

September 15, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the below 44 organizations, which focus on women's and girls' rights and empowerment, we welcome this opportunity to provide input to the State Department and USAID redesign process.

We believe that any redesign should be done with the primary aim of improving diplomatic engagement and international development assistance, two elements of the U.S. Government's work that must be maintained as distinct but complementary efforts. To this end, the redesign must not be used as a pretext to cut back our engagement or aid; neither should increased effectiveness and efficiency be used as an excuse for slashing resource levels. Rather, the guiding question for redesign efforts should be "How do we do more good work, more efficiently, and more sustainably?" As such, the redesign should focus on improving the quality of interventions to ensure that U.S. dollars are maximized, with the ultimate, long-term goal of supporting countries to become self-sufficient.

To achieve this, the U.S. must work with and support civil society and marginalized groups, which necessarily includes women and girls, to help create stable, inclusive, and free societies where the human rights of all are respected, protected and fulfilled. Investing in women and girls is vital to prosperous, stable, and peaceful communities and countries. For example, research has shown that the global GDP would increase 26% (or \$28 trillion) by 2025 if women were able to participate in the economy equally,¹ and that when women are included in peace processes there is a 20% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 2 years, and a 35% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years.² Those leading redesign must therefore recognize and prioritize women and girls in structural and programmatic efforts.

Recommendations:

The redesign must be predicated on the fact that more efficient provision of foreign assistance and use of the U.S. Government's diplomatic efforts is essential to help meet global development goals and is also in the best interest of the U.S. It must focus on using best practices and evidence to support efficiency and effectiveness, centering the needs and rights of the most marginalized and vulnerable communities, and promoting transparent processes. The U.S. has been a global leader in foreign assistance for decades, and that leadership has yielded significant progress toward alleviating poverty, disease and injustice, and improving the health and lives of individuals and communities.

In order to improve both diplomatic engagement and international development assistance, we hope you will consider the following recommendations:

Efficiency and effectiveness: Increased efficiencies must not come at the expense of commitment to meeting long-term development goals. The redesign process cannot be undertaken with the assumption

¹ McKinsey & Company. "The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women's Equality Can Add \$12 Trillion to Global Growth: Executive Summary." September 2015. Page ii.

² Laurel Stone (2015). Study of 156 peace agreements, controlling for other variables, *Quantitative Analysis of Women's participation in Peace Processes* in Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes, Annex II