

US Foreign Aid, Gender Equality, and Women's Empowerment

Is the United States putting its money where its mouth is?

Introduction

Gender equality and women's empowerment have been a growing part of the international development agenda for several decades. Gender equality is seen both as a means to achieve better development outcomes, as well as a development objective itself. The recognition of the importance of working toward greater gender equality and more rights for women and girls has been recognized by international development actors across the spectrum, including NGOs, multilateral organizations, civil society organizations, and national governments. This was reflected in the agreement by development actors to elevate gender equality as a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) as well as a cross-cutting part of all 17 SDGs. The United States has stepped up its support for women's empowerment and gender equality activities over the years, which has been mostly reflected in the creation of structures and policies that elevate these goals within the United States' international development and diplomacy agenda. United States development and humanitarian aid has contributed to the global goals around gender equality and women's empowerment in a multitude of ways. However, funding for this priority has declined in the last four years and remains low compared to other big donor countries. Furthermore, the current administration is requesting an unprecedented 32 percent cut to the International Affairs Budget overall and a 42 percent cut to gender equality and women's empowerment funding, which will be a setback to achieving the global development goals, including those around gender equality and women's empowerment. These trends imply that the US commitment to this issue isn't matching the rhetoric.

Why gender equality and women's empowerment matters in international development

Gender inequality is a serious injustice that plays out in many different forms across the globe. Both men and women are negatively affected by restrictive gender norms, but women are more-often discriminated against in many societies and in a variety of ways.

- Women generally earn less than men, and in less-developed countries, are less likely to be formally educated and employed.¹
- Often, economic barriers for women are codified in law, as almost 90 percent of 173 economies have at least one legal economic restriction for women.²
- Even though women make up 43 percent of the agricultural workforce globally, they have less access to productive resources, including land.³
- Many societies still adhere to traditions and social practices that are harmful to women, such as female genital cutting—experienced by 200 million women and girls across the globe⁴—and child marriage, which is more prevalent among girls than boys and has affected over 700 million women and girls today.⁵
- Women are often expected to be responsible for house and care work that isn't financially remunerated and leads to less opportunities outside the home like access to education and formal employment.⁶
- Women and girls are also frequently subject to physical and/or sexual violence, which have been experienced by approximately 35 percent of women globally.⁷
- Women are often disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises, and women and children currently make up more than 75 percent of people who have been forced to leave their homes due to the Syrian conflict.⁸

¹ "Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Final Report to the MCM" (Meeting of the OECD Council at Ministerial Level, Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012), <http://www.oecd.org/employment/50423364.pdf>.

² World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2016: Getting to Equal* (The World Bank, 2015), doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-0677-3.

³ "The Vital Role of Women in Agriculture and Rural Development" (FAO, 2011), <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/022/mb054e.pdf>.

⁴ "Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Global Concern" (UNICEF, 2016), https://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC_2016_brochure_final_UNICEF_SPREAD.pdf.

⁵ "Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects" (UNICEF, 2014), https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR..pdf.

⁶ Gaelle Ferrant, Luca Maria Pesando, and Keiko Nowacka, "Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps in Labour Outcomes" (OECD Development Centre, 2014), https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid_care_work.pdf.

⁷ Claudia García-Moreno et al., *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 2013).

⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response," UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response, accessed August 10, 2017, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

There is strong evidence that empowering women and working toward gender equality can lead to better outcomes not just for women, but for entire communities. An almost 40-year study that used data from 219 countries drew a clear link between women’s education and decreases in child mortality.⁹

Girls’ access to education is also responsible for over half of a 50 percent increase in economic growth that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has linked to educational attainment.¹⁰ It is also estimated that if women across the globe had the same access to agricultural resources as men, their farm yields would increase by 20-30 percent, which would result in food for 150 million more people.¹¹ Furthermore, when women have greater decision-making power over financial resources in their homes, children benefit more by how resources are being spent.¹² According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), there is a clear correlation between high levels of gender equality and economic prosperity, global competitiveness, and higher levels of human development.¹³ Finally, it has been estimated that by advancing gender equality, we could add \$12 trillion to the world economy.¹⁴ The bottom line is that when women and girls do better, we all do better.

All development issues—whether health, agriculture, governance programs, or others—are women’s issues, so it is likely that efforts to tackle them will benefit women, whether that’s a goal of the program or not. However, development actors can be intentional about targeting women and girls or achieving gender equality in multiple ways. First, they can target women and girls specifically and try to address the unique challenges they face, such as through maternal mortality or female genital cutting prevention programs. Programs can also target women, even if the issue they are trying address isn’t woman-specific. An example of this type of program is a women’s economic empowerment project. Second, even if a project doesn’t focus on women specifically, it can be gender mainstreamed, meaning that an effort to

⁹ Emmanuela Gakidou, “Increased Educational Attainment and Its Effect on Child Mortality in 175 Countries between 1970 and 2009: A Systematic Analysis,” *The Lancet* 376, no. 9745 (2010): 969.

¹⁰ “Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Final Report to the MCM.”

¹¹ FAO, ed., *Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development, The State of Food and Agriculture, 2010/11* (Rome: FAO, 2011).

¹² “Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Final Report to the MCM.”

¹³ “The Case for Gender Equality,” *Global Gender Gap Report 2015*, accessed August 8, 2017, <http://wef.ch/1QsPv3W>.

¹⁴ Jonathan Woetzel et al., “How Advancing Women’s Equality Can Add \$12 Trillion to Global Growth | McKinsey & Company,” accessed August 10, 2017, <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>.

include and benefit women as much as men is made. Third, it is important to note that projects targeting children benefit women since they are usually the expected caretakers of children. For example, child vaccination programs benefit women because they reduce mothers' burdens of caring for sick children.¹⁵

US government international affairs structures in place that promote gender equality and women's empowerment

The United States Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), two US federal entities involved in international development, have internal structures and policies that make the focus on gender equality and women's empowerment more intentional and formal in development and diplomacy efforts. Both have offices dedicated to focusing on women's empowerment and gender equality. Within the State Department, there's an Office of Global Women's Affairs, which is headed by the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, a position created in 2009 (which has been vacant since January 20, 2017). At USAID, there's an Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, situated within the Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment (E3).

The 2010 State Department Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), a review that provides the State Department with a blueprint for diplomatic and development efforts, highlights women as a focus. The most recent 2015 QDDR, also aims to build on the 2010 goal of "emphasizing gender and equality and women's empowerment in all aspects of our foreign policy,"¹⁶ although it has been criticized as not having the same level of focus on gender equality as is in the earlier version.¹⁷ The State Department also has a *Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment*.

In 2012, USAID adopted their *Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy*, which officially solidified its commitment to achieving gender equality as part of its international development efforts. The policy defined clear outcomes, practices, and roles and responsibilities in order to achieve this goal. It was believed by staff to increase awareness on gender and women's empowerment across the agency, but like with the 2015 QDDR, there have been real concerns by the development community that USAID isn't

¹⁵ Despite this, this brief does not focus on funding for children or youth programs, unless they're girl- or gender equality-specific.

¹⁶ "Enduring Leadership in a Dynamic World: Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review 2015" (The United States Department of State, 2015), <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/267396.pdf>.

¹⁷ See Women Thrive's Women and Gender in the QDDR: At a glance to learn more about the 2015 QDDRs shortcomings in highlighting gender equality.

implementing this policy.^{18,19} So, although the symbolic importance of the policy is important, there is still a lot USAID needs to do in order to make this commitment a reality. Feed the Future, a cross-agency initiative that is mostly implemented and funded by USAID, focuses on food security abroad, and it includes a Gender Integration Framework and a Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, two tools to help promote women's empowerment within Feed the Future programs.²⁰ USAID also has a child marriage policy, titled *Ending Child Marriage & Meeting the Needs of Married Children: The USAID Vision for Action* and a maternal mortality policy, titled *Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality: USAID Maternal Health Vision for Action*.

Finally, the US government has several national or multi-agency gender-related policies. There is a *US National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security* which aims to include the protections of women in conflict areas and the engagement of women in peace processes and conflict prevention in a systematic way. In 2015, foreign assistance was aligned with this national plan in 75 percent of USAID focus countries.²¹ There's also a *2013 Presidential Directive on Coordination of Policies and Programs to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women and Girls Globally*, which created the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues position and established an interagency working group, among other things. Finally, the *2016 United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls* is a strategy that involves the State Department, USAID, the Peace Corps, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

United States projects that benefit women and girls abroad

Both the State Department and USAID work to achieve gender equality through a variety of initiatives, projects, and partnerships. Below are five examples of gender- or women-specific programming initiatives in the State Department's Office of Global Women's Initiatives.

¹⁸ See the USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy: A Report on Implementation, June 2016, prepared by EnCompass LLC through the Advancing the Agenda of Gender Equality (ADVANTAGE) for review by USAID for more information on the shortcomings of the policy

¹⁹ "The USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy: A Report on Implementation" (EnCompass LLC, June 2016), https://www.encompassworld.com/sites/default/files/Final_GEFE_ImplementationReport.pdf.

²⁰ Charlie Turner, "The Gender Integration Framework (GIF)," Feed The Future, March 7, 2017, <https://agrilinks.org/library/gender-integration-framework-gif>.

²¹ "Shared Progress, Shared Future: Agency Financial Report Fiscal Year 2016" (USAID, 2016), https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAIDFY2016_AFR_508.pdf.

Table 1: Gender Programs in State Department's OGWI

Initiative/Program Title	Location	Amount ²²	Goal
Accountability Initiative	The Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Liberia	\$8.35 million	To strengthen justice systems to effectively address gender-based violence (GBV).
Afghan Women's Leadership Initiative (AWLI)	7 provinces in Afghanistan	\$10 million	To empower Afghan women and girls by supporting their economic participation and access to education; working to delay marriage for adolescent girls; training women survivors of GBV; and helping women shelters become financially sustainable.
The Secretary's Full Participation Fund	54 countries	\$23 million	To test and pilot innovative ways to tackle gender inequality, including via women's economic empowerment, access to technology for women and girls, combatting , and increasing women's civic and political participation.
The Comprehensive Gender-based Violence Initiative	Malawi, Tanzania, Laos and Nepal	\$6.1 million	To support GBV prevention and response activities.
Global Women, Peace, and Security Initiative	30 countries	\$16 million	To support local programs that advance peace by advancing women's inclusion in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and decision-making institutions, and protecting women from GBV.

Source: The "Programs and Partnerships" page on the State Department website

USAID has programs in over 80 countries that specifically aim to reduce gender gaps, address gender-based violence (GBV), and empower women and girls. These programs do this by tackling a wide range of issues, including access to health services, education, economic opportunities, technology, political participation, and many others. Some of USAID's notable initiatives include *Let Girls Learn* which focuses on girls' education, *SPRING* which aims to reach 200,000 girls by 2019 by supporting businesses that provide support to girls' empowerment through their products and services, and *Women's Leadership in Small and Medium Enterprises*, which supports women entrepreneurs in Peru, India, and the Kyrgyz Republic. Additionally, USAID supports maternal and child health programs across the globe and its efforts are believed to have saved the lives of 4.6 million children and 200,000 women since 2008.²³ In 2015, there were 221 U.S. government-

²² Please note that amounts provided here are what have been committed by the State Department and not what has actually been spent on each initiative.

²³ "Maternal and Child Health," accessed August 8, 2017, <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/global-health/maternal-and-child-health>.

supported activities designed to promote or strengthen the civic space participation of women and 640 activities that are designed to promote the participation of women or the integration of gender perspectives in security sector institutions or activities.²⁴ USAID has also supported 84 million girls enroll in preschool through secondary school from 2009 to 2011,²⁵ and “addressed the needs of more than 50 million girls and boys who were already married but have limited access to education, health services and economic opportunities.” Additionally, in FY13, 1033 early marriages were postponed or terminated in Ethiopia as a result of USAID-supported interventions.²⁶ Finally, USAID reported reaching 11.3 million people with their GBV programs in 2016.²⁷

The United States has released reports on the number of people reached by its State Department and USAID programming, and some of this data is gender disaggregated. We know by these indicators that women were impacted in a range of ways, including by being trained on a variety of skills, by the number of females enrolled in school, and the number of female farmers who have adopted new, improved practices. According to these indicators the areas in which USAID and the State Department reached the highest number of women are farming and agriculture, education, peacebuilding, anti-corruption training, social services, and malaria prevention efforts.²⁸

²⁴ “Shared Progress, Shared Future: Agency Financial Report Fiscal Year 2016.”

²⁵ “Promoting Gender Equality and Access to Education,” accessed September 18, 2017, <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/addressing-gender-programming/promoting-gender>.

²⁶ “Preventing and Responding to Child, Early and Forced Marriage | U.S. Agency for International Development,” accessed September 18, 2017, <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/child-marriage>.

²⁷ “Shared Progress, Shared Future: Agency Financial Report Fiscal Year 2016.”

²⁸ It was clear by looking at some of these indicators that not all data was gender-disaggregated correctly. For example, the number of female internally displaced persons reached (504,986) plus the number of male internally displaced persons reached (383,115) did not equal the total number of internally displaced persons reached (111,461,006). Thus, some of the indicator results are likely inaccurate, and this is why I didn’t add up all of women reached and include that in this brief.

Table 2. Gender Disaggregated Data

Indicator	2015 Actual
Number of farmers and others who have applied new technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance- Number of Women	1,825,841
Number of individuals who have received USG supported short term agricultural sector productivity or food security training- Number of Women	1,532,852
Number of learners enrolled in primary schools and/or equivalent non-school based settings with USG support- Number of Women	3,244,358
Number of local women participating in a substantive role or position in a peacebuilding process supported with USG assistance	1,042,870
Number of people affiliated with non-governmental organizations receiving USG supported anti-corruption training- Number of Women	2,272,194
Number of people benefiting from USG-supported social assistance programming- Number of Women	1,292,320
Total number of residents of sprayed houses (malaria prevention)- Number of Women	2,908,778

Although the State Department and USAID are the most prominently involved in global gender equality and women’s empowerment activities, there are funding accounts in other US agencies that provide aid to women and girls worldwide. The US Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, which allocated \$225.9 million in funding in 2016, provides nutrition programs for women, infants, and children in foreign countries.²⁹ Also, under the USDA’s Food for Progress program, 7,434 women in Uganda have adopted conservation farming practices, which have led to an average increase in yields of about 47 percent for both men and women.³⁰ In 2016, USDA reached 146 extension agents in Guatemala via another Food for Progress project and 43 percent of those agents were women. Another example of a USDA project that has benefitted women is the Smallholder Poultry Agribusiness Development (SPADE) program in Kenya. Over four years, USDA spent \$17 million to train 16,000 farmers, 68 percent of whom were women.³¹ In 2014, the number of women and children that were believed to be impacted by all capacity

²⁹ “2018 President’s Budget Foreign Agriculture Service” (USDA, 2017), <https://www.obpa.usda.gov/33fasexnotes2018.pdf>.

³⁰ “2017 President’s Budget Foreign Agriculture Service” (USDA, n.d.), <https://www.obpa.usda.gov/33fas2017notes.pdf>.

³¹ Ibid.

building and food security-focused USDA funding were 2.7 million.³² Finally, part of funding for food aid sits within the USDA budget (though USAID is involved in food aid distribution) and food assistance programs have a supposed focus on women and children.³³ However, out of the 64 million people reached by this program in fiscal year (FY) 2016³⁴, it is unknown how many of them were women.

The *Global Food Security Strategy*, which involves a variety of US departments, agencies, and offices and is considered a whole-of-government approach, has an objective titled: “A Well-Nourished Population, Especially Women and Children.” Additionally, it notes that gender equality and female empowerment are intended, cross-cutting intermediate results of the strategy.³⁵ According to a 2015 progress report, Feed the Future programs, which are tied to the strategy, have benefitted many people including women, and some of the outcomes include:

- 9 million people have applied improved technologies or practices, and 37 percent of them are women;
- 1,299 individuals have received USG-supported long-term agriculture sector productivity or food security training, and 44 percent of them are women;
- 51 percent of the 18 million reached by nutrition programs have been female;
- Women have made up 76 percent of the people trained in child health and nutrition through Feed the Future.³⁶

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) also has funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that they allocate globally, and some of that funding is targeted toward women and girls. According to the CDC’s *2011-2015 Global Health Strategy*, one of their objectives is to reduce maternal and perinatal mortality.³⁷ The Strategy also states that CDC

³² Ibid.

³³ “Quick Facts | Food Assistance | U.S. Agency for International Development,” accessed August 11, 2017, <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/food-assistance/quick-facts>.

³⁴ “Fiscal Year 2016 Food for Peace Fact Sheet,” accessed August 11, 2017, <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/food-assistance/quick-facts/fiscal-year-2016-food-peace>.

³⁵ “U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy FY 2017-2021,” September 2016, https://www.fas.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2016-10/u.s._government_global_food_security_strategy_fy17-21.pdf.

³⁶ “2016 Progress Report: Growing Prosperity for a Food-Secure Future” (Feed the Future, 2016), https://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/2016%20Feed%20the%20Future%20Progress%20Report_0.pdf.

³⁷ “CDC Global Health Strategy 2012-2015” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012), <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/strategy/pdf/cdc-globalhealthstrategy.pdf>.

is part of the Global Cookstove Alliance, which advocates for the use of clean cookstoves in order to reduce pneumonia in women and children.³⁸ In addition, the CDC is involved in global HIV/AIDs programming, and reports providing antiretroviral medications to 410,760 HIV-positive women in 2016.³⁹ Lastly, many of the CDC's programs are targeted at children, such as immunization programs, which, as mentioned previously, have real implications for women since they are often the caretakers of children in developing countries.

US funding trends for gender equality and women's empowerment

The OECD⁴⁰ has calculated that \$1.565 billion of the US's Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2015 was aid with a *principal* objective of addressing gender equality, and \$3.588 billion had *significant* gender equality objective. The OECD defines an activity as having a *principal* gender equality objective when "the contribution directly aims at advancing gender equality" and if "it would not have been implemented without the gender equality policy objective" and an activity as having a *significant* gender equality objective when "the contribution partly aims at advancing gender equality" and if "it would have been implemented even without the gender equality policy objective."⁴¹ Combined, the total was \$5.153 billion, which is 17 percent of all US official development assistance (ODA).⁴² When comparing this percentage to other OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members, the US ranked 20th out of the 28 DAC countries and 10th out of the top 10 aid donors in 2015. Furthermore, as can be seen in the graph below, the US has been underperforming in this area compared to its peers for more than just one year.

³⁸ Ibid.

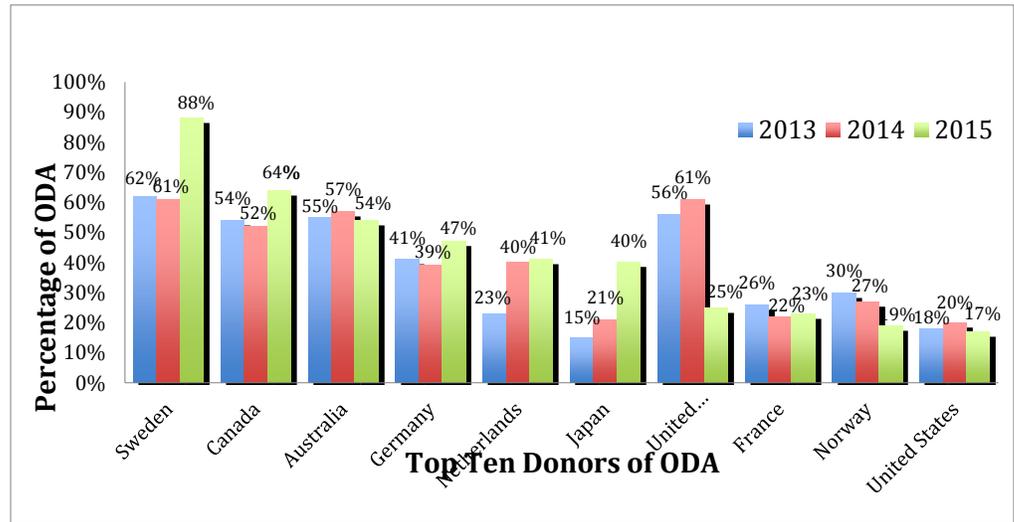
³⁹ "Centers for Disease Control and Prevention FY 2018 Justification of Estimates for Appropriation Committees" (Department of Health and Human Services, 2017), <https://www.cdc.gov/budget/documents/fy2018/fy-2018-cdc-congressional-justification.pdf>.

⁴⁰ The OECD numbers look at all United States ODA, including from agencies outside of USAID and the State Department.

⁴¹ "Gender Equality Policy Marker" (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, February 2016), http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Sida_toolbox_gender_equality_policy_marker.pdf.

⁴² "OECD Statistics: Aid Projects Targeting Gender Equality and Womens Empowerment (CRS)," accessed August 8, 2017, <http://stats.oecd.org/>.

Figure 1. Percentage of ODA for projects with a Significant and Principal Gender Equality Component (2013-2015)



Below is a breakdown of how that money was disbursed across different sectors in 2015.⁴³ Notably, 40 percent of funding with a gender equality component sits within the health sector, 14 percent within agriculture, and 10 percent within government and civil society.

⁴³ Note that money disbursed is different than money requested and an “actual” budget. Money disbursed is how money was actually spent versus what was asked for by the administration and what was appropriated by Congress. Even funds appropriated by Congress don’t always get spent in the way they were intended.

Table 3. Total 2015 Funding with a Gender Equality Component (USD Millions, Disbursed)

Program	Amount Funded
I.3. Population Policies/Programmes & Reproductive Health	\$1,937.884
I.2.b. Basic Health	\$805.287
I.5.a. Government & Civil Society-general	\$537.831
I.1.b. Basic Education	\$263.623
I.5.b. Conflict, Peace & Security	\$231.040
IV.1. General Environment Protection	\$189.396
II.5. Business & Other Services	\$135.409
VI.2. Developmental Food Aid/Food Security Assistance	\$127.322
III.1.a. Agriculture	\$124.894
I.4. Water Supply & Sanitation	\$114.190
II.3.a. Energy Policy	\$110.909
VIII.1. Emergency Response	\$104.721
I.6. Other Social Infrastructure & Services	\$98.659
III.3.a. Trade Policies & Regulations	\$95.448
I.1.d. Post-Secondary Education	\$45.961
IV.2. Other Multisector	\$45.884
I.1.a. Education, Level Unspecified	\$42.488
II.4. Banking & Financial Services	\$20.297
II.1. Transport & Storage	\$16.359
III.2.a. Industry	\$15.938
VIII.3. Disaster Prevention & Preparedness	\$9.226
I.2.a. Health, General	\$6.891

Source OECD CRS US Gender markers 2015

The United States also has its own, different way of tagging funding with a gender equality and/or women's empowerment component, and this occurs in the presidential administration's Congressional Budget Justifications (CBJs). FY 2013 was the first year that the CBJ report had gender as a "Key Interest" with specific funding, \$1.68 billion in total,⁴⁴ requested that year. The requested funding in FY 2014 then jumped to \$1.91 billion,⁴⁵ which has been the highest funding level requested for total gender equality and women's empowerment funding by any US Presidential administration. However, there has been a trend in recent years of cuts to specific accounts or specific types of funding that are especially problematic for women and girls.

As can be seen in the chart below, requested funding in the CBJs for gender equality and women's empowerment in the state and foreign operation budget has decreased over the last four years, and the decrease in funding between FY 2017⁴⁶ and FY 2018 has been the largest by far at 42 percent. This highlights a troubling trend of declining levels of funding provided by the United States for this type of essential development programming, despite the acknowledged importance of working towards gender equality and increased women's empowerment.⁴⁷ The following charts show the changes in requested funding since FY 2015. It is important to note that the amounts requested by presidents in their CBJs are often different from what is ultimately committed by Congress and the agencies, and what is often committed is different than what is ultimately spent on specific programming.

⁴⁴ "Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Summary Tables Fiscal Year 2013," 2012, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/185016.pdf>.

⁴⁵ "Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2014," 2013, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/208292.pdf>.

⁴⁶ FY2017 was requested by the Obama administration but it didn't pass until Donald Trump was president.

⁴⁷ There is a significant discrepancy between funding requests by the US government and the OECD gender funding numbers. One reason for this is that the OECD looks at all ODA, not just what sits within the State and Foreign Operations budget. Second, it seems as though the US government's numbers only reports on what OECD considers funding with a "primary" goal of advancing gender equality.

Table 4. Changes in Gender Funding 2015 - 2018

Fiscal Year	Total gender equality/women's empowerment funding requested	Primary gender equality/women's empowerment funding requested	Secondary gender equality/women's empowerment funding requested	Gender-based violence funding requested	Percent change of total funding requested from previous year
2018 ⁴⁸	\$781.709 million	\$136.440 million	\$542.852 million	\$102.416 million	-42 percent
2017 ⁴⁹	\$1.337 billion	\$248.929 million	\$930.999 million	\$157.270 million	-23 percent
2016 ⁵⁰	\$1.737 billion	\$353.553 million	\$1.241 billion	\$142.452 million	-6 percent
2015 ⁵¹	\$1.840 billion	\$331.874 million	\$1.369 billion	\$139.926 million	-4 percent

48 "Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2018," 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/271014.pdf>.

49 "Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2017," 2016, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252735.pdf>.

50 "Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2016," 2015, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238223.pdf>.

51 "Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2015," 2014, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/224071.pdf>.

The chart below shows the changes in funding requests from FY 2017 to FY 2018 within certain accounts and subaccounts.

Table 5. FY17 vs FY18 Funding Requests

Account/Subaccount	FY17 requested levels ⁵²	FY18 requested levels ⁵³	Percent Change
Global Health Program-USAID Total	\$330 million	\$81.831 million	-75.2 percent
Global Health Program-State Department Total	\$79 million	\$268.251 million	239.6 percent
Development Assistance (DA)	\$262.651 million	\$0	-100 percent
Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM)	\$0	\$25 million	
Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA)	\$3.15 million	\$1.5 million	-52.4 percent
Economic Growth, Education, and Environment (E3)	\$49.325 million	\$10.775 million	-78.2 percent
Bureau for Food Security (BFS)	\$3.56 million	\$700,000	-80.3 percent
Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL)	\$10 million	\$0	-100 percent
Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL)	\$600,000	\$0	-100 percent

There is also a difference in how gender equality and women’s empowerment are portrayed when comparing the most recent two CBJs (FY 2017 and FY 2018). In both appendices of the FY 2017 budget, the word “gender” can be found 292 times and the word “women” 559 times. In the FY 2018 request, you can find “gender” 13 times and “women” 49 times. Additionally, the FY 2017 CBJ lists “Gender” as one of four “foreign assistance priorities,” and devotes 15 pages to explaining why gender is a priority and how the US

⁵² “Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2017.”

⁵³ “Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2018.”

government works towards achieving it. The FY18 budget contains no such comparable section.

Overall, President Trump has requested a 32 percent or \$19.1 billion cut to the FY18 International Affairs Budget. It is important to note that cuts in other sectors, even outside of funding marked for gender equality and women's empowerment will also have drastic impacts on women. For example, because 40 percent of gender-focused aid falls within health funding, it is clear that any cuts to health programming will harm women. The FY 2018 CBJ has a 27 percent cut in all health programming compared to the FY 2016 actual budget. Additionally, 14 percent of total gender funding sits under the agriculture sector, which is facing a 51 percent cut by the administration. Finally, the 10 percent of gender funding which sits under government and civil society accounts, is facing a 30 percent cut.⁵⁴

Here are some other notable points in the current administration's CBJs:

- Funding for the State Department Office of Global Women's Initiatives in the FY 2018 State and Foreign Operations CBJ is \$8.250 million, which is \$1.8 million less than what was requested in FY 2017,⁵⁵ but the same level of funding as what the FY 2018 CBJ states was in the FY 2016 actual budget.⁵⁶
- Funding for family planning and reproductive health in the state and foreign operation budget is proposed to be totally eliminated (see below for more on the Mexico City Policy), and aid for maternal and child health programs decreases by 8% from the FY 2017 requested total of \$814.5 million⁵⁷ to \$750 million in the FY 2018 CBJ.⁵⁸
- For the CDC, the HHS CBJ reflects a requested reduction of 18 percent or \$76.31 million for global health programs when compared to the FY 2017 annual continuing resolution (CR) level, and most of that reduction would occur in the HIV/AIDs programming.⁵⁹
- For the USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service, the FY 2018 CBJ proposal eliminates the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child

54 Ibid.

55 "Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2017."

56 "Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2018."

57 "Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2017."

58 "Foreign Assistance Congressional Budget Justification Supplementary Tables Fiscal Year 2018."

59 "Centers for Disease Control and Prevention FY 2018 Justification of Estimates for Appropriation Committees."

Nutrition Program, but keeps funding for the Food for Progress at FY17 levels, \$149 million.⁶⁰

- Funding for Food for Peace in the USDA's FY 2018 CBJ is proposed to be completely eliminated.⁶¹

Finally, the current administration has already enacted a policy that will have negative impacts on women and girls globally - the Mexico City Policy (MCP), also known as the Global Gag Rule. A 2011 study found that countries in sub-Saharan Africa that had high exposure to the MCP had a rise in abortion rates when compared to countries that had low exposure to the MCP. The use of modern contraception in these high-exposure countries also declined relative to countries with lower exposure to the MCP. This is explained by the fact that NGOs that provide women's health services had fewer resources to provide support due to the MCP.⁶² The MCP affects more than just sexual and reproductive health services. It can result in the closure of health clinics, which has far-reaching impacts on the health of entire communities. In 2015, Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana had to close and consolidate many clinics because they couldn't take US government funding due to MCP restrictions.⁶³ The closure of clinics and the decrease in capacity of these organizations can negatively impact their ability to carry out programs on all health issues, like HIV/AIDs, malaria, malnutrition, and so on.

The Trump administration's expanded version of the policy is expected to affect the capacity of even more NGOs because it impacts almost 15 times more funding. Marie Stopes International, a nonprofit reproductive-health organization that has agreed to forego US funding due to its disagreement with the policy conditions, has estimated that the MCP will result in 6.5 million unintended pregnancies, 2.2 million abortions, 2.1 million unsafe abortions, and 21,700 maternal deaths during the next four years.⁶⁴

60 "2018 President's Budget Foreign Agriculture Service."

61 Ibid.

62 Patrick Avila, Eran Bendavid, and Grant Miller, "United States Aid Policy and Induced Abortion in Sub-Saharan Africa" (World Health Organization, 2011), <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/12/11-091660/en/>.

63 Kelly M. Jones, "Contraceptive Supply and Fertility Outcomes: Evidence from Ghana," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 64, no. 1 (October 1, 2015): 31–69, doi:10.1086/682981.

64 "Impact of Trump's Global Gag Rule on Women's Health" (CHANGE Center for Health and Gender Equity, May 2017), http://www.genderhealth.org/files/uploads/change/publications/GGR_Fact_Sheet_UPDATED_March_7_2017.pdf.

Congress's vision for aid and gender equality and women's empowerment funding

Although presidents have a big influence on the national budget, it is ultimately Congress, specifically the appropriations committees of both the House of Representatives and the Senate that decide on exact budget allocations. Even though the FY 2018 budget is far from being decided on at this time, bills from appropriations committees have been released giving us some insight into what final funding levels will look like. However, Congress doesn't typically recommend total funding levels for gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives, as these programs are funded from a variety of accounts and because the decision on how to best spend the funds is often left to the administration and the agencies.

The House of Representative's Appropriations Bill on State and Foreign Operations has some language on gender, but does not specify what overall levels of funding for gender should be. It states in Section 7059a, "Funds appropriated by this Act shall make available to promote gender equality in the United States Government diplomatic and development efforts by raising the status, increasing the participation, and protecting the rights of women and girls worldwide."⁶⁵ It does not include details on specific funding for gender equality and women's empowerment programs, outside of \$50 million for increasing leadership opportunities for women and \$150 million for GBV programming.⁶⁶ Additionally, it states \$265 million "should be available for microenterprise and microfinance development programs for the poor, especially women."⁶⁷ The House bill also recommends an overall cut of 17% to FY 2017 State and Foreign Operations spending.⁶⁸ The Senate Appropriations Committee's Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill includes a topline cut of 11% from FY 2017 levels.⁶⁹ Section 7059a has similar language as the House bill and also allocates \$50 million and \$150 million for women's leadership and gender-based violence, respectively. It doesn't include an allocation for women's microenterprises, but unlike the House bill,

⁶⁵ "Fiscal Year 2018 Draft Appropriations Bill for the Department of State" (2017), <https://appropriations.house.gov/uploadedfiles/bills-115hr-sc-ap--stateforop-fy2018stateforeignoperationsappropriations.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ "Senate Allocations Released, House SFOPS Bill Advances & Budget Resolution Introduced," USGLC, accessed August 25, 2017, <http://www.usglc.org/the-budget/international-affairs-budget-update-72117/>.

it allocates \$19 million for “women and girls who are at risk from extremism and conflict.”⁷⁰

Although the USDA and CDC funding accounts don’t play as big a role in development or gender equality efforts as the State and Foreign Operations allocation does, below are the differences in the president’s funding requests and Congress’s recommendations for the aforementioned USDA and CDC programs:

Budget Account	President’s Request	House of Representatives Recommendation	Senate Recommendation
USDA - McGovern Dole	\$0 ⁷¹	\$201.626 million ⁷²	\$206.626 million ⁷³
USDA - Food for Peace	\$0 ⁷⁴	\$1.4 billion ⁷⁵	\$1.6 billion ⁷⁶
USDA - Food for Progress	\$149,000 ⁷⁷	\$149,000 ⁷⁸	\$149,000 ⁷⁹
HHS – Global Health Program	\$350 million ⁸⁰	\$535.121 million ⁸¹	Unknown

70 “FY2018 State Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill,” Pub. L. No. S 1780 (2017), <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FY2018%20State%20Foreign%20Operations%20Appropriations%20Bill%20-%20S1780.pdf>.

71 “United States Department of Agriculture FY 2018 Budget Summary,” 2017, <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-Budget-Summary-2018.pdf>.

72 “Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2018” (2017), <https://www.congress.gov/115/crpt/hrpt232/CRPT-115hrpt232.pdf>.

73 “Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2018” (2017), <https://www.congress.gov/115/crpt/srpt131/CRPT-115srpt131.pdf>.

74 “United States Department of Agriculture FY 2018 Budget Summary.”

75 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2018, 2017.

76 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2018, 2017.

77 Ibid.

78 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2018, 2017.

79 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2018, 2017.

80 “Centers for Disease Control and Prevention FY 2018 Justification of Estimates for Appropriation Committees.”

81 “Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2018” (n.d.), <https://appropriations.house.gov/uploadedfiles/23920.pdf>.

Conclusion

US foreign assistance has had a tremendous impact on women and girls across the globe, and any cuts to foreign aid will have notable and unfortunate implications. Even a 10% cut to the International Affairs Budget will be devastating in a world that is still facing dire development and humanitarian crises—women and girls being the most vulnerable among those affected. Unfortunately, from the bills and funding allocations already known, Congress seems amenable to some cuts to the overall International Affairs Budget. However these bills aren't law yet and there is still the possibility that funding could be maintained at FY 2017 levels. Additionally, Congress historically has not allocated funds for gender equality or women's empowerment programs in total, outside of language mandating funding for a few specific types of programming, but there could be a push to add in language so that some proportion of funds is required to be spent on gender equality and women rights programs.

Even if the final FY 2018 budget won't reflect what the administration requested exactly, the CBJs have a symbolic importance and give us a good understanding of the priorities of the President. The funding requested for aid in general and for gender equality and women's empowerment activities specifically imply that these issues aren't priorities, and this is troubling since it will be up to the agencies themselves to generally decide how aid will be used to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. The current administration's requests unfortunately align with the longer-term downward trend in funding for gender equality and women's empowerment activities, albeit at a higher level. It raises real concerns that, even if funding is not cut drastically, programs designed to help women and girls will diminish, resulting in detrimental development setbacks because a country cannot prosper if half of its population is left behind. Despite the incredible work that USAID, the State Department, and other US agencies have done abroad, there's still a lot more work to be done, and the United States should not turn its back on women and girls worldwide by reducing its foreign aid.

Key Terms and Definitions/Explanations

Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ) – The annual presentation to Congress by the Executive Branch that justifies the budget requests for each part of the national budget. Congress reviews the President’s CBJ, but the Appropriations Committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate ultimately decide on the national budget allocations.

Development Assistance Committee (DAC) – A forum that is part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to discuss issues surrounding aid, development and poverty reduction in developing countries. The DAC currently has 30 members, including the United States, and membership criteria include: the existence of appropriate strategies, policies and institutional frameworks that ensure capacity to deliver a development co-operation program; an accepted measure of effort; and the existence of a system of performance monitoring and evaluation.

Foreign Aid/Assistance – Support the US provides to other countries for a multitude of purposes, from military to diplomatic to development. Passed by Congress in 1961, the Foreign Assistance Act created the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and was intended to bring reason to the wide array of players involved in foreign aid. After decades in which new directives, earmarks, and aid offices have been added, the act has become a catchall phrase.

Gender Equality – The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys and is based on the premise that women and men should be treated in the same way. It is the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person’s sex in opportunities, in the allocation of resources and benefits or in access to services. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity among different groups of women and men.

Gender Mainstreaming - A strategy which aims to bring about gender equality and advance women’s rights by taking account of gender equality concerns and building gender capacity and accountability in all aspects of an organization’s policy and activities, thereby contributing to a profound organizational transformation. It involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities: policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and projects. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a means to the goal of gender equality.

International Affairs Budget – Also known as the “150 account” for its location in the federal budget, the International Affairs Budget contains the majority of diplomatic, development, and military aid dollars (but not defense spending). This account pays for everything from embassy salaries to fighting drugs in Colombia to international children’s health programs.

Mexico City Policy (aka Global Gag Rule) - The policy requires any foreign non-governmental organizations (NGO) to certify that they will not use any of their funding (including non-US funding) to perform or promote abortions before they can be awarded US government funding for family planning assistance. “Promoting abortions” is defined as providing advice and information about and offering referrals for abortion, promoting changes in a country’s laws or policies related to abortion, or conducting public information campaigns about abortions. NGOs will not be restricted from US funds if they provide advice and information about abortions in cases where pregnancy poses a risk to the life of the mother is a result of incest or rape and if the woman requesting information about where to obtain an abortion has already clearly decided to have a legal abortion. The current version of the MCP is more expansive than previous versions, because it withholds *any* U.S. global health assistance from NGOs that cannot or will not certify that don’t promote or perform abortions.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) - The transfer by official agencies, including states and local governments, of public finances to developing countries, multilateral organizations and International NGOs that is: 1) administered with the main objective of promoting the welfare and the economic development of developing countries; and 2) concessional in character and conveys a grant element of at least 25 per cent.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - An intergovernmental economic organisation with 35 member countries, founded in 1960 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. The OECD acts as a norm setter and tries to influence domestic and international policies to better the lives of the poor, mostly through publishing data, peer reviews, and recommending standards and agreements.

State and Foreign Operations Budget – This budget includes funding for the Department of State and related agencies. It does not include all foreign assistance, such as food aid and foreign agriculture programs that sit within the US Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) budget.

United States Government Fiscal Year (FY) – A twelve-month period the United States government uses to report its finances. The US fiscal year

does not line up with the calendar year and begins on October 1 and ends on September 30.th We are currently in FY 2017, which will end on September 30, 2017.

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