

Priorities for the Biden Administration and 117th Congress

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Executive Summary

The following is a set of recommendations for the Biden Administration and the 117th Congress organized by issue area and timeline.

Restoring U.S. Leadership in Development and Diplomacy

DAY ONE:

- Reverse withdrawal from the U.N. Human Rights Council and seek a seat on the Council during its next election in 2021.
- Rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and increase the ambition of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in line with the 1.5°C limit.
- Reverse withdrawal from WHO.

FIRST 100 DAYS:

- Nominate and confirm a USAID Administrator and a U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations as part of the same slate as Secretaries of State and Defense if possible. These nominations should happen at the same time as the nominations of Deputy Secretaries of State. Elevate both positions to cabinet-level with representation at all three levels of the NSC and the Principal Committee.
- Pass a budget that includes a robust increase for the 150 Account, with particular focus on key development and humanitarian accounts. (Please find detailed requests and justifications included in relevant subsections).

FIRST YEAR AND BEYOND:

- Rebuild a bipartisan consensus on U.S. membership in the WHO and support efforts to strengthen the institution.

Gender and Women's Empowerment

FIRST 100 DAYS:

- Achieve gender equality and diverse representation in cabinet appointments, with a commitment to achieve similar representation at all levels of political appointments.
- Nominate and confirm an Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues with recognized expertise and commitment to advancing gender equality.

FIRST YEAR AND BEYOND:

- Prioritize and strongly re-engage in global bodies that advance gender equality, including the U.N. Human Rights Council, the U.N. Security Council, the U.N. General Assembly, and the Commission on the Status of Women.
- Ratify and implement the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the ILO Convention to End Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, and other critical global agreements that articulate and reinforce gender equality principles.
- Increase attention and resources to address the critical needs of women and girls in humanitarian emergencies.

Global Humanitarian Assistance

FIRST 100 DAYS:

- Restore American credibility and re-position the U.S. as a leading advocate and partner in addressing global forced displacement by:
 - Expanding the minimum number of refugees resettled in the U.S. annually to 125,000 and reversing policies intended to halt immigration, asylum and resettlement.

- Provide meaningful, relevant, and effective diplomatic engagement and financial support for hosting countries and countries of origin to address the root causes of displacement, support populations on the move and those enduring displacement, and enable conditions for sustainable recovery. Take steps to improve, clarify and streamline policies and laws that balance necessary due diligence and accountability with the need to respond effectively and efficiently to ever-growing humanitarian needs by:
 - Improving the waiver and licensing processes in areas where Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists are present
 - Immediately clarifying Congressional intent regarding material support for terror provisions and to establish a humanitarian exemption
 - Mitigating bank de-risking to facilitate funding for humanitarian operations in complex environments
 - Ensuring anti-terrorism certification requirements do not create an undue burden for those supporting principled humanitarian action

FIRST YEAR AND BEYOND:

- Take concrete steps to prevent and resolve conflicts, promote accountability with international law, and prioritize civilian protection in U.S. security strategy and broader diplomatic efforts. This must include adequate resources at the Department of State and Defense focused on civilian harm mitigation, and a commitment to transparent investigation of allegations of civilian harm.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

DAY ONE:

- Rescind the Mexico City Policy/Global Gag Rule and restore funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

FIRST 100 DAYS:

- Introduce and pass legislation *permanently* repealing the Mexico City Policy/Global Gag Rule.

FIRST YEAR AND BEYOND:

- introduce and pass legislation to protect future funding to UNFPA.
- Support comprehensive reproductive health programming in emergencies by including the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) in any humanitarian response.
- Ensure that lifesaving sexual and reproductive health services are part of the U.S. global response to COVID-19.

Global Nutrition and Food Security/Climate Change

DAY ONE:

- Rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and actively participate in the UNFCCC process to ensure that adequate financing and technical assistance is available for adaptation programs, particularly those intended to benefit smallholder and female farmers and fishers.

FIRST YEAR AND BEYOND:

- Prioritize U.S. efforts to contribute to and work through multilateral fora to achieve both the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and the WHA targets for nutrition by 2025.
- Fully implement the Multisectoral Nutrition Strategy
- Oppose any potential attempts to increase U.S. cargo preference requirements, which could harm efforts to alleviate global hunger. Reduce or eliminate these requirements if possible.
- Recognize the steady increase in global hunger, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and other factors such as climate change and conflict over the past several years, with the World Food Program projecting that acute food insecurity could double to 270 million by the end of 2020. Commit to providing strong U.S. funding and leadership in cooperation with the global community to address this crisis.
- Ensure the next U.S. Farm Bill passed in 2023 includes strong support for international food aid programming.
- Support reauthorization of the Global Food Security Act in 2023, which should include strong emphasis on gender and the role of women smallholder farmers in global food security.

White House Signature Initiatives on Global Gender Equality

The United States has a long legacy of championing gender equality and playing a leading role in the quest to end gender-based violence. **The Biden Administration should build upon that legacy and seize this historic moment to lead a global gender equality agenda.** It is not just the right thing to do; it is the best and most pragmatic way to advance human development and security. As Biden Administration builds back from recent regressions, advancing signature initiatives on gender equality is also a strategic opportunity to reassert the United States' international standing and rebuild critical partnerships with global leaders whose influence on progressive issues has grown as the United States' has retreated. This is particularly essential as the United States reengages positively in multilateral fora such as the U.N., G-7 and G-20, which would offer prime opportunities to launch a signature initiative on gender equality and rebuild international cooperation.

The aspiration of equality must be met with action. **We have solutions to ensure that mothers do not die giving birth; that girls do not get married before they are 18; and that women have equal rights to education and jobs.** Women around the world and across the United States have long mobilized for greater political representation, equal opportunities and pay, and against sexual harassment and violence. Yet even as we have closed some gaps, "The abuse of women and girls is the most pervasive and unaddressed human rights violation on earth. Women's inequality has profoundly affected our world," according to humanitarian and former President Jimmy Carter.

CARE proposes two signature initiatives to advance the United States' global standing on gender equality issues:

- 1. White House Council and Fund for Gender Equality:** This initiative would elevate gender equality to a genuine cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy by establishing a high-level and diverse White House Council for Gender Equality. The Council would drive the development and implementation of a new government strategy to advance gender equality. This initiative would also call for a dedicated Fund to support signature high-level, cross-government foreign assistance programs to advance gender equality globally and promote women's active leadership and decision-making at all levels.
- 2. Presidential Initiative on Gender-Based Violence:** This initiative would redouble the U.S.'s commitment to preventing and addressing gender-based violence (GBV) worldwide. Recognizing GBV as a persistent and costly abuse affecting primarily women, girls and vulnerable communities everywhere, including those in humanitarian settings, the president would establish a new cabinet-level Presidential Task Force to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally; mandate an update to the 2016 *U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV*; and require agency-level plans to implement this commitment. Under this initiative, the president will also seek robust funds to implement this work.

In designing and implementing this initiative, the Biden Administration should proactively ensure the engagement of a wide variety of leaders. This demands gender parity in representation, as well as active commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and representation across race, age, language, socio-economic status, physical or mental ability, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, indigenous identity, religion, ethnicity, citizenship, nationality or migrant status. This also includes a governmentwide commitment to consultation with civil society and social justice movements outside of government, including and especially those representing impacted communities.

White House Council and Fund for Gender Equality

The United States has long promoted gender equality globally, prioritizing the advancement of women's rights in our diplomacy and foreign assistance. These efforts include a wide range of issues, such as addressing gender-based violence, advancing women's leadership, supporting women's health and economic justice, and protecting women and girls in humanitarian crises. **However, policy and funding decisions in recent years have undermined key issues related to gender equality and global women's issues.** Harmful actions on reproductive rights and gender-based violence, for example, are some of the ways in which U.S. leadership on gender equality has retreated. Existing government structures aimed at advancing these issues have been weakened, leaving behind a deep experience void. The current Administration's emphasis on women's economic empowerment has been a welcome exception to this overall trend, though the focus has been too narrow and neglects key issues like reproductive health.

In addressing the global COVID-19 crisis, the deep impacts of the pandemic on women have been largely ignored. These impacts include the dramatic increase in gender-based violence, the economic burdens of providing unpaid care and being disproportionately affected by job insecurity, and the loss of critical sexual and reproductive health services. In fact, the United Nations estimates that the fallout of COVID-19 could cause an additional 47 million women and girls to lose access to lifesaving family planning services. Disruptions in programs could also lead to at least 13 million additional child marriages between 2020 and 2030.¹ Continuing to deprioritize gender equality in our global response to the pandemic and our foreign policy broadly will only perpetuate the systems of inequality that marginalize millions of women and girls worldwide, particularly those disproportionately impacted by humanitarian crises.

The Biden Administration has the opportunity to repair this damage. It should ensure that the range of gender equality/women's rights issues are prioritized and coordinated under a renewed commitment to advance gender equality globally. **To effectively implement this commitment and elevate U.S. leadership globally, it will require clear, high-level leadership, dedicated structures and funding, and a willingness to engage diverse civil society actors and voices from the Global South.**

¹ [Technical Note: Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage](#)

CARE proposes a multi-pronged approach to elevate and institutionalize U.S. leadership on gender equality worldwide under the president's direction. **Presidential action in the first 100 days should establish gender equality as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy by:**

1. Mandating a Strategy to Advance Gender Equality Globally (Annex 1). The heads of relevant Executive Branch agencies² will jointly develop and adopt a coherent strategy for elevating gender equality through foreign policy, led by the White House Council for Gender Equality (below).

- In addition, each agency will articulate a costed action plan to implement the strategy, including necessary policy, staffing, budget, legislative affairs, and communications needs and identifying gender focal points within each agency.

2. Establishing a White House Council for Gender Equality.

This Council would have a clear mandate to drive the development and implementation of the strategy to elevate

gender equality globally. The Council would design and lead cross-governmental initiatives, coordinate agency-level implementation, develop accountability standards, and regularly report to Administration and Congressional stakeholders on progress. In addition, a key component of the Council's work will be to strategically leverage the Global Gender Equality Fund (below). It would be comprised of the leaders of all relevant agencies; led by an appointed Special Advisor to the President for Global Gender Equality, the Secretary of State, and National Security Advisor; and supported by an advisory committee of recognized women's rights leaders from outside of the government. The Council and its advisory committee should reflect diverse representation from marginalized groups.

² Relevant agencies would include, for example, the Department of State, USAID, National Security Council, Treasury, Development Finance Corporation.

3. Creating a Global Gender Equality Fund. The president should seek, at minimum, an additional \$11 billion to establish a dedicated fund separate from the foreign assistance budget to support signature high-level, cross-government foreign assistance programs and initiatives to advance gender equality globally and promote women's active leadership and decision-making at all levels. This amount represents 20 percent of the current enacted foreign assistance budget – reflecting a global call by feminist activists that at least

20 percent of development and humanitarian programming prioritize gender³. Under the direction of the White House Council for Gender Equality, initiatives via the Fund would seek to engage global leaders, private sector partners and like-minded governments to expand the reach and multiply the impact of the Council's and the U.S. Government's work on gender equality.

³ Thompson, L., Patel, G., Kripke, G. and O'Donnell, M. (2020). *Toward a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States*. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women.

Presidential Initiative on Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a critical impediment to the rights, personal safety, economic empowerment and long-term well-being of people around the world, particularly women and girls who often bear the brunt of such violence. This issue also has grave impacts on the well-being and safety of communities and nations. **In 2016, the U.N. estimated the global cost of violence against women to be \$1.5 trillion, equivalent to approximately 2 percent of the global gross domestic product (GDP), or roughly the size of the entire Canadian economy.**⁴ The “shadow pandemic,” a term often used to describe the experience of women and girls experiencing GBV, is even more pronounced because of COVID-19, with an estimated 15 million cases of GBV occurring every three months the pandemic continues.⁵

The Biden administration has the opportunity to advance U.S. leadership in preventing and responding to GBV globally, that work has been persistently undermined in recent years. Executive Order 13623 in 2012 declared it a United States foreign policy priority to prevent and respond to GBV and was supported with key policy initiatives to implement that vision. President Biden should live up to that vision and advance it further by reestablishing the United States’ commitment to addressing GBV in multilateral and other forums; seeking robust resources for GBV in the annual President’s Budget Request or related budget justifications; prioritizing efforts to implement the *U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally*; empowering State Department and USAID experts to address critical GBV issues through foreign assistance and policy; reversing steps to limit the scope and definition of GBV in policy documents; addressing sexual and reproductive health consequences of GBV; and focusing on the implications of GBV while advancing other initiatives on women’s empowerment. **The Biden administration should reaffirm U.S. leadership on GBV in foreign assistance and reestablish leadership and global standing on this critical issue.**

Building on the United States’ strong legacy of championing efforts to prevent gender-based violence both in the U.S. and abroad, the Biden Administration should work urgently toward restoring U.S. leadership on GBV prevention and response. This requires not just recommitting to the vision outlined in EO 13623, but holistically institutionalizing this work throughout the U.S. Government’s foreign policy agencies for sustainable progress.

⁴ CARE International, “[Counting the Cost: The Price Society Pays for Violence Against Women](#),” March 2018.

⁵ UN Population Fund, “[Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-Based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage](#),” Interim Technical Note, April 27, 2020.

In the first 100 days, the Biden Administration should issue an Executive Order that would build on Executive Order 13623 to elevate and institutionalize GBV prevention and response across the U.S. government (Annex 2). This Executive Order would:

1. Mandate an update of the 2016 U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally (GBV Strategy) within six months.

This update would:

- Reflect new data and metrics, new positions and roles, and proposed program goals and outcomes based on best practices and lessons learned since 2016; and
- Be supplemented by agency-level, costed action plans and focal points to implement the GBV Strategy and integrate GBV prevention and response into the agency’s programmatic and policy work.

2. Establish a Presidential Task Force on Gender-Based Violence Globally (PTF). The purpose of this PTF will be to promote improved interagency coordination on global GBV response;

ensure integration of GBV into broader foreign assistance programs and policies; and develop minimum standards for

annual, publicly available agency reporting to the PTF and Congressional stakeholders on the GBV Strategy implementation efforts. The PTF will also be responsible for identifying areas in need of particular attention, such as GBV in humanitarian emergencies. This PTF should be composed of leaders of relevant agencies and led by the Secretary of State, the USAID Administrator and an appointed Special Advisor on Global Gender Equality.

3. Appoint a senior coordinator to oversee and coordinate interagency efforts on global GBV prevention and response, including special cross-agency initiatives to address GBV. This senior coordinator will liaise with agency-level GBV focal points to drive implementation of action plans, budget requests and other needs. The senior coordinator will report to the president and this newly established PTF.

As part of the President's Budget Request and accompanying Congressional Budget Justifications, the Administration should seek robust funding and resources to implement this initiative outlined above. The president should prioritize full funding for implementation of the GBV Strategy, including additional resources for necessary personnel and capacity-building as reflected in the costed action plans. This request should be, at a minimum, \$300 million⁶ and should include a presidential fund for special cross-agency initiatives to address GBV, as well as funding for programs implemented by agencies such as the Department of State and USAID. This funding should complement, not supplant, other critical programs aimed at promoting gender equality or women's empowerment.

This Presidential initiative to elevate and institutionalize the United States' anti-GBV work across the Executive Branch should parallel strong Administration efforts to engage Congress in passing vital legislation such as the *International Violence Against Women Act*, *the Safe from the Start Act*, *the Global HER Act* and robust appropriations for gender equality integration. This initiative should also complement and coordinate with efforts to advance gender equality globally, including work to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights; women's economic empowerment; the women, peace and security agenda; combating trafficking in persons; the rights of adolescent girls; and the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals.

This initiative aligns with proposals supported by a wide range of civil society actors, including the Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls Globally, which published this guidance note: [The First 100 Days and Ending Gender-Based Violence Globally](#).

⁶ This funding figure aligns with civil society requests for at least \$229 million for international programs to address GBV, female genital mutilation/cutting, and child, early, and forced marriage, as well as an additional \$71 million for special interagency initiatives.

Restoring U.S. Leadership in Development and Diplomacy

In the midst of a global health crisis with the potential for decades of ramifications, the Biden administration will need to work quickly to strengthen America's development infrastructure and U.S. leadership in global development and diplomacy. The following is a set of recommendations for The Biden administration, in partnership with Congress, to begin rebuilding and engaging on some of the world's most pressing challenges.

Immediately rejoin key multilateral agreements and institutions. In a time of unprecedented global health and economic challenges, the United States cannot afford to stay on the sidelines. President Biden should immediately reverse the current administration's decision to withdraw from the World Health Organization and instead work to rebuild bipartisan support for this critical institution. The United States should also restore its commitments to human rights and dignity and reverse its withdrawal from the U.N. Human Rights Council. Finally, the United States must rejoin the fight against climate change and not only rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement but also increase the ambition of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in line with the 1.5°C limit.

Rebuild and elevate America's humanitarian and development infrastructure. The Biden administration must move quickly and decisively to strengthen the leadership of USAID and the U.S. Mission to the United Nations by nominating experts in two key positions: a USAID Administrator with in-depth development and humanitarian expertise and experience and an Ambassador to the United Nations with a demonstrated commitment to multilateralism and humanitarian principles. As a sign of a clear commitment to rebuilding U.S. development capabilities, elevate both positions to cabinet-level, with representation at all three

levels of the National Security Council, including the Principal Committee. We recommend announcing these nominations as part of, or in the same slate as the Secretaries of State and Defense, if possible, and no later than nominations for the Deputy Secretaries of State.

Put a down payment on U.S. humanitarian leadership with a strong Presidential Budget Request. President Biden should submit a budget request that fully funds the International Affairs Budget and a robust global COVID-19 response, with a special focus on key development and humanitarian accounts, including:

- No less than \$4.4 billion for International Disaster Assistance, \$3.6 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance, and \$1 million for Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance.
- Meet the global unmet need for contraception with no less than \$1.6 billion for bilateral international family planning programs and at least \$111 million for UNFPA.
- A minimum of \$1.9 billion for gender-specific programming as well as gender equality integration and mainstreaming across relevant accounts.
- Additional supplemental funding to respond to COVID-19 internationally and adequately address second-order humanitarian impacts.

Gender and Women's Empowerment

Despite strides made by the international community, gender inequality remains a pervasive problem that not only undermines the rights of women and girls but also debilitates progress on achieving sustainable development, effective humanitarian assistance, and respect for human rights and dignity. While efforts to integrate gender equality into U.S. foreign policy have led to improvements in issues such as child, early and forced marriage, or women's economic opportunity, addressing the broader scale and impact of gender inequality requires full integration of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment into U.S. foreign policy, assistance, and diplomacy.

Achieve gender equality and diverse representation in cabinet appointments with a commitment to continue through all political appointments. The Biden administration should aim to appoint women with recognized experience, expertise, and commitment to gender equality to positions throughout the executive branch, particularly in agencies addressing foreign policy, development, and humanitarian assistance. This should include an emphasis on appointing women who have historically faced marginalization, such as women of color, indigenous and trans women.

Seek full funding for programs, policies, and the implementation of strategies to advance gender equality and women's and girls' rights. The resources the U.S. government pledges must reflect the U.S.' commitment to gender equality. The Biden administration and Congress should ensure robust funding for implementation of strategies and initiatives to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV); improve women's economic empowerment; empower adolescent girls and end child marriage, and other initiatives to institutionalize this work. This funding should not come at the expense of other critical programs aimed at promoting gender equality or women's empowerment. ([See here for the gender community appropriations request for FY21.](#))

Prioritize and strongly re-engage in global bodies that advance gender equality. The Biden administration should reinstate the U.S. commitment to gender equality in multilateral forums such as the U.N. Human Rights Council, the U.N. Security Council, the U.N. General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women, and other platforms dedicated to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This requires appointing qualified representatives with demonstrated commitment to gender equality and reversing positions that undermine the support for sexual and reproductive health, rights and opposition to GBV.

Congress and the Biden administration should ratify and implement the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the ILO Convention to End Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, and other

key agreements that reinforce gender equality principles. To regain the U.S.' stature as a leader in advancing gender equality, The Biden administration should prioritize ratifying widely recognized and supported agreements that promote critical principles on the rights of women and girls. This is particularly important for agreements like CEDAW and Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which the U.S. is isolated in not ratifying. The administration should also take measures to ensure sufficient resources, structures and leadership to effectively implement these instruments once ratified.

Nominate and confirm an Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues with recognized expertise and commitment to advancing gender equality. This critical position within the State Department should be held by a professional with demonstrated experience in promoting women's and girls' rights globally and who understands the critical nature of integrating gender equality into U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance programs. The Biden administration should ensure the incumbent will effectively represent the U.S. internationally on global women's issues and work with others in the U.S. government to integrate gender equality across the U.S. government's work. ([See here for statement of qualifications for the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues.](#))

Increase attention and resources to address the critical needs of women and girls in humanitarian emergencies. GBV, gender discrimination in accessing services/resources in crises, and exclusion of women from decision-making and leadership in humanitarian response perpetuate gender inequalities and exacerbate the impacts of humanitarian emergencies. The Biden administration should ensure programs such as the State Department and USAID *Safe from the Start* initiative to prevent and respond to GBV in emergencies is not just continued but expanded. President Biden should work with Congress to pass the bipartisan *Safe from the Start Act*. Administration officials should also prioritize the needs and rights of women and girls in humanitarian diplomacy, including in multilateral settings.

Global Humanitarian Assistance

The demand for humanitarian aid is greater than ever before. At least [168 million people](#)—one in every 45—needs humanitarian assistance and protection, the highest figure in decades. This need is outstripping resources, while onerous bureaucratic policies and regulations make humanitarian responses more challenging. Foreign policy approaches exacerbate civilian harm and rights abuses, and diplomatic engagement to resolve conflicts and support communities to recover and rebuild remains insufficient. The scope of need and obstacles to providing effective assistance are not borne equally. Crises exacerbate preexisting vulnerabilities, particularly for women and girls who require specialized support to mitigate risks to their lives and well-being.

The United States can and must do more to lead by example and foster global responsibility sharing in humanitarian settings. Under the leadership of the Biden administration, the United States has the opportunity to catalyze global action to respond to and resolve humanitarian crises like those in Yemen, Venezuela, and Syria, as well as those the international community has all but [forgotten](#).

Achieve durable solutions for forcibly displaced populations.

Each year, more and more people are forced to flee their homes in search of safety as [one person is newly displaced every two seconds](#) by conflict, human rights violations, natural hazards, persecution, or violence. Populations on the move face difficulties accessing protection, aid and services and require additional support to achieve a lasting solution to their displacement. These solutions include resettlement, safe, voluntary and dignified return or integration into host communities.

To address these issues, the Biden administration must restore American credibility to reposition the United States as a leading advocate and partner invested in the effort to address global forced displacement.

- The United States must immediately expand the minimum number of refugees resettled annually to 125,000 and reverse the current administration's [draconian policies and regulations](#) intended to halt immigration, asylum and resettlement – such much as the elimination of gender-based asylum.
- This domestic effort must be paired with [meaningful, relevant, and effective financial support](#) for hosting countries and countries of origin to address the root causes of displacement, support populations on the move and those enduring displacement, and enable conditions for sustainable recovery. Such conditions include providing [direct support to local women-led organizations and specialized services for women and girls](#) disproportionately affected by crisis. Funding U.N. humanitarian appeals as well as additional pledges via future [Global Refugee Forum](#) events and other displacement-related multilateral processes will help accomplish this support.

- These two lines of efforts will be most successful if they are matched with a strong commitment to diplomatic engagement, particularly to engage host countries to [reduce displaced populations' barriers](#) to accessing health, education and employment. Other helpful commitments include expanding pathways to obtain regular status; encouraging other donor countries to increase resettlement and commit additional resources; and recommitting to high-level engagement in multi-stakeholder processes such as the Global Refugee Forum, the [Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies](#), and others that address global forced displacement.

Protect civilians, uphold international law, and resolve the root causes of conflict. Worldwide, the direct and indirect effects of armed conflict on civilians—including attacks on aid workers—continue to grow more severe as [compliance with international law rapidly declines](#). Civilians are also exposed to these dangerous environments for increasingly prolonged amounts of time [as the average crisis now lasts more than nine years](#). Humanitarian action alone cannot protect civilians; international law requires military actors [to do their part to limit the effects of armed conflict on civilians](#). Despite this obligation, both state and nonstate parties to conflicts demonstrate an unwillingness or inability to take all feasible precautions to distinguish between combatants and civilians or military and civilian objects. Without significant diplomatic efforts to achieve peaceful resolutions to conflict and hold warring parties accountable for harm to civilians, humanitarian need will continue to grow.

The Biden administration must [make civilian protection and accountability for international law a first-order priority](#) in the United States' conduct of hostilities, security relationships and broader diplomacy.

- The U.S. military should increase transparency in reporting on civilian casualties caused by the United States or U.S.-led or backed coalition operations and partners via mandated

monthly public reporting on civilian casualties. The Administration needs to broaden the existing annual report on U.S. military strikes, combatant and non-combatant deaths to include reports on damage to civilian infrastructure and provide additional resources to bolster the capacity of the military to investigate allegations of civilian harm and acknowledge them where appropriate.

- The Secretaries of Defense and State should ensure the necessary staffing to enhance civilian harm mitigation in U.S. military operations and further plans to professionalize partner forces, helping put civilian protection at the fore.
- The United States must engage in robust diplomacy to prevent and resolve the conflicts that drive humanitarian need. Additionally, the U.S. must promote accountability and compliance with the law of armed conflict and human rights law, including by requiring compliance with international humanitarian law as a condition for arms sales.

Safeguard humanitarian access and reduce barriers to principled humanitarian response. U.S. policies enacted for political, economic or national security purposes have hampered effective and efficient humanitarian aid and service delivery. Extensive legal and policy restrictions intended to address diversion of aid and fraud—such as partner vetting systems or beneficiary screening—risk endangering aid workers' lives and undermining humanitarian principles. Counterterrorism policies and sanctions programs also limit humanitarian actors' capacity to respond safely to crises and can at times criminalize life-saving humanitarian activity. Navigating this complex regulatory environment often forces humanitarian agencies to delay program implementation and accept increased risk and costs.

To support principled humanitarian responses, the United States should take steps to improve, clarify and streamline policies and laws that balance necessary due diligence and accountability with the need to respond effectively and efficiently to ever-growing humanitarian needs.

- Congress should immediately clarify its intent regarding material support for terror provisions and to establish a humanitarian exemption for activities that are consistent with congressionally authorized and appropriated humanitarian activity. The executive branch could exercise this exemption on a case-by-case basis. The Biden administration and Congress should also support efforts to expedite and improve the certification and oversight processes for recipients of U.S. humanitarian funding and ensure consistent implementation of congressional instructions across the U.S. government.

- The Department of State, USAID, Department of Treasury, and Department of Justice should improve the process for consideration of waivers and licenses for safeguarding humanitarian action in areas where Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists are present. The process should include a clear timeframe for the Departments of Treasury and State to provide a response, along with a mechanism for tracking applications and decisions. This process should be clearly communicated to humanitarian organizations.
- USAID should work with implementing partners to ensure anti-terrorism certification requirements do not create an undue burden and allow for principled humanitarian programs that are impartial and based on need alone. USAID and other humanitarian donors should incorporate the costs of compliance for implementing counterterrorism regulations into grants to humanitarian organizations.
- The U.S. Department of Treasury, Financial Action Task Force, the Federal Reserve, and large international banks should engage with humanitarian organizations on bank de-risking to facilitate funding and financing for humanitarian operations in complex environments.

Secure adequate resources to meet humanitarian needs. As noted above, despite improvements in humanitarian response efficacy and increasing global humanitarian assistance, needs are far surpassing resources. As of August 2020, [donors have obligated just 26 percent of the funding](#) needed to respond to humanitarian crises around the world. While the United States does provide more foreign assistance than any other country, it is a smaller proportion of our gross national product (GNP) than other wealthy nations. Opinion polls consistently report that Americans believe foreign aid is about 25 percent of the federal budget, [when it is actually less than 1 percent](#). As humanitarian needs grow and are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, more resources are instrumental for alleviating suffering and saving lives. Yet, as of August 2020, [Congress has appropriated less than 1 percent of COVID-19 aid for the international response](#), falling far below the assessed need and minimum requirement recommendations from the U.S. non-governmental organization (NGO) community.

- President Biden and Congress should ensure the FY22 budget and future budgets provide increased resources to support robust and sustained principled humanitarian responses, with funding obligated and disbursed in a timely manner. The [NGO community's FY21 recommended minimum requirements](#) for key humanitarian accounts were:

- International Disaster Assistance: \$4.4B (FY20 enacted: \$4.4B)
- Migration and Refugee Assistance: \$3.6B (FY20 enacted: \$3.4B)
- Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance: \$1M (FY20 enacted: \$100,000)

In contrast, the FY21 budget request for international humanitarian assistance totaled \$5.9 billion, far below the above \$8 billion total NGO recommendation.

- President Biden should ensure further supplemental funding to respond to COVID-19 internationally to adequately prevent and respond to a pandemic and adequately address second order humanitarian impacts.

[The NGO community's recommendation for international assistance in COVID-19 supplemental funding passed by Congress in FY20 was \\$20 billion.](#)

The above funding recommendations are indicative of relative levels of funding needed, and future requests should be further adjusted in line with the expected increase in humanitarian need.

They also do not represent the full amount required to meet global needs but rather attempt to strike a balance between global need and the political and fiscal realities governing the U.S. budget.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[2020 Global Humanitarian Overview \(UNOCHA\)](#)

[Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019 \(UNHCR\)](#)

[International Humanitarian Law: Answers to your Questions \(ICRC\)](#)

[DENIAL, DELAY, DIVERSION Tackling Access Challenges in an Evolving Humanitarian Landscape \(CSIS\)](#)

[Aid Delivers- Hot Topics in the 116th Congress: Protection of Civilians in Conflict \(InterAction\)](#)

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Global Food and Nutrition Security

While the world has made progress in addressing malnutrition and food insecurity, much work remains to be done to ensure all people around the globe have access to diverse, nutritious diets for themselves and their children. For the past several years, the global rate of malnutrition has been rising steadily, reversing previous declines. [Even before the COVID-19 pandemic began earlier this year, the 2020 Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\) of the United Nations State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World \(SOFI\) report estimated approximately 690 million people around the world suffered from chronic hunger in 2019.](#)

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic is anticipated to worsen the global hunger crisis. The World Food Program has projected a doubling of the number of people facing acute malnutrition to 265 million by the end of 2020, and [women and girls have already been especially hard hit by the secondary hunger effects of COVID-19](#). All too often, however, women and girls have been treated as victims or bystanders in the COVID-19 pandemic, without their ability to lead positive change in areas including food security being fully acknowledged. (For more information on COVID-19, food security, and gender inequality, see CARE's report "[Left Out, Left Behind: Ignoring Women Will Prevent Us from Solving the Hunger Crisis.](#)")

To address the global food security crisis, The Biden administration and Congress should plan to do the following:

Recognize the steady increase in global hunger, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and other factors such as climate change and conflict over the past several years, and commit to providing strong U.S. funding and leadership in cooperation with the global community to address this crisis. This commitment should begin by including strong funding for food security and nutrition programming in the FY22 budget.

Support international food aid programming. The Biden administration and Congress should ensure the next U.S. Farm Bill, to be passed in 2023, includes strong support for international food aid programming, including continued flexibility to use modalities such as cash and vouchers where

most appropriate. Additionally, Congress should not pursue efforts to increase cargo preference shipping requirements, which would harm efforts to alleviate global hunger and result in a more costly food aid delivery process and less food reaching those in need quickly.

Reauthorize the Global Food Security Act (GFSA) in 2023. The new version of the GFSA reauthorized in 2023 should include strong emphasis on gender and the role of women smallholder farmers in global food security, as well as emphasizing the need for continuing whole-of-government coordination around food security.

Support women smallholder farmers. Women smallholder farmers are critical to efforts to ensure global food security, yet their importance and the challenges and barriers they face are often overlooked in food security programming. The GFSA should focus on strong support for women smallholders, particularly in addressing the ongoing effects of climate change.

Ensure the United States plays a global leadership role on nutrition. The Biden administration should prioritize U.S. efforts to contribute to and work through multilateral fora to achieve both the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 2 to eliminate hunger and malnutrition, by 2030, [and the World Health Assembly's \(WHA\) targets for nutrition, including stunting and wasting, by 2025](#). The Biden administration should also fully fund and implement the [Multisectoral Nutrition Strategy](#) within the U.S. government.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

Every 90 seconds, a woman dies from a pregnancy-related complication. Maternal death or injury can result from several factors; however, they are often linked to the low social status of women. The good news is the vast majority of these are almost entirely preventable. Among the most effective, affordable and life-changing interventions is the ability for women to time and space their pregnancies when it is best suited for them. Effective voluntary family planning services provide women, men, couples and families access to information and a wide variety of contraception methods, so they can voluntarily decide if, when and how many children to have. By ensuring women have access to family planning and other life-saving sexual and reproductive health services, women are granted decision-making power over their futures, and millions of lives could be saved each year.

Introduce and pass legislation to permanently repeal the Mexico City Policy / Global Gag Rule. Since it was first introduced in 1984, the Global Gag Rule (GGR), also known as the Mexico City Policy, has been imposed by every Republican administration and has had a harmful and counterproductive impact on women's access to reproductive health services around the world. The policy forbids foreign NGOs from receiving U.S. family planning funding if they perform abortions, counsel patients on how to receive an abortion, or simply advocate for abortion access, even if it is done with their own private funds. [Studies have shown the policy leads to poorer health outcomes for women](#) and actually increases incidents of abortion and unintended pregnancy when in place. In 2017, the administration re-imposed the policy and greatly expanded it to apply to all of U.S. global health funding, leading to damaging impacts on [everything from HIV/AIDS programming](#) to Water Sanitation and Hygiene ([WASH](#)) efforts.

The harmful impacts of GGR have been extensively documented, and the regular imposition and repeal of the policy has sparked confusion and a chilling effect among NGOs and, far more importantly, has [deadly consequences for some of the world's most vulnerable communities](#). The strong support for Global Health Empower and Rights (Global HER Act) Act in the 116th Congress proves there is a durable political will to permanently ban GGR. The Biden administration and Congress must build on this momentum and champion the passage of a bill that does away with this harmful policy permanently.

Introduce and pass legislation to protect UNFPA funding. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is the U.N. organization tasked with making family planning and safe delivery available to women around the world. UNFPA advances access to family planning for women and youth in more than 150 countries and works to end harmful practices like gender-based violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation. In many of the contexts

where UNFPA works, particularly in humanitarian settings, they are one of the few providers of reproductive health supplies.

In 2016, the United States was the third-largest overall donor to UNFPA, contributing nearly \$70 million to the organization's work to provide life-saving care in development and crisis settings. In 2017, the current administration, without citing direct evidence, found UNFPA in violation of the Kemp-Kasten Amendment and halted all funding to the body.

Like GGR, the politicized decision to defund UNFPA harms some of the world's most vulnerable women and girls and actively undermines U.S. efforts to support global health. The Biden administration must immediately restore funding to UNFPA and work with Congress to prevent future administrations from defunding the organization without legitimate evidence. The *Support UNFPA Funding Act*, with more than 120 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives, is strong evidence of Congress's own interest in addressing UNFPA's defunding.

Invest in meeting the global unmet need for voluntary family planning. Approximately 214 million women around the world would like to avoid or delay pregnancy but do not have access to the tools and education to do so. If this need were met, nearly one in four maternal deaths would be prevented, [making voluntary family planning one of the single most effective maternal health interventions](#). Yet despite the clear benefits, U.S. investments in international family planning have remained essentially flat for the past decade. It is well past time for the United States to commit its fair share to meeting the unmet need for contraception globally. President Biden's first budget request [should include at least \\$1.66 billion for bilateral international family planning programming, and at least \\$111 million for UNFPA](#).

Support comprehensive reproductive health programming in emergencies. More than 60 percent of all preventable maternal deaths and 45 percent of all preventable newborn deaths occur in vulnerable contexts, many affected by conflict and humanitarian emergencies. The Biden administration must prioritize sexual and reproductive health services in emergency and crisis settings. Key to this is a commitment to comprehensive implementation of the Minimum Initial Service Package for Sexual and Reproductive Health in emergencies (MISP) in any humanitarian response. [The MISP is a critical set of activities aimed at ensuring life-saving reproductive health services are prioritized at the onset of an emergency.](#)

Ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are part of the global response to COVID-19. Current strains on health systems due to COVID-19 present a serious risk to women and girls, as resources are diverted to address the pandemic, meaning there is an increased likelihood of a shortage of life-saving SRHR services, with potentially devastating impacts. This danger was made abundantly clear in the 2014 West Africa Ebola outbreak, [where the maternal mortality rate rose by nearly 70 percent.](#) The Biden administration should clearly repudiate the current administration's call for removing references to SRHR from the U.N.'s Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 and work to ensure SRHR services that [are in line with the MISP](#) are integrated into the U.S. response to the pandemic.

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