

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICY GUIDANCE: PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY TO ACHIEVE OUR NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES

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“If half of the world’s population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal, and social marginalization, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity is in serious jeopardy.

**The United States must be an unequivocal and unwavering voice
in support of women’s rights in every country, on every continent.”**

SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, JANUARY 2009

THE SECRETARY’S VISION

The U.S. National Security Strategy states, “Countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women are accorded full and equal rights and opportunity.” Evidence shows that investments in women’s employment, health, and education are correlated with greater economic growth and more successful development outcomes. Engaging women as political and social actors can change policy choices and makes institutions more representative and better performing. And a growing body of evidence shows that women bring a range of unique experiences and contributions in decision-making on matters of peace and security that lead to improved outcomes in conflict prevention and resolution. To further our strategic imperative of advancing the status of women and girls, Secretary Clinton has issued the Department of State’s first ever Secretarial Policy Guidance on Promoting Gender Equality to Achieve our National Security and Foreign Policy Objectives, providing the Department with guidance on how to promote gender equality in service of America’s foreign policy.

THE DEPARTMENT’S GLOBAL STRATEGY

Under President Obama’s and Secretary Clinton’s leadership, the United States has brought an unprecedented focus to bear on promoting equality and advancing the status of women and girls around the world. The State Department’s embassies and bureaus are promoting gender equality and advancing the status of women and girls across the a broad range of bilateral, regional, and multilateral diplomatic activity, including all levels of diplomacy with host governments, public diplomacy, and engagement with civil society, business leaders, and the media. This does not mean simply ensuring a balanced approach to our diplomatic efforts, development assistance, and humanitarian aid. Rather, the Department is focusing across all of our work to reduce disparities and proactively promote gender equality to foster economic growth, peace, and security.

We know that no country can live up to its civic or economic potential when it disadvantages half its population. The Policy Guidance requests embassies and bureaus to work to bolster participation and leadership opportunities for women in local and national government processes, civil society, and international and multilateral forums; to unleash the potential of women to spur economic development

by addressing the structural and social impediments that disadvantage and prevent women from contributing to their fullest extent in formal and informal economies; and to draw on the full contributions of both women and men in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace building. The Department is also working to address the distinct needs of women and girls in disaster and crisis response through the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security framework.

KEY MECHANISMS

Planning and Budget Development

Department bureaus and key embassies will develop strategic plans to promote gender equality and advance the status of women and girls across geographic regions and functional bureaus, and these plans will be incorporated in the Department's strategic planning and budgeting process. Strategies will be grounded in analysis of existing inequalities and focused on action items that the Department and embassies can promote in both near-term and longer-term timeframes.

Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Policy Guidance requests that embassies and bureaus ensure that the full range of U.S. assistance programming identifies and addresses existing gender disparities, capitalizes on the unique skills and contributions of women and girls, and is accessible and responsive to women and girls. The Department, in conjunction with USAID, has also worked to improve our monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure that U.S. assistance is achieving desired outcomes, and bureaus and embassies are integrating sex-disaggregated data into reporting mechanisms. The Department has developed new definitions related to gender issues for bureaus and embassies to use in attributing the portions of their budgets toward gender equality and advancing the status of women and girls.

Management and Training

To ensure appropriate expertise and institutional support, the Policy Guidance requests the Department to strengthen management and oversight, build human capital, and emphasize training on women, girls and gender equality issues, building on reforms described in the 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR). This includes ensuring that Chiefs of Mission and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretaries lead Departmental work to implement a focus on gender equality; developing appropriate staffing mechanisms across the Department; and expanding training at our Foreign Service Institute in this area.

The Department is also implementing several other steps to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices on gender integration at embassies and in bureaus. For example, the Department will ensure that, where relevant, personnel working on women, girls, and gender equality will be part of regional and situational task forces, priority embassy and regional initiatives, country team meetings, and emergency contingency planning and response in affected bureaus and embassies. And the Department is expanding internal websites and other online platforms to promote the sharing of best practices and continued focus on these issues.