



THE COUNCIL ON WOMEN AND GIRLS: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND VISIBILITY



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The Council on Women and Girls: Civic Engagement, Leadership and Visibility Accomplishments

The White House Council on Women and Girls

Since the day he took office, President Obama has fought for policies that are important for women and will expand opportunity for all Americans. He's signed major legislation like the Affordable Care Act and Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. He's dramatically expanded fair pay and paid leave protections. And his administration has systematically encouraged cities and states to embrace policies like higher minimum wage and paid leave.

Underpinning these actions, President Obama and Vice President Biden have spoken out and driven a conversation about treating women fairly in America. They have pushed for cultural change that gives women the respect they deserve in schools and in workplaces, and joined advocates in dramatically changing our country's approach to sexual assault on campus and elsewhere. That conversation has spurred changes in cities and states, businesses big and small, schools from pre-K to college.

Across the Obama-Biden Administration, this work has been driven by the White House Council on Women and Girls (CWG), which the President created in March of 2009 to help develop and implement these policy priorities. The CWG is comprised of representatives from each Federal agency, as well as the White House offices, and coordinates efforts across Federal agencies and departments to ensure that the needs of women and girls are taken into account in all programs, policies, and legislation.

Below, we will explore some of the ways the Obama Administration has to increase civic engagement, leadership and visibility for women and girls.

Civic Engagement, Leadership and Visibility

The Obama Administration has put an emphasis on breaking down barriers faced by women and girls, working to remove bias and ensuring that women and girls are able to become engaged citizens and leaders across all industries and sectors. The following are key steps that the Administration has taken to foster women's leadership, engagement, and visibility:

1. **Promoting the visibility of women in media and across industries and sectors**, including in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), media, agriculture, transportation, climate, and business;
2. **Fostering women's leadership in the Federal government;**
3. **Breaking down barriers to women's leadership in the military** by taking actions like opening all combat roles in the military to women;
4. **Designating the Sewall-Belmont House as the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument;**
5. **Ensuring representation of women on U.S. currency;** and
6. **Focusing on peace and security** by taking actions such as issuing the first U.S. National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security.

Promoting the Visibility of Women in Media and Across Industries and Sectors

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“It can be especially difficult for women, for others who traditionally are not viewed as being at the center of business life in a country, haven't had all the access to the same opportunities. So we've got to tap all the talent that's out there. Just because you are born poor does not mean you should not be able to start a business. Just because you don't look like the traditional businessman doesn't mean you can't make a great product or deliver a great service.”

President Barack Obama, May 24, 2016

Overview

When it comes to agenda setting and opinion making, women are underrepresented in various areas, from directing academic research to serving on editorial boards in news publications. One recent study by the American Association of University Professors showed that, although women earn more than half of all Ph.D. degrees granted to American citizens today, they only make up about 45 percent of tenure-track faculty, 31 percent of tenured faculty, and just 24 percent of full professorship. The Obama Administration is working with a variety of institutions in academia, entertainment, and news media to find ways to increase the voice and visibility of women in agenda setting and opinion making.

Visibility in STEM and Media

The Obama Administration has taken significant steps to increase participation by women and underrepresented ethnic and racial groups in STEM careers, including through efforts to mitigate persistent barriers to STEM inclusion. In October 2015, the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) established an Interagency Policy Group to identify policy options and actions that the government can take to mitigate [implicit and explicit bias](#) in the Federal STEM workforce and in Federally-funded institutions of higher education.

As an important complement to other ongoing efforts to foster inclusion of historically underrepresented groups in STEM, the Administration is working with the media and entertainment industry to raise awareness that the image of STEM jobs in media can impact [public perception of STEM fields and careers and to break down gender stereotypes in children's media and toys](#). The Administration has also [highlighted critical STEM contributions](#) of diverse women who are less known or more obscure.

All too often, the stories of our women in STEM and their contributions to some of today's greatest advances are excluded from our history. The White House launched a website, [The Untold Story of Women in Science and Technology](#), to highlight the stories of inspiring women throughout history who have broken gender barriers, led groundbreaking efforts to improve our environment and understand the world around us, and made discoveries that impact our lives each and every day. All of the stories are told by female leaders in the Obama Administration who are moving forward important science and technology policies each and every day.

Diversity in Agriculture, Transportation, and Environment

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) created a mentoring network for [women in agriculture](#). The network has grown to over 1,500 members from across the United States since its launch in 2014. Network members receive regular updates on leadership opportunities,

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[USDA tools that benefit their operations](#) or businesses, access to roundtables, opportunities to participate in engagement and informational calls, and access to blog posts. USDA is heavily engaged in both 4-H and Future Farmers of America. Part of the outreach is engaging young women interested in agriculture, environment, and STEM. USDA's international work and capacity building often trains or assists female farmers. In addition, USDA funds international fellows who study and conduct research on agriculture, environment, and new technologies related to food and agriculture in the United States with the goal of bringing that knowledge back to their countries.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) established the [Women and Girls in Transportation Initiative \(WITI\)](#) to promote women's visibility and access to careers in transportation. This internship program is available in all 13 Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization regions, enabling young women from colleges and universities across the country to participate. It is administered through the department's 13 [Small Business Transportation Resource Centers \(SBTRC\)](#), which provide resources, technical assistance and outreach to all 50 states and U.S. territories; each SBTRC is responsible for placing qualified female college students in transportation-related internships throughout their regions. USDOT has worked closely with stakeholder organizations interested in promoting and advancing women in transportation skilled trade careers that are often held by men. Early in the Administration, USDOT facilitated two face-to-face roundtables and an online dialogue with the following focus area outcomes: to conduct outreach and education for young women about opportunities; to increase skills training and advancements; to promote a positive work environment; and to increase coordination and communication across the transportation industry on issues related to women in skilled transportation careers. USDOT has also worked closely with the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau to identify opportunities to advance women in transportation careers.

Since 2008, the employees of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Research and Development in Research Triangle Park, NC have been leading apprenticeships through the [Citizen Schools Program](#). Employees serve as volunteer "Citizen Teachers" working with middle schoolers through the national Citizen Schools program. These employees teach 10-week "Apprenticeships" focused on helping students master issues related to environmental protection. This program works to close the opportunity gap for children in public middle schools in low-income communities. The program includes working with students of color, and a large share of the students in each of the EPA Apprenticeships have been girls of color. Several EPA employees have dedicated their time to this program, and many have received the Gold Presidential Volunteer Service Award.

Additionally, in 2011, EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs launched the [EPA Tribal ecoAmbassadors Program](#), which brings together Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and EPA scientists to solve environmental problems most important to the participating TCUs. Since the start of the Tribal ecoAmbassadors Program, over eighty female college students have directly participated in the Tribal ecoAmbassadors projects. Women compose up to two-thirds of the student bodies of these participating TCUs. The Tribal ecoAmbassadors Program continues to nurture new pathways to highlight women in STEM, as well as provide meaningful experience to the future generation of STEM-educated women from Indian Country.

Women in Business

According to a report from the Center for American Progress, women are only 14.6 percent of executive officers, 8.1 percent of top earners, and 4.6 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs. They hold just 16.9 percent of Fortune 500 board seats. In the financial services industry, women make

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up 54.2 percent of the labor force, but only 12.4 percent of executive officers and 18.3 percent of board directors. None are CEOs. Women account for 78.4 percent of the labor force in health care and social assistance but only 14.6 percent of executive officers and 12.4 percent of board directors. None, again, are CEOs. In the legal field, women are 45.4 percent of associates—but only 25 percent of non-equity partners and 15 percent of equity partners. In medicine, women compose 34.3 percent of all physicians and surgeons but only 15.9 percent of medical school deans. According to American Progress, in information technology, women hold only 9 percent of management positions and account for only 14 percent of senior management positions at Silicon Valley startups.

The Obama Administration continues to highlight those companies that have implemented innovative solutions to creating pathways for women to executive leadership. In August 2015, the Council on Women and Girls and the Council of Economic Advisers [hosted a convening at the White House](#) focusing on opportunities for the business community and business schools to work together to encourage success for women in business, helping our companies to incorporate the full range of talent and diversity of American workers. The convening brought together leaders from the business and business school communities as well as other stakeholders for a conversation on recruiting, training and retaining leaders for the 21st-century workplace and the importance of implementing policies that work for families.

That day, over 45 business schools committed to a set of [best practices](#). These best practices offer concrete strategies for business schools to help women succeed throughout school and their careers and to build a business school experience that prepares students for the workforce of tomorrow. These best practices focus on four key areas:

- Ensuring access to business schools and business career;
- Building a business school experience that prepares students for the workforce of tomorrow;
- Ensuring career services that go beyond the needs of traditional students; and
- Exemplifying how organizations should be run.

Fostering Women's Leadership in the Federal Government

"Every day, across this country, so many women wake up every day and try – using everything they have – to make life a little better for others."

First Lady Michelle Obama, May 7, 2010

President Obama has taken significant steps to increase the diversity of the Federal workforce and include women in leadership positions throughout government. His cabinet has included eight women, more than any President in history. He has also nominated two women, including the first Latina woman, to serve on the Supreme Court, making it the first time three women have sat on the Supreme Court. The President has made a commitment to diversifying the circuit courts, not only [appointing 138 female judges](#) – more than any other President – but also appointing minority women judges at a rate more than twice that of any other President.

Additionally, President Obama created the White House Council on Women and Girls to ensure that Federal agencies take into account the needs of women and girls in the policies they draft, the programs they create, the legislation they support, and that the true purpose of our government is to ensure that in America, all things are still possible for all people. The Council

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on Women and Girls has as its members the heads of every Federal agency and major White House office, so that everyone shares in this responsibility.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has taken a leadership role in fostering women's leadership in the Federal government. [OPM's Executive Women in Motion \(EWIM\)](#) program's mission is to promote the advancement of women in the Senior Executive Service (SES) through interagency mentoring, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing. The EWIM Mentoring Program supports the White House Equal Futures Partnership initiative designed for women to participate fully in public life and to lead and benefit from inclusive economic growth. Each EWIM-Pathways to the SES session includes a keynote speaker, OPM leadership development presentation, flash mentoring, and networking. Additionally, sessions target Federal employees in grade levels GS 12-15. Featured speakers and mentors are successful and inspiring women executives who share their personal SES career journey. Since 2014, OPM has sponsored EWIM events involving 569 women at the White House, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and Federal Executive Boards including in Atlanta, Baltimore, and San Francisco, with 70 to 95 participants at each session. Participants have overwhelmingly provided positive feedback on their overall experience and content, and would recommend the events to their colleagues.

In April 2016, OPM's Office of Diversity Inclusion (D&I) hosted the [Collaboration and Innovation Summit](#), an event designed to bring together D&I game changers and other change-oriented professionals from across the Federal sector to share ideas, learn from thought leaders, and innovate new ways of implementing D&I strategies throughout the Federal government. The Summit focused on the critical elements of all successful inclusive ecosystems, including the fostering of trust, an inclusive-friendly culture, linkages and networking, leadership, partnership development, and mentorship.

OPM has established a government-wide [Situational Mentoring Program](#) for new and current executives. Situational mentoring is a short term discussion between executives on a high impact issue, problem, challenge, or opportunity. The purpose of the program is to provide advice and guidance that allows executives to appropriately address critical issues; enhance individual and organizational performance; and develop executive core qualifications. The situational mentoring database is housed on OMB's MAX website. Mentors and mentees can discuss challenges face-to-face or virtually. Currently, there are 30 women executive mentors participating in OPM's SES Situational Mentoring Program.

Breaking Down Barriers to Women's Leadership in the Military

"But I think we all can agree that when these women have sacrificed so much and have served so bravely, they should never have to hide their accomplishments. They should never have to worry about whether their service will be valued equally. And just like every veteran who has served this country, they should be getting every single one of the benefits they've earned – absolutely."

First Lady Michelle Obama, March 2, 2016

In February 2012, the Department of Defense announced its intent to eliminate the [co-location exclusion](#) barring women U.S. military service members from being co-located with ground combat units, a change that opened up over 13,000 new positions to women service members. This change reflects President Obama's commitment, and the commitment of the Department of Defense, to eliminating barriers that prevent service members from rising to their highest

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potential according to their individual abilities, not constraining them through gender-restrictive policies.

In 2013, the Department of Defense announced that they would [move to open more military positions](#)—including ground combat units—to women. Because of this, our armed forces took another historic step toward harnessing the talents and skills of all our citizens. To further advance this progress, in 2015, the Department of Defense announced that [all combat roles in the military would be open to women](#). This milestone reflected the courageous and patriotic service of women through more than two centuries of American history and the indispensable role of women in today's military. Many have made the ultimate sacrifice, including more than 150 women who have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan—patriots whose sacrifices show that valor knows no gender.

Designating the Sewall-Belmont House as the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument

"And so I'm hoping that a young generation will come here and draw inspiration from the efforts of people who came before them. After women won the right to vote, Alice Paul, who lived most of her life in this very house, said, 'It is incredible to me that any woman should consider the right for full equality won. It has just begun.' And that's the thing about America -- we are never finished. We are a constant work in progress."

President Barack Obama, April 12, 2016

On April 12, 2016, President Obama designated a new national monument to honor the movement for women's equality. The new [Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument](#) includes the house that served as the headquarters for the National Women's Party (NWP) since 1929 and the home of Alice Paul, who founded the Party, played an instrumental role in the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment guaranteeing women's suffrage, and continued to serve as the Party's chief strategist. From this location, Alice Paul and the NWP led the movement for women's equality, authoring more than 600 pieces of Federal, state and local legislation in support of equal rights. Paul updated the Equal Rights Amendment text, wrote provisions that were included in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prevent discrimination on the basis of gender, and worked to get women's equality language incorporated into the United Nations Charter. These efforts have been key to women's inclusion and full participation in society.

Ensuring Representation of Women on U.S. Currency

"Last week, a young girl wrote to ask me why aren't there any women on our currency, and then she gave me like a long list of possible women to put on our dollar bills and quarters and stuff -- which I thought was a pretty good idea."

President Barack Obama, July 30, 2014

In June 2015, the Department of the Treasury announced that it would embark on a process to redesign its next series of currency, which would start with the \$10 note. Treasury engaged the

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public through social media portals, roundtables, town halls, and meetings, as well as through correspondence, to solicit input on who best represents the theme of democracy. After 10 months of rigorous public engagement, Treasury announced on April 20, 2016 that it would redesign the \$5, \$10, and the \$20. The new \$10 note will celebrate the history of the women's suffrage movement, and feature images of Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Alice Paul. The front of the new \$20 note will feature a new portrait with Harriet Tubman, whose life was dedicated to fighting for liberty. The reverse of the new \$20 will depict the White House and an image of President Andrew Jackson. The new \$5 note will honor historic events that occurred at the Lincoln Memorial in service of our democracy, and will feature Martin Luther King, Jr., Marian Anderson, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

The final concept designs for the new \$5, \$10, and \$20 notes will all be unveiled in 2020 in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote. As part of this rollout, Treasury shared more than 270 names of notable historic women who had been recommended from the public on their website. The intent is that ongoing discussions will continue so that more historic American women will be recognized through various educational initiatives both inside and outside of the Federal government.

Focusing on Peace and Security

"We need to reform and modernize peace operations because today's complex conflicts demand it. And that means putting in place the highest-caliber, merit-based leadership teams for every single mission. It means making sure we get more women leaders into critical roles."

President Barack Obama, September 28, 2015

Overview

Around the world, women and girls are often not at the table in decision making conversations. The Obama Administration has a goal to empower half the world's population as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace in countries threatened and affected by war, violence, and insecurity. This is critical to our national and global security. Deadly conflicts can be more effectively avoided, and peace can be best forged and sustained, when women become equal partners in all aspects of peace-building and conflict prevention, when their lives are protected, their experiences considered, and their voices heard.

Women's Voices in Peace-Building, Conflict Prevention, and Emergencies

In 2011, the United States issued its first-ever [National Action Plan \(NAP\) on Women, Peace and Security](#), and President Obama signed [Executive Order 13595](#) directing the NAP's implementation. Together, these documents chart a roadmap for how the United States is working to accelerate and institutionalize efforts to advance women's participation in preventing conflict and keeping peace. They represent a fundamental change in how the United States approaches diplomatic, security, and development-based support to women in areas of conflict by ensuring that gender is fully integrated into efforts regarding peace and political processes, conflict prevention, the protection of civilians, and humanitarian assistance.

Under the NAP, the United States is working to ensure women's voices are heard in emerging democracies and governments everywhere, from Mongolia to Afghanistan to Iraq. The [United States provides extensive support in Afghanistan](#) to bolster women's participation in the political process and support advocacy efforts through equal voter registration outreach,

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assistance to women candidates, gender equality in political parties, and support of female Parliamentarians and diplomats. The United States has committed [\\$216 million to help empower 75,000 Afghan women](#) (aged 18-30) with the skills, experience, knowledge, and networks to succeed through USAID's PROMOTE program, implemented in partnership with the Afghan government. Under the Obama Administration, the United States has also supported the empowerment of Syrian women to take an active role in governance, civic engagement, and conflict resolution. Together, the Department of State and USAID are amplifying the voices of Syrian women civil society leaders participating in peacebuilding initiatives, mediating local cease-fires, and ensuring their perspectives are considered by the international community.

The NAP has enabled expanded efforts to prevent and protect women and children from harm, exploitation, discrimination, and abuse, including gender-based violence (GBV) and trafficking in persons (TIP). The Department of Defense is advancing effective accountability mechanisms designed to address violence against women and girls around the world, including through mobile-education seminars provided by the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies on combating impunity for gender-based violence in the military. USAID has reached [more than five million survivors of GBV](#) and those at risk of violence with critical medical, psychosocial, legal, and economic assistance in countries affected by conflict, natural disaster, and insecurity.

The United States continues to invest in gender-based violence prevention and response by ensuring that women and girls have equitable and meaningful access to all disaster response and disaster risk reduction programs, and requiring that programming is safe and tailored to meet the different needs, capacities, and interests of women, men, girls, and boys. The Defense Institute for Medical Operations has developed a leadership course designed to empower partner nation healthcare policymakers and their implementing authorities to establish effective, evidence-based programs to combat gender-based violence. "Safe from the Start" is a joint State and USAID effort to help humanitarian actors prioritize GBV prevention and response, and deliver quality programs from the onset of an emergency or crisis. Safe from the Start represents the U.S. government's Commitment to the "Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies" – a groundbreaking effort that brings together governments, donors, and humanitarian responders to coordinate our collective efforts on GBV prevention and response in humanitarian emergencies. From 2013 to 2015, the United States committed [nearly \\$40 million](#) to projects and activities in support of Safe from the Start.

Additionally, since 2012, the United States has directly trained more than 3,200 women peacekeepers across the globe through the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), a U.S. government-funded security assistance program that strengthens the international capacity to implement United Nations and regional peace operations. To date, GPOI has trained over 320,000 personnel. As part of its focus on protection of civilians, GPOI training emphasizes the prevention and remediation of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as child protection. In 2015 alone, GPOI funded over 120 training events and courses that included instruction on these topics.

In November 2015, the Department of State launched an enhancement workshop on Women, Peace and Security for participants of the [Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program](#). Humphrey Fellows come to the United States for a year of non-degree, graduate-level study, leadership training, and substantive professional collaboration with U.S. counterparts, and this workshop is expected to become an annual offering. Each year, approximately 170 fellows are selected from around the world, and 53% of the 2016-2017 class are women.

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The United States recognizes that successful conflict prevention efforts around the world require long-term investments in women's economic empowerment. To that end, USAID recently launched a new multi-year initiative to support game-changing programs that remove barriers to women owning and managing small and medium-sized enterprises, including legal, social, educational, and economic barriers, along with rigorous impact evaluation of these efforts. Digital financial services pose particular promise for women as tools for empowerment and economic opportunity. Digital platforms not only facilitate access to traditional financial services, but also provide consumers with new ways to interact with, qualify for, and manage formal financial relationships. Women constitute many of those who would not be reached except through these new pathways. USAID is fostering the growth of these services and the underlying digital infrastructure that has made financial inclusion a realistic possibility for the first time.

Women's Voices in Climate Change Programs

USAID's global climate change programs work to build resilience in disaster and crisis-prone countries by reducing risks to the world's most vulnerable populations. A sustainable and thoughtful response to the impact of climate change is one that promotes peace, democracy, human rights, good governance, and accessible social services. As the United States promotes women's participation in peace and political processes, it is critical to empower women to draw on their holistic view of threats to their community—including natural disasters and environmental effects caused by climate change. To that end, USAID is establishing a creative new collaboration that brings together "Women, Peace and Security" and climate change agendas to tackle the critical intersections of gender, climate, security, and resilience. This collaboration will aim to promote women's participation and leadership in efforts to address climate-related shocks and challenges linked to recurrent crisis, conflict, and insecurity.

Mentoring Women Globally in Meaningful Participation, Leadership, and Civic Engagement

During the 2011 United Nations General Assembly, President Obama issued a challenge to his fellow heads of state to break down barriers to women's political and economic empowerment. In response to this challenge, ten countries and the European Union joined the United States in September 2012 to launch the [Equal Futures Partnership \(EFP\)](#). In its first three years, the partnership has grown to 29 members. These members commit to new actions to ensure women's full participation in public life as well as to enable them to lead and benefit from inclusive economic growth. Those actions include legal, regulatory, and policy reforms and involvement of all relevant stakeholders. EFP advisory subcommittee members, including U.N. Women, the World Bank, the Thunderbird School of Global Management, and the Asia Foundation collaborate with EFP members to support implementation of country commitments through technical assistance, advisory services, and financing.

In September 2014, the Department of State launched the [Women Leaders: Promoting Peace and Security](#) exchange program, which supports the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The program explores ways in which women can be effective leaders in conflict mediation and community transformation. Over the course of two and a half weeks, participants observe how women leaders and organizations in the United States actively engage in mediating conflicts and disputes arising from political, socioeconomic, ethnic, religious, and regional differences. And through the annual Secretary of State's Award for International Women of Courage (IWOC), the Department of State has [honored 99 women from 60 countries](#) who have shown exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for women's rights and empowerment, often at great personal risk. On March 29, 2016, the department celebrated the 10-year anniversary of IWOC with Vice President Biden and Secretary Kerry.

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To encourage women's meaningful participation in peace processes and in political leadership, both the Department of State and USAID have supported capacity-building for local women's organizations, non-partisan training opportunities for potential candidates for office, diplomatic engagement to encourage women's meaningful inclusion in peace processes, and capacity within peacekeeping operations and among partner militaries. For example, together with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), the Department of State launched [Women Preventing Violent Extremism](#), a professional exchange program designed for 25 women from countries in Europe, the Near East, and South and Central Asia who are leading efforts to combat violent extremism in their communities. The project culminated in the launch of a new Women against Extremism (WaE) network to facilitate ongoing collaboration, innovation, and advocacy to scale up female-specific campaigns to counter violent extremism.

These efforts are enhanced by grant mechanisms such as the Department of State's "Global Women, Peace, and Security Initiative" and "Africa Women Peace, and Security Initiative," which have programmed more than \$23 million for 89 projects in 40 countries, and USAID's "Women, Peace, and Security Incentive Fund," which has invested \$15 million in 15 innovative activities in 13 countries since 2012. Together, these and other U.S. programs have supported the meaningful participation of over 60,000 women in peacebuilding activities ranging from community dialogues to national peace negotiations since 2012. Projects include establishing a psychosocial training and treatment unit at Ahfad University for Women (AUW) Health Clinic in Sudan; prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and establishing USAID's Peace Initiative Kenya to build capacity of women's grassroots networks for conflict and gender-based violence prevention and to elevate women's meaningful participation in local government efforts in advance of the 2013 elections.

Additionally, the U.S. government is working with the African Development Bank to support women, girls, and orphans in post-Ebola countries through the five-year Post-Ebola Recovery Social Investment Fund (PERSIF). Started in 2015, PERSIF seeks to contribute to bolster social services, restore livelihoods, and create economic opportunities, while also enhancing resilience in communities affected by the Ebola outbreak.

Collectively, the United States is working with partners in an effort to ensure a gender focus is included within the U.S. Counter-ISIL Coalition's Working Group on Stabilization efforts. In May 2015, the Coalition agreed to adopt this approach ensuring that gender issues are included in the Coalition's work. The United States is making the integration of women in countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts a priority through high-level diplomatic dialogues, foreign assistance programming, research and analysis, and public diplomacy. From supporting mothers who take actions to prevent violent radicalization, to investing in research on women's varied roles in violent extremism itself, the Department of State and USAID have expanded innovation and learning on the CVE agenda. For example, as violent extremism has evolved into crisis proportions in parts of Africa, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and South Asia, USAID has begun conducting regional research and analysis to improve understanding of the key issues impacting and influencing women and girls related to violent extremism.

The United States recognizes the importance of improving gender integration in interagency policy processes, as well as sustaining diplomatic, development, and defense coordination to ensure increased progress in the implementation of NAP objectives. In 2016, and consistent with Executive Order 13595 and the 2015 National Security Strategy's emphasis on women, peace and security principles, an update to the NAP will ensure that, in the face of emerging global challenges, the United States fulfills its ongoing commitment to promote women's participation in advancing peace, national security, economic and social development, and international cooperation.