



## COALITION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS GLOBALLY

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February 17, 2016

The Honorable Catherine Russell  
Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues  
U.S. Department of State  
Office of Global Women's Issues  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

On behalf of the Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls Globally, we commend you for your historic initiative to end gender-based violence around the world. As we reflect upon the accomplishments of the last three years, we stand ready to support the critical next steps to make your unprecedented policy initiatives a reality.

We welcomed the release of the *US Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally (Strategy)* in August of 2012 and eagerly anticipated the measures taken to implement it, mindful that this is a critical step towards reducing violence and empowering women and girls around the world. We are grateful for the collaborative and consultative spirit with which you and your office have engaged US civil society and non-governmental organizations, and look to the next phase of this important and life saving work.

As we engaged in the process of reviewing the implementation of the *Strategy* and carefully examined ways to improve and build upon this work, the violence perpetrated against women across the globe did not pause or halt. Since August of 2012, stories of rape, abductions, human trafficking and shootings have played almost like a silent movie in the background; the images are seen but for some reason the voices do not reach the intended audience. Over the past three years we have been witness to the kidnapping of 276 female students from a school in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria, many of whom have reportedly been forced into marriages against their will. News reports, on a daily basis, capture the heart wrenching stories of women and children in Latin America escaping from the violent hands of their partners and fathers only to fall prey to predatory non-state actors who forcibly recruit boys for their drug cartels and sexually enslave girls. The systematic kidnapping, rape, and enslavement of Yazidi women have become another means of feeding the coffers of the armed group calling itself the Islamic State. Honor crimes and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/circumcision, public lynching and stoning, and child marriage continue to be realities for millions of women and girls worldwide.

It is against this background that we write you to both praise your commitment to ending gender-based violence across the globe and to impress upon you the urgency with which we must raise the volume on these stories and with an effective and committed strategy write a different ending through a number of concrete recommendations regarding the GBV *Strategy* and Report. While we are encouraged by your commitment, we note the absence of sufficient data and information in the report to be able to adequately assess the impact and reach of the *Strategy*, and hope that the next phase of the *Strategy* and its ensuing implementation report are more robust and reflect an overarching and cohesive *Strategy* where programs, funds and initiatives are more connected and facilitate a more effective monitoring and evaluation process. It took unprecedented presidential leadership to begin curbing the global AIDS and HIV pandemic with the launch of the historic President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEFAR). We are calling for the same type of steadfast leadership and unprecedented commitment to stopping violence against women and girls.

## **Recommendations**

### **Review & Report on Implementation**

- Provide a more cohesive description of the overarching global strategy and the country by country strategic approach that has led to undertaking the specific programmatic initiatives enumerated in the report. Currently, the report gives the impression of many valuable but disparate initiatives that are underway, rather than describing a location-specific, clear approach that is guided by the U.S. *Strategy*;
- Offer information about the specific programmatic goals of the three inter-agency committees that were established to facilitate implementation of the GBV *Strategy* and what outcomes have been achieved from their 3-year collaboration;
- Enumerate on the process used to gather information from the missions, conduct content analysis of the reports, and engage in consultation with NGOs for feedback;
- Provide highlights of learnings, outcomes, and promising practices particularly on implementation of programs in the field and with bilateral partners (i.e., INL and GBV Justice Advisor in Liberia);
- Capture and illustrate examples of the missions' Gender Working Groups' activities and efforts related to GBV prevention and response and what if any impact those activities had on the participants; and if not already done so, open up forums and mechanisms aimed at learning and sharing to partners and implementers to share their work and their learning, both in Washington and country mission levels, using a variety of mechanisms such as virtual consultations, webinars, online forums, or wikis;
- Provide a comprehensive list of prevention and response programs implemented over the past three years and associated with particular sectors such as health; women, peace and security; education; humanitarian response; and the workplace (this can be done in a chart or graph format to simply illustrate the scope of the GBV programs in the varied sectors); additionally, provide information on how and to what extent the U.S. government is integrating/mitigating and addressing GBV through more non-

traditional sectors such as food security, economic empowerment, energy and infrastructure;

- Include in the report a list of U.S. missions that have drafted and/or implemented country-specific strategies that address gender and GBV prevention and response.

### **Next Phase of the *Strategy***

- Outline the GBV *Strategy* in the country plans for the identified pilot countries Malawi and Tanzania, and clarify what such selection means in terms of types of activities and funding;
- Expand inter-agency participation to include the DOD, DOL, and J/TIP and formalize a role for civil society;
- Call for the creation of mission-wide gender strategies that are multi-sectoral in their approach and collaborative with local groups;
- Call for designated staff trained as gender advisors within each mission and bureau and highlight their function in bureau programmatic and budget reporting and planning;
- Strengthen and increase strategic engagement with civil society groups and local NGOs to provide both technical assistance and guidance on coalition building, which would both strengthen learning about what works as well as help build local political will for social change;
- Include GBV in the world of work and GBV concerns after natural disasters (which would also include impacts of climate change) as a key concept and policy target;
- Expand GBV-related programming, highlight the need for transparent funding sources, and ensure that even in programming that does not have explicit focus on GBV the department is taking steps to monitor, mitigate and do no harm;
- Integrate GBV *Strategy* into newly funded initiative in Central America;
- Increase and improve diplomatic engagement on GBV conditions within foreign countries, including through U.S. Government statements at Universal Periodic Reviews and annual Human Rights Reports;
- Increase and make mandatory basic training on gender/GBV issues for State Department personnel, particularly Foreign Service Officers;
- Consolidate toolkits and other resources overseas personnel can utilize as guides for understanding and incorporating GBV issues into their daily work, particularly for those working in “non-traditional” GBV sectors such as economic growth;
- Prioritize partnerships with private sector actors to expand the scale of awareness and programming to address GBV;
- Increase funding and improve response time in emergency humanitarian contexts like the Syrian refugee crisis. Coordinate culturally relevant GBV response and prevention mechanisms for women and girls who are facing rape and human trafficking.

The next phase of the GBV *Strategy* provides an opportunity to solidify gains and make measurable and lasting progress. We look forward to working with your Administration to institutionalize this work and to secure the necessary support to make these initiatives a reality.

We respectfully ask you to take the next steps that are necessary to make the prevention and reduction of gender-based violence globally a central part of U.S. foreign policy and a hallmark achievement of your legacy.

With respect,

**The Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls Globally**

The Coalition to End Violence against Women and Girls Globally consists of more than 500 organizations whose combined expertise, experience, programmatic work, and collaboration with local activists make it a powerful resource and ally on issues related to the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls.

**List of Supporting Organizations**

1. AFL-CIO
2. Africa Faith & Justice Network
3. Amnesty International USA
4. The Bahá'ís of the United States
5. Breakthrough
6. CARE USA
7. Equality Now
8. Freedom House
9. Futures Without Violence
10. International Center for Research on Women
11. International Justice Mission
12. International Medical Corps
13. International Rescue Committee
14. Jewish Women International
15. MenEngage Alliance
16. Men's Resources International
17. National Association of Social Workers
18. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
19. National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
20. National Organization for Women
21. Peaceful Families Project
22. Population Action International
23. Promundo-US
24. Sierra Club
25. Solidarity Center
26. United States National Committee for UN Women
27. Vital Voices
28. Women for Women International
29. Women's Refugee Commission
30. Women Thrive Worldwide
31. Women Watch Africa
32. World Pulse

