age (Women LEAD) Initiative, USAID and the Department of State announced plans to provide \$150 million through 2025, subject to availability of funds, to advance women's political leadership, prevent and respond to gender-based violence against women leaders online and offline, and support women's meaningful participation and decision-making in the criminal justice sector, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. This includes ongoing and new activities from USAID and the Department of State, such as USAID's [Advancing Women's and Girls' Civic and Political Leadership Initiative](#). Women LEAD has



Guatemalan tomato farmer Maria Lancerio installed a rainwater reservoir on her farm and increased her productivity up to three times a year. Photo Credit: Alexander Hernández, Feed the Future

reached over [\\$900 million in aligned commitments](#) from across governments, philanthropy, civil society, and multilateral organizations since the initiative's launch in July 2024.

With FY 2023 funds, the Department of State and USAID invested more than \$303 million in development, multilateral, and security assistance for Women, Peace, and Security-related activities. This investment reflects the U.S. commitment to advance women's leadership in sustaining peace, security, and economic stability, as articulated in the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 and the 2023 U.S. Strategy and National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. In FY 2023, USAID and the Department of State supported 14,000 local women to participate in a substantive role or position in peacebuilding processes.

SUPPORTING GIRLS' EDUCATION

Girls' access to education is one of the most powerful forces for driving economic development, prosperity, and security. When girls receive an education, they expand their employment opportunities, have better health outcomes, and are less likely to marry as children. USAID is helping millions of school-aged girls get the education they need to pursue their dreams.

In FY 2023, USAID [reached more than 18.7 million girls and women](#) with education assistance in 69 countries—surpassing its 15 million target—and trained over half a million women educators and administrators. Around the world—from the Dominican Republic to India and Tajikistan—USAID partners to strengthen education systems to be safe, equitable, and inclusive so that all children and youth gain the skills they need to thrive. USAID supports the education of adolescent girls and young women—for example, by expanding access to secondary school in rural Malawi, providing scholarships for young women in Pakistan to access higher education, and supporting out-of-school adolescent girls with a non-formal education course that equips them with essential skills in Somalia.



USAID's Learn Together Activity supports Tajikistan's Ministry of Education and Science's capacity to develop and implement primary education policies and programs and encourage girls to see themselves in careers in math and science. Photo credit: USAID/Learn Together Activity

EQUIPPING WOMEN ON THE FRONTLINES OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Humanitarian emergencies trigger and amplify gender inequality and gender-based violence. To improve humanitarian response, USAID and the Department of State are advancing women's leadership, prioritizing protection from gender-based violence, and increasing resources and support for girls and women within humanitarian response systems.

For example, through the flagship Safe from the Start ReVisioned Initiative, USAID and the Department of State are improving the response to gender-based violence from the outset of emergencies, through a combined investment of \$181 million towards Safe from the Start objectives in FY 2023. USAID's humanitarian protection sector funding, which includes GBV prevention and response programming, increased by more than \$100 million from FY 2022 to FY 2023; the percentage of the humanitarian budget allocated to protection nearly doubled within three years. Addressing GBV in disaster settings includes psychosocial support, case management, and community-based prevention measures, such as safe spaces for women and girls.

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

One in three women experience physical or sexual violence over the course of their lifetimes, from child marriage to genital mutilation to the use of sexual violence as a tool of war. USAID and the Department of State are making progress in creating a world free of gender-based violence, so that everyone can participate fully—and safely—in society. Department of State and USAID investments to address GBV totaled \$369 million—a \$95 million increase from FY 2022. USAID and the Department of State expanded their reach significantly, providing GBV services to 4.2 million individuals in FY 2023, marking an 18 percent increase from FY 2022. With USAID support, 137 legal instruments to improve how GBV is addressed were drafted, proposed, or adopted—nearly quadrupling the FY 2022 number.

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)-funded USAID programs continue to scale up and reach more survivors of gender-based violence, and in FY 2023 reached over 465,000 people with essential GBV services, helping people living with HIV to remain on lifesaving antiretroviral treatment and supporting individuals at high risk to stay HIV negative.

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USAID invested over \$29 million using FY 2023 resources, a 44 percent increase from FY 2022, to address child, early, and forced marriage around the world—including to equip girls and young women with education and workforce readiness skills and to raise awareness of the risks and harms associated with child marriage. The United States is also a long-standing donor to the Joint Programme on the

Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, providing a contribution of \$5 million in FY 2023 funds. Additionally, for the first time, the Department of State contributed \$500,000 to the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, which works in 12 countries in Africa and South Asia to promote the rights and empowerment of adolescent girls. The Department of State also invests in the criminal justice sector, including law enforcement, prosecutors, and the judiciary on providing a survivor centered and trauma informed approach to GBV survivors and victims.

ADVANCING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

When women are free to learn and can earn and control income, infant mortality declines, child health and nutrition improve, agricultural productivity rises, economies expand, and cycles of poverty are broken. To advance healthy communities and improve development outcomes, USAID and the Department of State are working to increase equitable access to essential health services across the globe, investing over \$955 million in FY 2023 resources in gender equality across all health program areas.



Through the Feed the Future, Bangladesh Production for Improved Nutrition Activity, a mother feeds her daughter yogurt prepared at home. Photo credit: ACDI/VOCA

USAID investments advance work at the country level to empower women, girls, men and boys to improve their own health and that of their families, including by enhancing local capacity to provide accessible health care—such as through increased leadership opportunities for women in health; strengthened digital health and supply chain systems; and improved systems to track progress. For example, USAID’s maternal and child health programming includes a focus on 25 countries that account for 70 percent of maternal and child deaths worldwide, including in conflict- and crisis-affected settings. In addition, in the nine Francophone West African

countries that form the Ouagadougou Partnership and report some of the lowest contraceptive use rates and highest maternal mortality ratios in the world, USAID committed \$86.5 million in FY 2023 resources to increase access to voluntary family planning information and services. In FY 2023, the bipartisan PEPFAR program reached 2.5 million adolescent girls and young women through the DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe) partnership, offering comprehensive HIV prevention services.