



A Pivot to Prevention: How the 118th Congress Can Prevent Violent Conflict & Build Peace Globally

Cover Photo by Careb Perez

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**Alliance for
Peacebuilding**

Foreword from AfP's Executive Director

Preventing and reducing violent conflict and building sustainable peace globally is a bipartisan issue. Congress is leading on adopting practical laws and providing critical peacebuilding and conflict prevention funding. In partnership with the peacebuilding community, Congress has advanced the field by applying lessons learned and enacting key evidence-based legislation such as the [Global Fragility Act \(GFA\)](#), [Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act](#), [Women, Peace, and Security \(WPS\) Act](#), and other prevention-oriented laws. Continued robust funding for and oversight of these laws and policies is vital to ensure their successful implementation.

However, more work is needed to ensure peacebuilding and conflict prevention become central pillars and are integrated throughout U.S. foreign diplomacy and development strategies and policies. HFAC Chairman and GFA co-sponsor Michael McCaul (R-TX) [recognized](#) the imperative for the GFA and conflict prevention programming noting, "It is critical we work to prevent violent conflict before it is too late. And the Global Fragility Act does just that. With a whole-of-government approach, the U.S. must streamline our diplomatic, development, and defense efforts to prevent violent conflict and address the root causes of fragility." Chairman McCaul affirmed, "By addressing root causes of instability and violent extremism, such as poverty and weak governance, [the GFA] will work to prevent conflicts before they occur."

In 2018, the world was already experiencing a 30-year high in violent conflict. Now, the war in Ukraine is causing a tectonic geopolitical shift not seen since 9/11 or the end of the Cold War. The world is facing severe interconnected crises, such as [environmental threats and extreme weather](#), [food insecurity](#), and the lasting impacts of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). Rising energy costs and [global inflation](#) are [dramatically raising the cost of living](#), particularly in conflict-affected and fragile states. In 2023, due to increasing conflict and violence, more than [117 million people](#) will be displaced, and an estimated [339 million people](#) will need humanitarian assistance and protection globally—the highest figure in decades. The [threat of atrocities looms large](#) in numerous countries and [democracies are backsliding around the world](#). Additionally, the war in Ukraine is diverting major resources away from ongoing crises in long-fragile contexts such as [Afghanistan](#), [Yemen](#), [Syria](#), [Myanmar](#), and [Ethiopia](#).

Although complex and extremely alarming, these trends provide a clarifying moment and opportunity for Congress to support a U.S. foreign policy that robustly supports conflict prevention and peacebuilding, security, and diplomacy. As the 118th Congress begins its work, it must elevate peacebuilding and conflict prevention and ensure the U.S. government has the ability to innovate, scale what is working, and change what is not. Now, Congress must provide much-needed resources to support partnership with conflict-affected and fragile states to address increasing violent conflict and extremism and promote security—at home and abroad.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Hume". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Elizabeth Hume

Executive Director
Alliance for Peacebuilding

About the Alliance for Peacebuilding

The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP), named the “[number one influencer and change agent](#)” among peacebuilding institutions worldwide, is an award-winning nonprofit and nonpartisan network of 180+ organizations working in 181 countries to prevent and reduce violent conflict and build sustainable peace. AfP cultivates a network to strengthen and advance the peacebuilding field, enabling peacebuilding organizations to achieve greater impact—tackling issues too large for any one organization to address alone.

We are the Alliance for:

- **Accelerating collective action** through collaboration and exchange;
- **Advocating for policies, laws, and funding** to advance the peacebuilding field;
- **Creating standards of practice** to align peacebuilding around common tools, frameworks, and approaches;
- **Developing an evidence base** to ensure better policies and practices; and
- **Shaping new narratives** to develop and amplify effective peacebuilding messaging.



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Photo by Elijah Mears

Fully Fund & Ensure Successful Implementation of Foreign Policy Priorities

Global Fragility Act

The [Global Fragility Act](#) (GFA) passed with bipartisan support as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) [2020 appropriations package](#). The GFA is a [game-changing law](#) that provides the State Department, USAID, and the Department of Defense with flexible funding and a multi-year mandate to develop and implement an overarching and integrated peacebuilding and conflict prevention foreign assistance and diplomacy strategy in at least five selected pilot countries/regions. The GFA provides the U.S. with a [radically different approach](#) to foreign assistance, away from the current slow, siloed, and non-adaptive approach to a sustained, long-term investment in preventing and reducing violent conflict globally. The GFA requires evidence-based metrics to ensure data guides policy and assistance decisions, and bi-annual reporting to Congress on its findings. The GFA also stipulates the administration must regularly consult with civil society on best practices and implementation and elevate local leadership. These concepts, while seemingly obvious, [could be revolutionary to U.S. foreign policy and assistance](#), create a fundamental shift from the current “[business as usual](#)” approach, and pave the way for more cost-effective upstream interventions that negate the need for expensive humanitarian and security responses.

At AfP’s annual conference, GFA champion Senator Chris Coons spoke about the importance of [working with global partners](#) and the urgency with which the U.S. must implement the GFA. Senator Coons said, “*I’m proud to help lead the Global Fragility Act, both in its enactment and now its implementation. It’s an effort to align U.S. diplomacy, development, and defense policy.*” He went on to say, “*We must trust those with expertise in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and only then can we regain credibility and help to lead alongside our global partners.*”

In December 2020, the Trump Administration released the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability](#) (Global Fragility Strategy)—the government strategy required by the GFA. In April 2022, the Biden Administration announced the list of [four priority countries and one region](#) for GFA implementation: Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Haiti, and Libya, and Coastal West Africa (Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Togo). The GFA provides a significant step forward in U.S. government planning and operations for addressing state fragility and violent conflict, but successful implementation requires robust funding and a 10-year commitment by Congress to the learning and innovation enshrined within the GFA.



“By addressing root causes of instability and violent extremism, such as poverty and weak governance, this law (the GFA) will work to prevent conflicts before they occur.”

***- Sen. Chris Coons
(D-DE)***

The GFA:

- Mandates the Administration to launch an interagency strategy to guide U.S. government efforts to bring down increasing levels of violence and improve its efforts to prevent future violent conflicts;
- Requires the Secretary of State and USAID Administrator, in coordination with the Secretary of Defense, to select countries or regions where the U.S. will pursue new investments and programming to implement the goals of the cross-government strategy and create 10-year-long implementations for each;
- Calls for direct consultation and engagement with local civil society actors and organizations in the priority countries/regions;
- Improves the U.S. government's ability to measure, evaluate, and assess efforts to reduce violence and prevent violent conflict; and
- Authorizes funding for implementation.

The GFA authorized funds for implementation through the Complex Crises Fund (\$30 million) and the Prevention and Stabilization Fund (\$200 million). It also called for the creation of a Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund, which allows the State Department “to leverage, receive, coordinate, and program funds provided by other donors and private sector partners to carry out the purposes” of the Global Fragility Strategy. In FY23, Congress only provided \$135 million for the Prevention and Stabilization Fund, inclusive of a discretionary \$25 million for the Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund. In FY24 and FY25, it is essential that Congress provide, at a minimum, the full \$200 million authorized in the GFA for the Prevention and Stabilization Fund, as well as a separate \$25 million appropriation to support the Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund. The 118th Congress should also keep funding levels at no less than \$60 million for the Complex Crises Fund, as provided in FY23.

Congressional support is critical to allow the GFA agencies to develop and implement programs to reduce violence, build stability in the priority countries/region, and prevent conflict in these fragile contexts. The interventions supported through and lessons learned from the GFA can

serve as the blueprint for more effective and cost-efficient foreign assistance around the world. Now that the Global Fragility Strategy and priority countries/region have been released, Congress must fully and consistently fund the initiative and provide robust oversight to ensure successful implementation of the GFA.

The 118th Congress can support successful implementation of the GFA by:

- Providing at least \$200 million for the Prevention and Stabilization Fund for FY24 and FY25;
- Creating a distinct funding stream for the Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund and appropriating at least \$25 million each for FY24 and FY25;
- Ensuring topline appropriations to the priority GFA countries/region allow for the integration of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in other sectoral programming and assistance;
- Reducing earmarked funding to the GFA countries to allow for maximum flexibility and the utilization of non-GFA-specific funds to support GFA objectives and activities in the priority countries/region;

- Signaling to the GFA implementing agencies to utilize foreign assistance in GFA countries flexibly and through a multisectoral approach that does not treat peacebuilding and conflict prevention as second-priority issues;
- Considering the provision of a clean budget for foreign assistance to each of the priority GFA countries to allow for the piloting, adaptation, and innovation central to the GFA;
- Providing [additional funding](#) to address the severe personnel shortages at U.S. embassies/missions, as well as the headquarters of the GFA implementing agencies;
- Lifting the ceilings of administrative expenses on the GFA accounts, such as the [5% limitation](#) on the Complex Crises Fund, and encouraging the implementing agencies to exercise “notwithstanding authority” to expeditiously hire staff and contractors to advance GFA implementation;
- Encouraging the implementing agencies to utilize expedited procedure packages to ease burdensome administrative requirements and bypass procurement policies in GFA countries/region;
- Holding regular hearings about GFA implementation featuring key officials from the Department of State, USAID, and DoD, as well as civil society leaders in the priority countries/regions;
- Maintaining regular communication with the implementing agencies to facilitate flexibility, learning, and innovation, as enshrined in the GFA, to allow the agencies and embassies/missions to pivot as needed when encountering challenges in programming and scale to multiply successes;
- Scaling back reporting requirements on foreign assistance expenditures in the GFA countries to allow agencies to test programs and approaches, learn and apply lessons, and scale effective initiatives in the short, medium, and long-term;
- Enacting a legislative fix to exempt peacebuilding, humanitarian, and development organizations from liability for any activities licensed by the Treasury Department in addition to the current exception authority of the Secretary of State and Attorney General in [18 U.S.C. § 2339B\(j\)](#);
- Further providing exceptions to these groups for transactions ordinarily incidental and necessary to deliver aid, such as paying taxes or utility bills, training, expert advice, and assistance to build peace and prevent violence and violent extremism;
- Legislating, at a minimum, a limited exception to the material support fix for the GFA priority countries/region—or at least in Libya, Mozambique, and Coastal West Africa. These priority contexts are experiencing heightened threats of violent extremism, which could undermine GFA implementation;
- Including provisions within the FY24 and FY25 National Defense Authorization Act to support DoD stabilization and other activities that advance the implementation and intent of the GFA;
- Providing DoD with dedicated, flexible, and multiyear funding specifically to support GFA implementation to ensure it remains an agency priority, including through the [Defense Support for Stabilization Activities](#) as outlined in Sec. 1210A of the FY20 NDAA and Sec. 1333 of the FY22 NDAA;
- Reducing requirements for DoD to undertake Sec. 1210A activities at the request of the State Department and USAID, and instead, increasing Congressional notification requirements; and
- Quickly confirming ambassadorial nominees for the GFA priority countries throughout the 10-year life cycle.

Elie Wiesel Genocide & Atrocities Prevention Act

Atrocities [destabilize countries](#), trigger mass displacement and humanitarian crises, and create grievances that violent extremists and authoritarians exploit. As of early 2023, [13 countries are experiencing atrocities](#) and several more are at-risk, while gross violations of human rights and war crimes continue to be documented in [Ukraine](#). To address increasing atrocities worldwide and improve the U.S. government's response, the [Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act](#), signed into law in January 2019,

mandated the development of a U.S. government atrocity prevention strategy and atrocity and conflict prevention training for U.S. foreign service officers working in at-risk contexts. The U.S. government released the required [U.S. Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities](#) and annual [Report to Congress](#) in July 2022, which outline the interagency approach to address the risk and commission of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other atrocities.

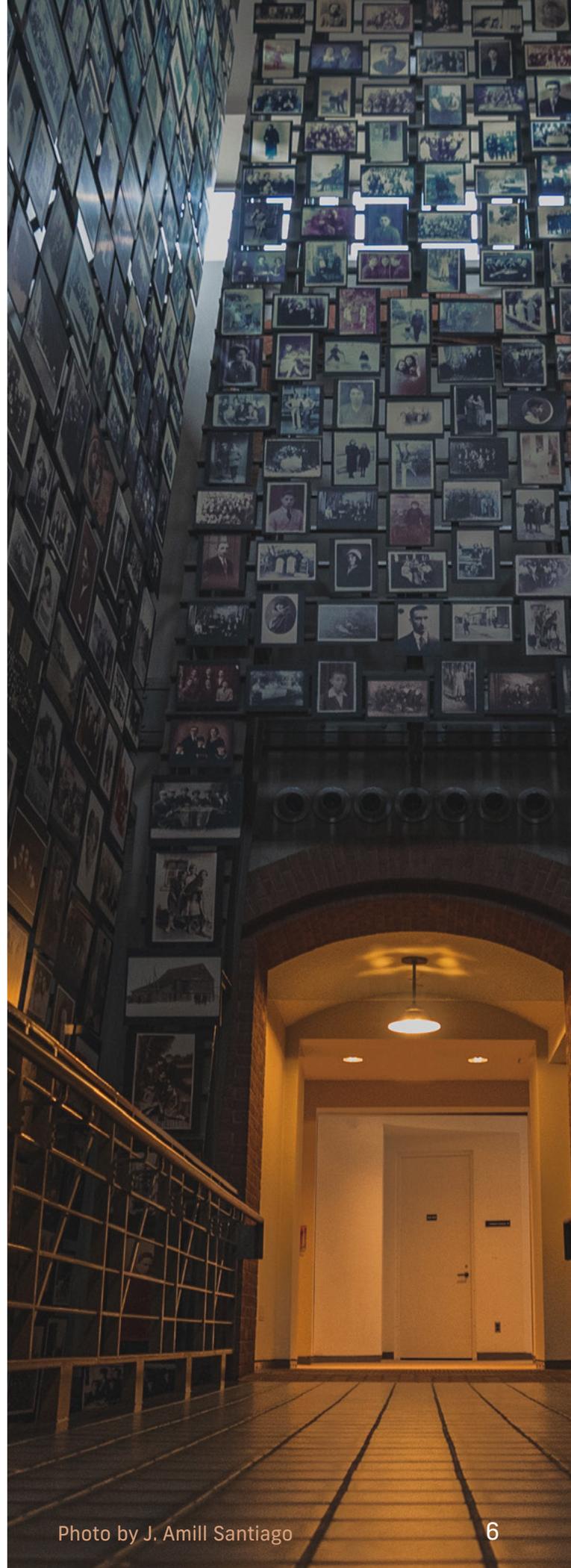
The Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act:

- Institutionalizes U.S. efforts to prioritize the prevention of mass violence;
- Ensures the U.S. government has the most constructive and cost-effective tools to address the drivers of violent conflict;
- Establishes a Mass Atrocities Task Force;
- Mandates atrocity and conflict prevention training for U.S. foreign service officers in at-risk contexts;
- Requires reporting by the President to Congress on U.S. initiatives to address atrocities and genocide to ensure these efforts become key pieces of the U.S. national security strategy;
- Establishes the Complex Crises Fund; and
- Ensures coordination among U.S. government agencies to prevent global atrocities.

The 118th Congress can support successful implementation of the Elie Wiesel Genocide & Atrocities Prevention Act by:

- Appropriating no less than \$25 million for the Atrocities Prevention Fund in FY24 and FY25, rather than the \$6.5 million allocated in FY23;
- Exercising oversight¹ of the Administration to ensure it promptly identifies countries and regions at-risk of atrocities, assesses ongoing atrocities, and takes steps to mitigate and respond to them;
- Holding regular briefings to discuss atrocity situations and explore the Administration's ongoing response to them;
- Coordinating the Act's implementation with the GFA, the Women, Peace, and Security Act, and other complementary violence prevention and reduction efforts to eliminate bureaucratic silos and use all available tools that support inclusive foreign assistance programming; and
- Providing funds to international criminal and civil tribunals to promote accountability for the commission of international crimes and atrocities.

1. In sections 5(a)(1)(D) and (E) of the Act, Congress required the Administration to provide a "global assessment of ongoing atrocities, including the findings of such assessment and, where relevant, the efficacy of any steps taken by the [Atrocities Prevention Board] or relevant Federal agency to respond to such atrocities" and to report on "countries and regions at-risk of atrocities, including a description of specific risk factors, at-risk groups, and likely scenarios in which atrocities would occur.



Women, Peace, & Security Act

In 2017, President Trump signed the bipartisan [Women, Peace, and Security \(WPS\) Act](#) into law, which seeks to further the aims articulated in the landmark [UN Security Resolution 1325](#) (2000) and [follow-on resolutions](#) that created the framework for the WPS Agenda to ensure women’s meaningful leadership in peace, security, and political processes. The WPS Act—the first of its kind in the world—aims to facilitate women’s active participation in efforts to prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflict and to establish and maintain peace, as well as to elevate their contributions to post-conflict and disaster recovery and reconstruction in the U.S. and around the world.

The Trump Administration [took more than two-and-a-half-years to draft the WPS Strategy](#), releasing it in [June 2019](#). Unfortunately, the Strategy jettisoned many of the lessons garnered over nearly two decades and the key goals, objectives, and initiatives outlined in the national action plan (NAP) adopted in [2011](#) and updated in [2016](#). In June 2020, the Administration released the four agencies’ [implementation plans](#). The Biden Administration plans to release an updated Strategy in 2023, as required by the WPS Act.

To implement the WPS Act, Strategy, and plans, Congress should build on the momentum of appropriating \$150 million in FY23 and create a distinct fund for the implementation of WPS activities—the Women, Peace, and Security Fund—to demonstrate the inextricable nexus between women’s involvement in peacebuilding and national and international security. We recommend no less than \$190.5 million be made available annually to support the implementation of the WPS Act and Strategy. A distinct fund is critical to ensure that the implementing agencies use the funds specifically to support the intent of the WPS Act, rather than “[double counting](#)” other foreign assistance related to women and gender that is tangentially related to WPS expenditures. This funding will expand and improve the coor-

dination of U.S. government efforts to empower women as equal partners in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, transitional processes, and relief and reconstruction efforts in countries affected by violent conflict or political transition.

The WPS Act:

- Requires that the President submit a national strategy on WPS to Congress within one year of enactment;
- Requires the creation of plans to implement the WPS Strategy by the State Department, USAID, DoD, and the Department of Homeland Security to integrate gender perspectives throughout diplomatic, development, and security-related initiatives in conflict-affected contexts;
- Mandates training for relevant government personnel in the U.S. State Department, USAID, and DoD on WPS issues;
- Encourages consultation with local stakeholders regarding women’s participation in peace processes; and
- Requires Congressional reporting within two years of the release of the WPS Strategy by the Secretary of State, USAID Administrator, and Secretary of Defense, and annually thereafter.



Photo by UN Women/Ryan Brown

The 118th Congress can support successful implementation of the WPS Act by:

- Providing no less than \$190.5 million for the advancement of the WPS agenda for programming that supports the participation of women-led and women-focused civil society organizations in peace processes, as well as fosters inclusive processes that facilitate the robust participation of women and other marginalized groups;
- Creating a distinct WPS fund to resource programs, supplies, training, and other measures, materials, and initiatives that encourage women’s participation in governance, peacebuilding, transition, relief, and recovery processes within partner governments and their civil society sector, as well as multilateral institutions and security cooperatives; Consulting regularly with the implementing agencies on timelines for revisions to and implementation of the WPS Strategy and the agency implementation plans;
- Ensuring the updated WPS Strategy clearly articulates the ways in which it [links to and advances the National Security Strategy](#) and other national security and legislatively-mandated strategies;
- Expanding oversight mechanisms of U.S. government assistance to complement existing metrics to ensure that funds are utilized for their intended purposes—and not “double-counted” with other foreign assistance related to women or gender—to advance women’s participation, leadership, access, and protection pursuant to the WPS Act and Strategy;
- Supporting research programs that support “[peaceful masculinities](#)” to address the role of men and boys in conflict, extremism, and other forms of violence that undermine state stability;

- Ensuring the Strategy, plans, and programming include quantitative and qualitative indicators and outcomes, require gender analyses, and mandate the collection of sex- and diverse identity-disaggregated data that ensures a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to address national and international security, improve existing and future programming, and account for the differences men and women experience in conflict-affected and fragile states;
- Committing to regular consultations on the implementation of the WPS agenda with civil society, particularly the [U.S. Civil Society Working Group on WPS](#);
- Requiring that all future nominees for Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues have substantial experience, as endorsed by the [global gender equality community](#), advancing the WPS agenda and championing the equality, rights, and empowerment of women and girls;
- Expanding the membership of the [WPS Congressional Caucus](#); and
- Holding regular briefings and hearings regarding the Administration’s implementation of the WPS Act and Strategy.



“By building more equitable and gender-inclusive societies that put women in the rooms where decisions are being made, we’re creating a more peaceful and secure world.”

**- Rep. Lois Frankel
(D-FL-21)
Co-Chair, WPS Caucus**

“Empowering women is essential to our national security. The United States must remain steadfast as a global leader in efforts to elevate women around the world.”

**- Rep. Mike Waltz
(R-FL-06)
Co-Chair, WPS Caucus**



Photo by Caleb Fisher

Prioritize Peacebuilding & Conflict Prevention in Foreign Assistance Appropriations

Robustly Invest in Foreign Assistance

Given the complexity of compounding global crises, Congress must prioritize the investment of U.S. tax dollars to address the drivers of conflict and build sustainable peace. In 2021, violence had a devastating economic impact, costing [\\$16.5 trillion](#)—or 10.9% of the global gross domestic product. Support for upstream prevention and peacebuilding through foreign assistance and development saves lives and money. [Research strongly suggests](#) diplomatic, development, and peacebuilding initiatives—particularly those led by and engaging with local stakeholders—are [cost effective](#) at preventing the outbreak or recurrence of conflict, negate the need for expensive humanitarian and securitized interventions, and promote U.S. national security interests. Congress should increase resources to the key accounts, as well as the State Department and USAID, to prioritize peacebuilding and conflict prevention in U.S. foreign assistance.

The 118th Congress can support U.S. foreign policy and assistance by:

- Significantly increasing funding for the State Department and USAID to meet [21st-century challenges](#). This increase should include a major new investment in peacebuilding and conflict prevention through priority accounts such as the Complex Crises Fund (no less than \$75 million); the People-to-People Reconciliation Fund (no less than \$40 million); People-to-People Partnership for Peace Fund (no less than \$50 million); U.S. Institute of Peace (no less than \$60 million); the Atrocities Prevention Fund (no less than \$25 million); the Democracy Fund at USAID (no less than \$160 million); Human Rights and Democracy Fund at State (no less than \$360 million); Office of Transition Initiatives at USAID (no less than \$112 million); the Prevention and Stabilization Fund (\$200 million); and the Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund (\$25 million distinct from the Prevention and Stabilization Fund);
- Ensuring key bureaus, offices, and units across the State Department and USAID have sufficient funding to promote peacebuilding and prevent violent conflict and extremism. In particular, Congress should robustly fund the State Department’s Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations; Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the Negotiation Support Unit, and Office of Global Women’s Issues, as well as USAID’s Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization and Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation;
- Providing more flexible and multi-year funds to funnel resources directly to local civil society organizations, particularly those that are led by and serve women, youth, faith actors, and other marginalized communities;
- Appropriating sufficient funding to address the global and domestic threat of climate change and its adverse impacts on global economic growth, health, food security, mass migration, and violent conflict and extremism;
- Realigning DoD’s budget to focus on implementing key initiatives, such as the GFA and WPS Act, security partnerships, and cooperation;
- Ensuring DoD specifically addresses the implementation of the GFA, WPS Act, and Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act and their related strategies and includes gender analyses in all national security strategies, policies, and documents;
- Permanently removing the arbitrary statutory 25% cap on U.S. contributions to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations, fulsomely paying off arrears, ensuring consistent contributions to meet international obligations, making significant voluntary contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund, UN Peacebuilding Support Office, and other UN agencies and programs and address drivers of conflict and promote peace; and
- Exercising robust oversight over military and foreign assistance funding to ensure transparency and avoid waste, fraud, and abuse.

Provide Significant Funding to Key Peacebuilding & Conflict Prevention Accounts

Congress should significantly increase funding for the State Department and USAID, and ensure robust resourcing for key peacebuilding and conflict prevention accounts. Within the federal budget, the following accounts support critical U.S. government peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities and should be fully funded in FY24, FY25, and beyond:

Atrocities Prevention Fund (APF): This fund enables the State Department to prevent atrocities, in furtherance of the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act, including by implementing recommendations of the Atrocity Prevention Task Force. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than \$25 million annually.

Complex Crises Fund (CCF): The CCF is used by the State Department and USAID to support GFA implementation and prevent and respond to emerging or unforeseen crises. CCF is a tool for the U.S. government to direct resources to countries or regions that demonstrate a high or escalating risk of conflict, atrocities, instability, or unanticipated opportunities for progress in fragile democracies. CCF provides global, flexible funding. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than \$75 million annually.

Democracy Fund, USAID: This fund supports the work of USAID's Center of Excellence for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance, which exercises broad oversight over the global democracy, human rights, and governance programs implemented by the agency. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than \$160 million annually.

Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF), State Department: This account functions as a "venture capital fund," enabling the State Department to respond quickly and flexibly to changing needs and opportunities to advance democracy and promote human rights. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than \$250 million annually.

People-to-People Partnership for Peace Fund: Created through the 2020 [Nita M. Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act](#) (MEPPA), this fund provides resources to help build the foundation for peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians, encourage economic development, and promote a sustainable two-state solution. MEPPA authorizes up to \$250 million over five years through FY25. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than \$50 million annually.

Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund: This account allows the State Department to leverage, receive, and coordinate program funds provided by other donors, governments, and private sector partners to carry out the Global Fragility Strategy. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than \$25 million annually, separate and distinct from the Prevention and Stabilization Fund.

Prevention and Stabilization Fund (PSF): This account allows the State Department and USAID to support the stabilization of conflict-affected areas and counter global fragility, including through implementation of the GFA and Global Fragility Strategy. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than \$200 million annually.

People-to-People Reconciliation Fund: The People-to-People Reconciliation Fund supports “people-to-people” conflict mitigation and reconciliation programs, managed by USAID’s Center for Conflict and Violence Prevention (CVP). These programs bring together diverse individuals of different ethnic, religious, class, or political backgrounds from areas of civil conflict for meaningful engagement. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than \$40 million annually.

Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI): This fund supports USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). The Office addresses opportunities and challenges in countries in crisis and assists in their transitions to promote stability, peace, good governance, and democracy. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than \$112 million annually.

United States Institute of Peace: The U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) is an independent, nonpartisan institution charged with increasing U.S. capacity to prevent, mitigate, and resolve international conflict without violence. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than \$60 million annually.

To appropriately address conflict dynamics, prevent future conflicts, promote peacebuilding, and protect national security, Congress must increase funding for U.S. foreign policy priorities and assistance. The below chart includes recent years’ enacted totals for each account referenced above, as well as minimum FY24 and FY25 requests to ensure adequate funding for critical programs.

Account	FY20 Enacted	FY21 Enacted	FY22 Enacted	FY23 Enacted	FY24 Request
APF	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$6,500,000	\$25,000,000
CCF	\$30,000,000	\$30,000,000	\$60,000,000	\$60,000,000	\$75,000,000
Democracy Fund (USAID)	\$95,250,000	\$100,250,000	\$125,200,000	\$133,250,000	\$160,000,000
HRDF (State)	\$178,450,000	\$190,450,000	\$215,200,000	\$222,450,000	\$250,000,000
People-to-People Partnership for Peace Fund	-	\$50,000,000	\$50,000,000	\$50,000,000	\$50,000,000
Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund (GFF)	-	\$25,000,000 (from the PSF)	\$25,000,000 (from the PSF)	\$25,000,000 (from the PSF)	\$25,000,000 (distinct from the PSF)
PSF	\$200,000,000	\$100,000,000 (of which \$25 million for the GFF)	\$125,000,000 (of which \$25 million for the GFF)	\$135,000,000 (of which \$25 million for the GFF)	\$200,000,000
Reconciliation Fund	\$30,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$40,000,000
OTI	\$92,043,000	\$92,043,000	\$80,000,000	\$80,000,000	\$112,000,000
USIP	\$45,000,000	\$45,000,000	\$54,000,000	\$55,000,000	\$60,000,000

Support the United Nations & Other Multilateral Institutions

Multilateralism has long been a [pillar of U.S. foreign policy](#). The world is interconnected; when violent conflict happens anywhere, it can spread and disrupt peace everywhere. Therefore, support for peacebuilding in other parts of the world through collective action benefits the U.S., its values, and its national security. Through strengthening multilateral institutions, Congress can cultivate shared responsibility for peace across the international community. Congress should continue to reaffirm America's relationship with the international community through robust appropriations to support the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral institutions, including paying on time and in full the assessed contributions² to key UN accounts, such as the Regular Budget and peacekeeping accounts, as well as voluntary contributions to key peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and other agencies and funds, such as to support the [UN Peacebuilding Support Office](#), [UN Women](#), the [Green Climate Fund](#), and the [Clean Technology Fund](#).

In September 2021, the UN Secretary-General released a seminal report outlining [Our Common Agenda](#), which calls for an “inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism to better respond to humanity’s most pressing challenges,” including on international peace and security, over the next 25 years. Now, the UN is developing a “[New Agenda for Peace](#)” in advance of a [Ministerial Forum](#) in September 2023 and the [Summit of the Future](#) in September 2024, with the goals of reducing strategic risks, strengthening responses to violence, elevating the role of women and girls, and investing in prevention and peacebuilding.

One tool the UN has to prevent and reduce violent conflict is the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Established in 2005, the PBF is severely underfunded. The [Secretary-General](#) called on every Member State to make a voluntary contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund, managed by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), to reflect the recognition that peacebuilding and sustaining peace are core mandates of the UN and are inseparable from sustainable development

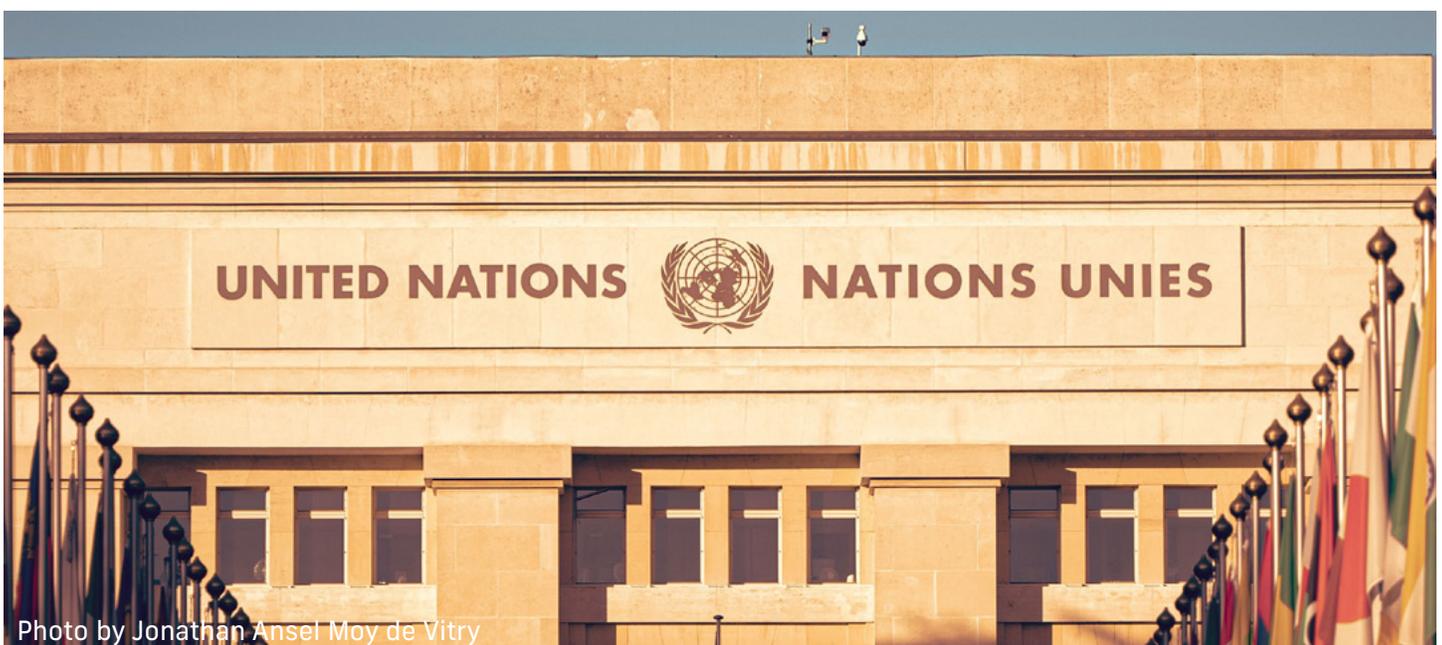


Photo by Jonathan Ansel Moy de Vitry

2. [Assessed contributions](#) are payments that all UN Member States are required to make to finance key operations and programs of the UN.

and recovery, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the U.S. has consistently failed to adequately support the Peacebuilding Fund, with only \$300,000 contributed between 2017 and 2020 and \$1 million appropriated for FY22 and FY23 each. The U.S. must enhance its contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund, given that its support will help to leverage potentially hundreds of millions from other UN Member States to support critical peacebuilding activities. Stepping up U.S. support for the PBF can build further momentum from the fund's [recent successes](#) and help it rapidly [allocate much needed funding and resources](#) to the most fragile and conflict-affected countries and regions.

Another crucial component of U.S. support to the UN is through funding for peacekeeping missions. As of January 2023, there are [12 UN peacekeeping operations](#) globally, consisting of 80,000 military, police, and civilian personnel. The UN requires assessed payments for members, with higher rates for each of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The [current assessment](#) for the U.S. is 26.94%, but Congress capped the U.S. contribution at 25% in FY95, resulting in annual arrears that were typically addressed through limited cap relief or the application of excess funds from previous peacekeeping missions. However, Congress refused to raise the cap since FY17, resulting in nearly \$1 billion in arrears. The FY23 appropriations bill provided \$1.48 billion for peacekeeping, a nearly \$17 million decrease from FY22 and \$845 million less than President Biden's budget request, which included full funding above the 25% cap and \$730 million to pay down arrears. Given the disruptive role of Russia, China, and other actors at the UN and on the global stage more broadly, U.S. commitment to multilateral action to prevent conflict and build peace is more critical than ever.

The 118th Congress should support U.S. engagement in multilateral institutions and global cooperative efforts by:

- Making a significant voluntary contribution to the PBF of at least \$3 million³ to properly resource critical peacebuilding programs, set an example for other Member States, as well as other UN agencies and funds critical to global peace, security, health, equality, and empowerment;
- Supporting the development, funding, and U.S. contributions to support the forthcoming New Agenda for Sustaining Peace and other peacebuilding initiatives;
- Permanently lifting the arbitrary statutory 25% cap on U.S. contributions to UN peacekeeping operations and providing significant and consistent funding for UN Peacekeeping;
- Continuing to provide substantial funding to pay down arrears, which amount to [over \\$900 million](#), in FY24 and FY25 appropriations;
- Paying the full assessment for the UN Regular Budget each year on time and in full;
- Providing substantial funding to UN Women, including in the area of peacebuilding and conflict prevention and in furtherance of the WPS Agenda;
- Continuing to fund the UN Refugee and Works Agency (UNRWA), which supports the health and welfare of Palestinian refugees in the Occupied Territories and neighboring countries, including Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria; and
- Providing increased contributions to international financial institutions and accounts, such as the Green Climate Fund and Clean Technology Fund to address the interconnected crises of and stemming from climactic threats.

3. From 2016 to 2020 the U.S. only contributed \$300,000 compared to Germany, which contributed more than 17 million dollars. The U.S. provided \$1 million to the UNPBSO in [FY22](#) and [FY23](#).



Photo by Andy He

Ensure a Multi-Sectoral & Integrated Approach to Foreign Assistance

Integrate Locally-Led Peacebuilding Across Foreign Assistance

[Centering local leadership and ownership of foreign assistance and programming](#) is vital to more effective international development and peacebuilding. [Locally-led peacebuilding](#), which shifts decision-making power and program responsibility to local actors, is critical to understanding the needs and values of communities impacted by conflict, violence, and fragility, and recognizes that local solutions and participatory, inclusive processes are fundamental to preventing and reducing violent conflict and building sustainable peace. Locally-led peacebuilding requires the people and communities most affected by conflict to have the principal authority and influence over the strategy, implementation, evaluation, and resource allocation in peacebuilding interventions.

USAID uses various means to ensure local engagement through design, procurement, management, and assistance measurements. In November 2021, USAID Administrator Power, delivered a [speech](#) that [outlined a pledge](#) to dramatically increase the amount of USAID assistance to local organizations, calling for 25% of USAID funding to go to local partners within the next four years and 50% by the end of the decade. While acknowledging the challenges associated with launching a new agenda, Administrator Power [admitted](#) that results are lacking, with only about 6% of funding going to local organizations globally and the vast amount of USAID funds to address the situation in Ukraine being funneled through UN agencies. However, USAID has been seeking to enhance localization efforts for years, including through [USAID Forward](#) (2010), [Local Works](#) (2015), the [Journey to Self-Reliance](#) (2017), the [Acquisition and Assistance Strategy](#) (2018), the [New Partnerships Initiative](#) (2019), and the [Local Capacity Strengthening Policy](#) (2022). However, the localization commitments therein have yet to be fully realized. Congress recognized the critical nature of local

engagement and locally-driven solutions in the [Global Fragility Act](#) (GFA), the [Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act](#), and the [Women, Peace, and Security \(WPS\) Act](#). Local participation is a key element of the GFA in particular. Section 504(a)(4) of the GFA states the goals of the law must be addressed through participatory, locally-led programs and the empowerment of marginalized groups, such as youth, women, and religious and ethnic minorities. Additionally, Section 504(a)(5) required the [Global Fragility Strategy](#) to describe approaches that ensure appropriate national leadership and participatory engagement by civil society and local partners in the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs. Three of the four goals of the Strategy emphasize the role and engagement of local actors in GFA implementation and address opportunities to strengthen the operating climate for civil society in conflict-affected contexts over the 10 years in [Haiti, Libya, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, and Coastal West Africa](#).

The [locally-led agenda](#) has been gaining traction in recent years. While some progress has been made, significant cultural, operational, and policy challenges remain and require a tectonic shift in donor culture and operations to overcome existing barriers. One of the most significant challenges to advance locally-led development and peacebuilding centers around donor procurement mechanisms and a lack of direct and flexible funding for local organizations. Procurement processes are burdensome for local organizations to navigate due to complex application processes that require a strong capacity in proposal development, monitoring and evaluation, and financial management. Many donors are risk-averse, and there is skepticism that local actors have the requisite ability to be accountable and implement programming effectively. Through direct, flexible, and longer-term funding to locally led civil society organizations, Congress

can more effectively address and prevent violent conflict and build sustainable peace globally, while also ensuring the successful implementation of key prevention-oriented laws and policies, such as the GFA.

The 118th Congress should support locally-led peacebuilding by:

- Passing legislation to address procurement and other barriers within USAID that undermine the expansion of local partners and grantees and local leadership and ownership in peacebuilding and development;
- Appropriating multi-year, flexible, and risk-tolerant funds for direct awards to local civil society organizations working to prevent violent conflict and extremism and build sustainable peace, particularly those led by and serving women, youth, faith actors, and other marginalized communities, and providing flexibility in their use;
- Ensuring that assistance and funding for locally-led peacebuilding and development organizations increases their organizational, technical, advocacy, and leadership capacities, including capacity to plan longer-term programming timelines and budgeting;
- Reserving specific amounts or percentages of funding in foreign assistance accounts to be delivered to locally-led peacebuilding and development organizations;
- Providing additional funding to support [USAID's Local Works program](#), which strives to improve understanding, particularly for mission and operational staff, about how local organizations adapt and creatively advance objectives in challenging contexts where USAID may not operate, as well as the [New Partnerships Initiative](#) and other efforts to mainstream localization in U.S. foreign assistance;

- Encouraging further investment in local solutions and organizations by requiring international organizations receiving U.S. foreign assistance programming to provide sub-awards to local civil society organizations or evidence that local partners meaningfully participated in the program proposal and design processes;
- Requiring implementing agencies to detail the ways in which they funded and supported locally-led peacebuilding in the regular reports required by GFA, WPS Act, and Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act;
- Calling on USAID and the other implementing agencies of the GFA to pilot procurement reforms and enhance flexibility and risk tolerance to direct local resources to local civil society organizations in the four GFA priority countries and one region; and
- Providing robust oversight through hearings and other requests of the Administration to track efforts to implement locally-led commitments, as well as related to the implementation of USAID's [Local Capacity Strengthening Policy](#).

“If we truly want to make aid inclusive, local voices need to be at the center of everything we do.

We’ve got to tap into the knowledge of local communities, and their lived-experiences. Otherwise, we risk reinforcing the systemic inequities that are already in place.”

- USAID Administrator Samantha Power





Integrate Gender Considerations Across Foreign Assistance

Integrating the consideration of the unique needs, roles, challenges, and opportunities facing women, girls, and LGBTQI+ persons across U.S. foreign assistance is critical to [increasing security](#) at home and overseas and [bolstering the effectiveness](#) of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding programming.

Women and girls are [disproportionately impacted by fragility and conflict](#), including through increased health risks, deprivation of social and economic resources, lack of access to education, and sexual and gender-based violence. Women and girls comprised [97%](#) of [conflict-related sexual violence](#) (CRSV) victims/survivors in 2021, although for every reported case of CRSV, [another 10-to-20 cases go unreported](#).⁴ As of early 2023, [more than half of the world's displaced population are women and girls](#). Conflict and fragility also fuel child marriage—the 10 countries with the highest rates of child marriage are [either fragile or extremely fragile](#), and girls living in conflict zones are [20% more likely](#) to enter child marriage than those in stable countries. Furthermore, gender inequality exposes LGBTQI+ and gender-diverse individuals to disproportionate harm, including increased [violence during conflict](#), [social stigma](#), [human rights violations](#), [social persecution and the need to seek asylum](#), and [lack of protection](#).

Women are not a monolith, nor are they only innocent victims of violent conflict or extremism. While women are often targets of [gender persecution](#), CRSV, [human trafficking](#), and [forced slavery](#), they can also be [combatants](#), [perpetrators](#), [informants](#), and [recruiters](#). However, women and girls are also key agents of change necessary to build sustainable peace. Peace agreements that include women

4. According to the UN, conflict-related sexual violence “refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls, or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict.”

are [20% more likely](#) to last at least two years and [35% more likely](#) to last 15 years. Despite being acutely impacted by conflict, women are often excluded from peace processes, making up just [13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators, and 6% of signatories](#) in major peace processes between 1992 and 2019.

Congress recognized the multifaceted roles and experiences of women and girls in conflict-affected and fragile states by passing key laws such as the WPS Act, the GFA, and Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act. The [FY23 spending bill](#) provided \$150 million in for implementation of the WPS Act, \$200 million for the Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund, \$250 million to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and \$50 million in mandatory funding for the Madeleine K. Albright Women's Leadership Program to increase women's political participation and leadership opportunities across sectors at the local, provincial, and national levels.

The U.S. has also rolled out key policies and strategies to integrate gender considerations across foreign assistance. These frameworks include the 2019 [U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security](#) (mandated by the 2017 WPS Act), the 2021 [National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality](#), the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally 2022](#), [USAID's 2022 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy](#), and the November 2022 [Presidential Memorandum on Promoting Accountability for CRSV](#).

Despite these advances, considerations of women, girls, and gender overall remain siloed in U.S. foreign assistance. However, mainstreaming gender across U.S. foreign assistance can prevent conflict, address the impacts of violence, and promote inclusive peace and political processes. By robustly integrating and resourcing [gender analysis](#) and gender equality across foreign assistance, the U.S. can ensure humanitarian,

development, and peacebuilding programming advances more inclusive, cost-effective, and sustainable peace and security globally.

The 118th Congress can integrate gender considerations across U.S. foreign assistance by:

- Robustly funding key gender equity and equality initiatives, including but not limited to implementation of the WPS Act, the prevention and response to gender-based violence, the promotion of women's rights in conflict-affected and fragile countries; and the Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund;
- Exercising Congressional oversight to ensure successful implementation of key U.S. gender strategies, such as the U.S. Strategy on WPS, the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally, and USAID's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy;
- Exercising Congressional oversight to ensure implementation of all laws, strategies, and policies related to international peace and security comprehensively take into account gender considerations, including but not limited to the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, the State Department and USAID Joint Strategic Plan, the GFA Strategy, and the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act,
- Ensuring all national security, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention foreign assistance integrates gender analyses and perspectives that take into account the disproportionate impacts of conflict and fragility on women, girls, the LGBTQI+ community,, and gender diverse persons and empowers them as key participants in building sustainable peace;
- Providing direct funding for local women-led civil society peacebuilding organizations and resources that bolster the meaningful

inclusion and leadership of women, girls, and LGBTQI+ and gender-diverse individuals across sectors in conflict-affected and fragile states;

- Funding the collection and analysis of sex- and gender-disaggregated data in U.S.-funded programming, as well as data disaggregated by other identity markers such as religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, race, ethnicity, and class;
- Calling on the Executive Branch to ensure women’s meaningful inclusion and leadership of diplomacy, defense, and development efforts within the U.S. government, as well as resourcing robust staffing of gender advisors and experts across U.S. government agencies related to foreign assistance and security;
- Mandating and resourcing training on gender analysis and integration in the State Department, USAID, DoD, and other relevant agencies;
- Requiring all future nominees for Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues have substantial experience, as endorsed by the [global gender equality community](#), advancing the WPS agenda and championing the equality, rights, and empowerment of women and girls; and
- Insisting that all diplomatic, development, defense, and ambassadorial nominees address questions related to WPS and the equality, rights, and empowerment of women and girls to ensure the integration of gender considerations across all foreign facing agencies and posts.



Photo by UN Women/Emad Karim

Integrate Peacebuilding & Conflict Prevention in Addressing Global Food Insecurity

Increasing levels of violent conflict, including in Ukraine, as well as the compounding impacts of climate change, economic shocks, and other crises are leading to [unprecedented levels of food insecurity](#) worldwide. Supply chain disruptions, inflation, and dramatic spikes in the cost of fertilizer and grain are [undermining](#) farmers' ability to grow and distribute crops. As of [early 2023](#), 828 million people are going hungry, while 349 million people across 79 countries are grappling with acute food insecurity and nearly one million are facing famine-like conditions.

Conflict has become one of the largest [causes and effects](#) of food insecurity globally. However, too often, the distribution of aid to address crises does not take into account local contexts; ethnic, religious, racial, political, economic and social tensions; existing conflict dynamics; or the potential impacts food aid could have in and among communities. The 117th Congress sought to mitigate the growing food crisis through a number of initiatives, including a \$5 billion emergency supplemental in May 2022 to address the food crisis in and caused by the conflict in Ukraine, as well as the December 2022 passage of the [Global Food Security Reauthorization Act](#), which authorized \$3.9 billion per year for global food security assistance from FY24 to FY28, as well as extended the [Feed the Future Initiative](#) through 2028. In addition, Congress provided over \$1.75 billion for Food for Peace, a \$10 million contribution to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals on eliminating poverty and hunger, and contributed to other critical food security accounts in the [FY23 appropriations bill](#).

To date, the Biden Administration pledged nearly [\\$10 billion](#) to address global food insecurity. In May 2022, USAID released its [Global Food Strategy](#). While USAID and its implementing partners have been working diligently to

distribute the direly needed resources provided by Congress, the delivery of aid has not been done in a conflict-sensitive manner and could lead to increased tensions, violence, and violent conflict. The U.S. government should make more strategic investments in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and resilience to food insecurity to reduce the need for massive humanitarian aid packages, as every \$1 [invested in resilience](#) reduces need for humanitarian expenditures by \$3.

The 118th Congress should support the integration of peacebuilding and conflict prevention in addressing global food insecurity by:

- Ensuring that funding meets the current needs to address famine-like conditions, acute food insecurity, and hunger globally, but requiring that all assistance be delivered in a conflict-sensitive and integrated way to avoid creating new or exacerbating existing conflict dynamics;
- Undertaking close oversight and requiring regular reporting on the Global Food Strategy to ensure its implementation does not create or exacerbate conflict dynamics;
- Consistently and robustly funding the Food for Peace initiative, Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, and other key accounts to promote food security and peace;
- Holding hearings with USAID that include the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, as well as key officials from the Bureau on Conflict and Violence Prevention, to discuss how food security assistance is being delivered in a manner that does not exacerbate or create new conflict-dynamics or instigate violence;



- Funding food security assistance and programming that applies a [systems thinking](#) and [short-term, medium-term, and long-term](#) approach to food security, including developing agricultural infrastructure and technology, public health, risks from climate change, governance, and marginalization;
- Investing in programs that address the drivers of conflict and build sustainable peace to mitigate one of the key causes of food insecurity and promote resilience-building to future shocks;
- Promoting [local leadership and ownership](#) of aid distribution and programming that addresses the drivers and impacts of food insecurity; and
- Resourcing programming that promotes [long-term recovery](#), such as the skills and management techniques to ensure sustainable growth and access to food.

Integrate Peacebuilding & Conflict Prevention in the Global COVID-19 Response

The ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic is more than just a health crisis. COVID-19 fueled “[stabilization in reverse](#)” and highlighted the [need](#) for peacebuilding and conflict prevention programs to be integrated into pandemic responses. As of 2023, COVID-19 continues to [impact conflict dynamics](#) by creating a diminished trust in governments; an increase in economic hardship, supply chain disruptions, and resource scarcity; and disruption of social cohesion within and between communities. Although the original crisis has abated, sustained funding for a COVID global response is critical to protect Americans from new and lethal variants and address its compounding effects on global peace, security, and democracy. However, the 117th Congress declined to meet the Biden Administration’s [FY23 budget request](#) for additional funds for the global COVID response in the [FY23 appropriations bill](#).

The international community must increase and sustain flexible foreign assistance to achieve the objectives of the Biden Administration’s [COVID response plan](#). Beyond the health implications, the COVID-19 pandemic poses far reaching and long-term dangers through the disruption of effective governance, economic collapse, and significant threats to human and food security, including the “[shadow pandemic](#)” of gender-based violence. The March 2021 [American Rescue Plan Act](#) provided [\\$11 billion](#) in emergency funding for the U.S. global COVID-19 response. In FY22, Congress provided an additional [\\$5 billion](#) in emergency funding. Congress also allocated more than [\\$2 billion](#) in non-emergency funding for the global COVID-19 response. However, while the Administration’s COVID strategy included conflict prevention and peacebuilding as “second order” issues, no funding was allocated for this issue. Until the health crisis

fully abates, sustained and flexible funding must address both the immediate health implications and compounding conflict dynamics.

The [National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness](#) and the subsequent [COVID-19 Global Response and Recovery Framework](#) focus primarily on health and humanitarian assistance and continue to miss a critical opportunity to support locally led peacebuilding organizations. During the initial crisis, [international organizations](#) evacuated many expatriate staff, halted site visits, and [had to rely significantly on local partners](#) due to travel restrictions. Local organizations quickly identified community [needs](#), ensured [conflict-sensitive aid distribution](#), shifted to [online engagement](#), and applied [lessons](#) from previous health crises, such as the [Ebola](#) outbreak.

Furthermore, many countries cannot afford vaccines for their populations and [rely](#) on donor countries. After the U.S. failed to provide substantial vaccine supplies to countries in need in the early months of the pandemic, countries like [Russia and China](#) stepped in, but with [strings attached](#). In 2021, the U.S. took a massive stride forward with its vaccine diplomacy in new purchases and donations, [pledging](#) to distribute 1.1 billion vaccines globally, with [nearly 665 million](#) distributed as of early 2023. Vaccine distribution and the overall sustained pandemic response should not only address strategic imperatives, such as blunting Russia’s and China’s geopolitical maneuvering, but also incorporate the same peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and localized approaches for the COVID-19 response—because no one is safe until everyone is safe.

The 118th Congress should continue to address the destabilizing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by:

- Sustaining foreign assistance and integrating conflict prevention and reduction support to address both the health implications and the long-term threats stemming from the disruption of effective governance, economic contractions, and food and human insecurity;
- Exercising oversight of the Biden Administration's [COVID-19 Global Response and Recovery Framework](#) to ensure its implementation takes a multipronged and coordinated approach that equally prioritizes protecting U.S. interests, bolstering health systems, addressing complex humanitarian crises, and mitigating and ameliorating the pandemic's impacts, such as increased economic instability and conflict dynamics;
- Prioritizing funding for local civil society organizations, as well as women, youth, faith leaders, and other marginalized communities, to ensure the effectiveness of programming and aid distribution;
- Undertaking sustained vaccine diplomacy and providing an ample vaccine supply to developing countries with using a conflict-sensitive approach and through consultation with and support from local stakeholders;
- Increasing and ensuring topline appropriations in foreign assistance ensure integration of conflict prevention in pandemic response and other sectoral programming and assistance through vehicles such as the Prevention and Stabilization Fund, the Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund, the Complex Crises Fund, the Atrocities Prevention Fund, the Conflict Stabilization Operations Account, USAID's Democracy Fund, and the State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund; and
- Reducing earmarked funding to specific countries and sectors to allow for maximum flexibility and the utilization of foreign assistance funds to support peacebuilding and conflict prevention integration in the COVID-19 response.



Photo by Yoav Aziz



Photo by Ilya Pavlov

Integrate Digital Peacebuilding Across Foreign Assistance Amid Mass Technological Disruption

Global threats to peace and security are also emerging in the digital and cyber sphere. Eurasia Group's Top Risks for 2023 included technological "[Weapons of Mass Disruption](#)," such as [generative Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#) and the [severe global disinformation crisis](#). Social media is [undermining social cohesion](#), feeding ideological divides and extremism, and weakening buy-in to collective action on global crises, such as [climate change](#) and [COVID-19](#). Autocrats, violent extremists, and other bad actors are also utilizing technology and mis/disinformation to [cement power](#), facilitate [democratic backsliding](#), [harm civilians](#), and [disrupt the economy](#). Generative AI deep fake videos are [exacerbating geopolitical tensions](#) between countries by promoting distrust between governments and the public and foment violence.

The conflict in Ukraine, in particular, exemplifies how bad actors are weaponizing technology for nefarious ends. Throughout 2022, Ukraine was on the receiving end of [more than 2,000 cyberattacks](#). Many of these attacks had [destructive impacts on critical sectors, infrastructure, and platforms](#), such as Ukrainian government websites, energy and telecommunication service providers, financial institutions, and media outlets. As of January 2023, the firm NewsGuard identified [332 websites](#) spreading Russian disinformation about the war. In response, the Ukrainian government is gathering evidence of these cyberattacks as [evidence of war crimes](#).

While technology is being weaponized by bad actors, it is also emerging as a new space through which peacebuilding actors can prevent conflict and build sustainable peace. [Digital peacebuilding](#)

seeks to analyze and respond to online conflict dynamics, as well as technological and cyber threats that create and/or exacerbate traditional and physical conflict dynamics. To address these challenges, peacebuilding organizations and programs strive to harness digital tools to promote peace and social cohesion and counter these harmful trends through initiatives such as online dialogue, digital media literacy, and cybersecurity capacity building.

The U.S. Congress must support foreign assistance that robustly responds to these technological and cyber threats to peace and security and stem further instability caused by the deployment of technology as a weapon of war and disruption. By doing so, Congress can address conflict dynamics, prevent democratic backsliding, build social cohesion, and prevent closing of civic space.

The 118th Congress should promote digital peacebuilding and address mass technological disruption by:

- Providing substantial resources for policies, assistance, and programming aimed at media and digital literacy, evidence-based counter-messaging strategies, and proactive identification of potential mis/disinformation threats that benefits democracies, citizens, and civil society in conflict-affected and fragile countries;
- Significantly resourcing flexible funding mechanisms, such as USAID's under-resourced [Digital Ecosystem Fund](#), that systematically integrate digital and cyber considerations—including but not limited to digital finance, digital inclusion, and AI support—across U.S. foreign assistance and development efforts;
- Ensuring that U.S. foreign assistance applies a digital lens across its portfolio so that all arms of U.S. diplomacy and development understand how digital elements impact peacebuilding outcomes;
- Funding assistance to build up cybersecurity capacity and resilience—including through digital hygiene training and data protection—for democratic governments, civil society, and aid organizations facing cyberattacks, particularly within conflict-affected and fragile contexts;
- Resourcing the production of [guides](#) and [disinformation tools and resources](#) with media contacts and others to ensure responsible reporting and prevent the unintended spread of mis/disinformation especially with local organizations doing real-time fact-checking and debunking claims by bad actors;
- Supporting efforts to rebuff Russian mis/disinformation and cyberattacks, such as Russia's [bogus claims of neo-Nazi infiltration of Ukraine's government](#) and [disruption of Ukrainian electricity](#); resourcing evidence collection initiatives of Russian cyberattacks to support accountability and prosecution for war crimes against civilians; and providing Congressional oversight of intelligence reports about Russia's actions in Ukraine and other nefarious actors promoting mis/disinformation;
- Hosting joint and cross-cutting hearings on the implications of mis/disinformation and cyber threats within the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, as well as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; and
- Exercising Congressional oversight of social media platforms—through investigations, hearings, and legislation—so they consistently and urgently address the mis/disinformation crisis.

Integrate Mental Health, Psychosocial Support, Brain Science, & Psychology into Peacebuilding & Conflict Prevention Assistance

People's experiences and mental health greatly impacts their behavior, attitudes, and relation to conflict and peacebuilding. Those who experience conflict and crisis are at heightened risk to long-term mental health disorders stemming from prolonged trauma. [Twenty-two percent](#) of those who have experienced conflict in the last 10 years will have depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia. Approximately [1.5 million children](#) in Ukraine may end up with some sort of mental health disorder due to the conflict. One-third to one-half of adult refugees [experience PTSD](#), and up to 70% of refugee children will experience separation anxiety. Trauma caused by violence and conflict can also beget further fragility; up to 50% of people who join violent extremist groups [have experienced some form of childhood maltreatment](#). Additionally, mental health can contribute to people's willingness to commit violence, exacerbate [in versus out-group](#) dynamics, and create an uptick of [rationalization for harming others](#).

Peacebuilding programs and research focus heavily on the grievances driving conflict, such as corruption, human rights abuses, elite capture of power, ethnic marginalization, and inequality, without systematically considering mental health aspects. The peacebuilding field must better understand the connection between brain science, mental health, psychology, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding, and apply this knowledge to its programs and policies to create more holistic and effective outcomes. However, few policymakers and peacebuilding experts have the requisite knowledge and experience in fields related to brain science and psychology

to integrate these considerations within U.S. foreign assistance, policies, and programs. While there is growing evidence-based research, more work and research is needed to do so effectively.

There have been some steps forward on the mainstreaming of these fields into U.S. foreign assistance. In 2021, Congress [introduced the Mental Health in International Development and Humanitarian Settings \(MINDS\) Act](#), which seeks to integrate mental health programming across U.S. foreign assistance, create a USAID Coordinator for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and establish a MHPSS working group within the U.S. government. However, the Act was ultimately not passed by the 117th Congress. Congress must act on the growing evidence around mental health, psychosocial support, brain science, and psychology regarding violent conflict and robustly integrate these fields into U.S. foreign assistance.

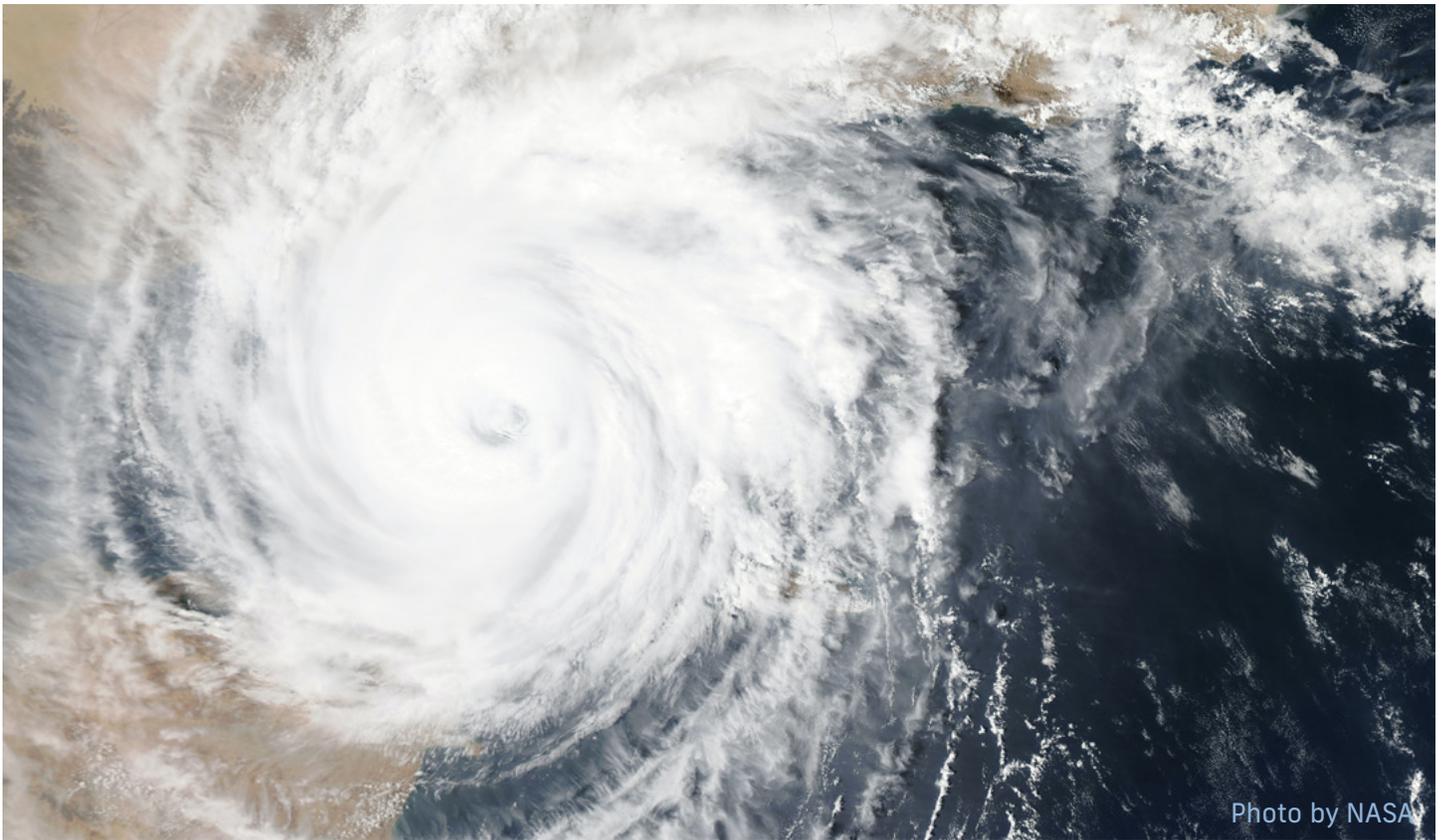
The 118th Congress can integrate mental health, psychosocial support, brain science, and psychology into U.S. peacebuilding and conflict prevention assistance by:

- Reintroducing and passing the MINDS Act to ensure that mental health considerations and psychosocial support are properly integrated across U.S. foreign assistance programming, especially in service of women, youth, and other marginalized populations in conflict-affected and fragile states who are most at risk;



Photo by Milad Fakurian

- Resourcing the integration of brain science and psychology expertise within peacebuilding and conflict prevention assistance to better understand the psychological drivers and impacts of violence and violent conflict and develop evidence-based interventions to address those drivers;
- Providing funding for trauma-informed MHPSS and healing programming for victims of violent conflict and fragility, especially for those disproportionately impacted by trauma caused by violent conflict such as women, youth, and other marginalized communities; and
- Resourcing additional research on the connections between brain science, psychology, and conflict prevention to build upon the growing evidence base surrounding mental processes as drivers of violent conflict.



Integrate Environmental/Climate Considerations Across Foreign Assistance for More Effective Peacebuilding & Conflict Prevention

Congress should provide substantial funding to address the global threats from the impacts of increasingly extreme weather and climate-driven instability. The increasing crisis poses severe risks to global peace and security and is [adversely affecting](#) global economic, health, food security, and migration patterns, exacerbating conflict and fragility, and [disproportionately impacting women and girls](#). A seminal [G7 report](#) found climate change, through interaction with “other pressures and contextual factors,” can create seven “compound risks” of conflict: local resource competition; livelihood security and migration; extreme weather events and disasters; volatile food prices and provision; transboundary water management; sea-level rise and coastal degradation; and unintended effects of climate policies. Additionally, [conflict remained the](#)

[largest driver of food insecurity in the world in 2022](#)—with 60% of the world’s hungry living in conflict-affected areas—which extreme weather will only continue to exacerbate.

Congress should support the prioritizing of climate action across U.S. foreign assistance, as articulated in President Biden’s January 2021 [Executive Order](#) on climate change as a foreign policy and national security priority, which called on federal agencies to create “strategies and implementation plans for integrating climate considerations into their international work.” In October 2021, DoD [released a report](#) outlining how “increasing temperatures; changing precipitation patterns; and more frequent, intense, and unpredictable extreme weather conditions” are threat multipliers to U.S. national

security. The [2022 National Defense Strategy](#) further notes that “climate change may tax governance capacity in some countries while heightening tensions between others, risking new armed conflicts and increasing demands for stabilization activities.” It subsequently calls for integration of climate considerations across its resilience and adaptability efforts, such as including climate change in threat assessments. USAID released its [Climate Strategy](#) in 2022, which included several of AfP’s key recommendations recognizing the compounding impact of climate change and conflict and the need to integrate peacebuilding and conflict prevention in climate policies and programming. Similarly, the [Prologue to the GFA-mandated U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, released in 2022](#), included new language calling for climate change mitigation and strengthening environmental security in GFA implementation.

In recent years, the U.S. has made significant commitments to invest in climate action. At the UN in 2021, President Biden pledged [\\$11.4 billion](#) annually by 2024 to assist developing states address climate challenges. The Biden Administration also announced [PREPARE](#)—a whole-of-government initiative aiming to provide \$3 billion in finance for [climate adaptation](#) to respond to assist more than half a billion people in developing countries to manage the impacts of droughts, floods, erosion, and extreme weather events through locally-led development by 2030. However, the FY23 spending bill [allocated only \\$1 billion in international climate assistance](#).

Congress must ensure the U.S. serves as a leader to mitigate and prevent the worst impacts of the global climate crisis, especially those that undermine international and U.S. national security. By allocating sufficient resources to climate action—and ensuring that funding for humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts integrate climate considerations—Congress can increase the efficiency and return on investment of U.S. foreign assistance.

Specifically, Congress can prevent and mitigate instability caused and exacerbated by climate change, as well as address the compounding relationship between conflict and climate change.

The 118th Congress should integrate conflict prevention and peacebuilding in climate action by:

- [Integrating climate considerations into foreign assistance](#) across sectors and programs to ensure climate funding is conflict- and gender-sensitive, and conflict prevention and peacebuilding funding is climate-sensitive;
- Robustly investing in climate action to address and prevent violent conflict and promote peace by resourcing the commitments in [PREPARE](#) and making long-term and flexible appropriations to address climate impacts;
- Providing robust oversight of U.S. government climate strategies and programs to ensure they address both climate and conflict considerations to prevent and mitigate violent conflict;
- Ensuring climate policies and programs intentionally integrate and mainstream leadership and inclusion of marginalized groups, as well as develop context-appropriate programming at the national, subnational, and local level; and
- Requiring reporting on U.S. government efforts towards climate mitigation and adaptation to address climate change’s compounding effects on conflict-affected and fragile states, including on strategies related to food security; building the resilience of communities vulnerable to severe droughts, floods, and waterborne diseases; strengthening water infrastructure and drought-tolerant agriculture; and monitoring and assessing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation.



Photo by Levi Meir Clancy

Address Barriers to Peace Created by Outdated Counterterrorism & Countering Violent Extremism Laws

Congress should rebalance and rightsize the U.S. government's approach to counterterrorism (CT) and countering violent extremism (CVE). Since 9/11, U.S. [CT and CVE laws, policies, and programs have failed](#) to effectively prevent and reduce violent extremism, fueled conflict and atrocities, propped up violent, corrupt, and authoritarian governments in the name of security allyship, while undermining democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. These approaches have also had a devastating civilian toll. To date, the "War on Terrorism" has cost over [929,000](#) lives and cost [over \\$8 trillion](#), but the proliferation of violent armed groups and state fragility continues to grow unabated.

An over-militarized approach to CT/CVE persists, as laws have not kept pace with evolving challenges, analysis, research, and programming innovations. After 9/11, Congress adopted broad legal restrictions on providing "[material support](#)" to foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs).⁵ While well-intentioned, these laws have undermined the U.S. government's ability to [prevent and reduce violent conflict and extremism globally and build sustainable peace](#) by limiting the effectiveness of peacebuilding and conflict resolution programs designed to deter extremism and provide humanitarian assistance in FTO-controlled territory. Namely, the [Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act](#) and [International Emergency Economic Powers Act](#) ban material support for FTOs. Unfortunately, material support includes a wide range of activities and interactions—from sharing tea at a meeting to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs that assist former members of FTOs.

While these laws were not designed to limit programs working to end the conflict, reduce violence, and build sustainable peace, the effect has been chilling, despite the [robust safeguards](#) peacebuilding and humanitarian organizations utilize to prevent the diversion of funds to FTOs. However, the potential criminal and civil consequences often prove too risky for NGOs, resulting in their decision to withhold the delivery of vital services and programs, ultimately [depriving vulnerable populations](#) of critical aid and programs needed to build sustainable peace and security. Even in sanctioned contexts where NGOs are willing to deliver services and programs, banks are often highly risk averse and refuse to transfer funds to the NGOs, such as in [Syria](#) and [Iraq](#).

In December 2022, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) took a [historic step](#) to address the draconian impacts of sanctions on NGOs by [issuing and amending a series of general licenses](#). The "carveouts" in these general licenses will begin to untie the U.S. government's hands and allow U.S. foreign assistance to address the drivers of violent conflict and extremism through unimpeded delivery of disaster relief, health services, and programs that support democracy and peacebuilding without the threat of criminal and civil liability. While the issuance of these general licenses is a positive step, they are far from a long-term guarantee that removes legal risk to NGOs. To ensure these protections continue from administration to administration, Congress must [urgently pass a legislative fix](#) that codifies and expands these vital protections for NGOs so that U.S. assistance can effectively prevent and reduce conflict and violent extremism.

5. Once an organization/person is designated as an FTO, it is extremely rare for the designation to be removed, even if a peace agreement is signed, as is the case in Columbia. Additionally, Congress provided the Department of State and the Department of Justice the ability to waive the prohibition on material support for U.S. government programming, but these waivers are extremely rare.

The 118th Congress should improve the U.S. CT and CVE approach by:

- [Amending](#) the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to create legislative exceptions for peacebuilding and humanitarian organizations to provide the critical assistance necessary to mitigate, resolve, and prevent conflict and address the conditions that fuel violent extremist recruitment and activity;
- Creating a [limited material support fix](#) to ensure successful implementation of the GFA by providing exceptions to the prohibition for NGOs operating in Libya, Mozambique, and Coastal West Africa. These priority contexts are experiencing heightened threats of violent extremism, which could undermine GFA implementation. GFA programming and assistance will be critical to curbing the threat of al-Shabaab in Mozambique, particularly in Cabo Delgado and the north, the various militant groups in and around Coastal West Africa, and the Islamic State and Al Qaeda affiliates in Libya. Peacebuilding and prevention programming in these contexts can address the systemic drivers of extremism, foster trust in government and local institutions, accelerate economic development, and eradicate corruption;
- Undertaking an extensive review and evaluation of previous and existing CT and CVE laws, policies, and programming to glean lessons learned and best practices in light of evolving threats, in the U.S. and abroad, in service of creating a revamped approach to CT and CVE. This approach should deprioritize security interventions in favor of a multisectoral framework that focuses on evidence-based policy and programming, centers strengthened human rights and governance, and undertakes prevention, intervention, disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration;
- Providing increased foreign assistance funding for programs that address the causes that drive violence, violent conflict, and extremism, including, but not limited to, political marginalization, ineffective governance, instability, and weak rule of law and social cohesion;
- Incorporating public, mental, and behavioral health, trauma-informed, and resiliency assistance into CT and CVE efforts to effectively engage violence-affected communities and undertake disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration programming for extremists; and
- Providing regular oversight of government CT and CVE efforts and holding frequent hearings and briefings to ensure they most effectively address drivers of violent extremism and conflict.



“By addressing root causes of instability and violent extremism, such as poverty and weak governance, [the GFA] will work to prevent conflicts before they occur.”

***- Rep. Michael McCaul
(R-TX-10)
Chairman of the House
Foreign Affairs Committee***



Photo by Farid Ershad

Ensure Robust Oversight of Foreign Assistance and Diplomacy in Priority Conflict-Affected & Fragile States/Regions

Ukraine

The war in Ukraine is causing a tectonic geopolitical shift not seen since 9/11 or the end of the Cold War. Economic sanctions by the U.S., Europe, and other allies are the toughest ever imposed and will continue to have significant long-term economic, social, and political effects. The conflict is slowing global economic growth due to [“upward pressure on prices, above all for food and energy”](#) and has pushed 349 million people around the world into [imminent danger from acute food insecurity](#). Russia continues to perpetrate [extensive cyberattacks](#) in Ukraine and globally, [including against organizations providing aid in the region](#), and persists with [threats](#) to use nuclear and chemical weapons.

The war is also causing widespread destruction to civilians and infrastructure, leading to [nearly 19,000 civilian casualties](#) and [mass displacement](#), and requiring [\\$630 billion in reconstruction](#). As of February 2023, approximately [17.6 million people](#) in Ukraine require humanitarian assistance, particularly [women](#) and [youth](#), who are being [disproportionately impacted](#) by the violent conflict. Reports by the Office of the [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) and the [Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine](#) identified significant war crimes and human rights violations, including the killing of civilians, hostage taking, execution, torture, and conflict-related sexual violence. To date, the Ukrainian Prosecutor found evidence of over [71,000 war crimes](#).

As of January 2023, the U.S. has appropriated more than [\\$113 billion](#) in assistance for the war in Ukraine, including [\\$62.3 billion](#) for military assistance and [\\$46.1 billion](#) in foreign assistance, with the remaining \$5 billion distributed among other U.S. government agencies. Of the foreign assistance, Congress provided \$26.9 billion in economic assistance, \$11.2 billion in humanitarian assistance, and \$5.7 billion in security assistance. While humanitarian and



economic aid are critical, Congress must [invest in peacebuilding and prevention approaches](#), particularly through locally-led and owned peacebuilding, to create local buy-in and ensure the requisite capacity at all levels of Ukrainian society to address fracturing social cohesion, accountability for atrocities, reconstruction, and recovery during and after the war.

The 118th Congress should address conflict and fragility in Ukraine by:

- Providing life-saving multisectoral assistance to people affected by the war to protect conflict-affected people and civilian infrastructure; supporting the provision of essential, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed programs and services designed to respond to the expressed needs of impacted communities; and contributing to sustained recovery, reconstruction, and resilience efforts in Ukraine;
- Allocating assistance that supports peacebuilding; nonviolent civil resisters; human rights monitoring; atrocities prevention, documentation, evidence-protection, and prosecution; combatting mis/disinformation; enhancing cybersecurity capacity and resilience; democracy and governance; as well as psychosocial, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed programming;

- Providing rapid and flexible funding for local organizations, activists, movements, [formal and informal networks](#), and volunteers working in Ukraine and the region, especially organizations that are led by and work on issues affecting women and youth, who are [disproportionately impacted](#) by violent conflict. Congress must support programming that elevates the decision-making role of women, as [gender analysis of the conflict](#) shows that it is exacerbating gender inequalities and women remain marginalized from leadership roles;
- Providing assistance to countries grappling with Ukrainian and Russian refugees and funding initiatives of dialogue, peacebuilding, and social cohesion to address tensions that could result in increased violence (including gender-based violence) and political, social, and economic instability;
- Ensuring assistance to address the war in Ukraine does not divert resources from critical conflict prevention and peacebuilding accounts, nor decrease attention on long-standing conflicts and other fragile contexts; and
- Providing technical and financial support to the Ukrainian legal system, including training investigators, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, law enforcement, and civil society to effectively collect and preserve evidence, coordinate, and conduct proceedings for war crimes and other international crimes in line with international law and best practices.



Afghanistan



On August 15, 2021, the Taliban took over control of Afghanistan. Since then, international forces completely withdrew and the tremendous gains in rights, freedom, and agency that Afghan women and girls, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQI+ persons claimed since 2001 have largely disappeared. Despite assurances to the contrary, the Taliban [banned Afghan women and girls from obtaining an education beyond primary school](#), placed [severe restrictions on their movement](#), and are preventing them from working in a series of edicts that amount to [gender persecution](#). No country, including the U.S., has diplomatically recognized the Taliban, given their strong links to terrorism and use of terror tactics against their own population, which has squeezed out the legitimate voices of the majority of the Afghan population.

As of January 2023, [28.3 million Afghans](#)—over two-thirds of the population—require humanitarian assistance, at least 70% of households are unable to meet their basic needs, and nearly 100% of female-led households are not getting enough to eat. In late December 2022, the Taliban [banned women from working in NGOs](#), further exacerbating the dire humanitarian situation for families with female breadwinners.

Female humanitarian workers comprise up to one-third of the humanitarian workforce and have been on the front lines providing lifesaving assistance for decades. Female NGO staff also deliver aid to meet the specific needs of Afghan women and girls in a culturally appropriate manner, including services for gender-based violence and healthcare. Widespread restrictions on women's employment have already contributed to the decimation of the Afghan economy and an [estimated \\$1 billion](#) loss in the gross domestic product.

In the wake of the military withdrawal, the U.S. received over [80,000](#) at-risk Afghan evacuees, 90% of whom entered the country on humanitarian parole, which allows them to live and work in the country, but provides no legal pathway to residency or citizenship. As of January 2023, the U.S. has accepted



Photo by Wanman Uthmaniyyah

[nearly 19,000 Afghans on Special Immigrant Visas](#) (SIVs), a program for former translators, interpreters, and other Afghans who worked with the U.S. government, but only about [7-to-10%](#) were women, disproportionately disadvantaging Afghan women at-risk to Taliban atrocities. Although Congress extended the SIV program through 2024 in the FY23 appropriations bill, it failed to advance the [Afghan Adjustment Act](#), which would have created a viable pathway to legal residency for Afghans entering the U.S. via humanitarian parole.

The 118th Congress should address conflict and fragility in Afghanistan by:

- Providing constructive engagement with key officials regarding the U.S. approach in Afghanistan, particularly around the U.S. response to Taliban restrictions on the rights of women and girls, ethnic minorities, and members of the LGBTQI+ community;
- Calling on the U.S. government to refrain from diplomatically recognizing the Taliban authorities due to their links to international terrorism and use of terror tactics against their own population;
- Urgently addressing the humanitarian crisis, including calling for the revocation of restrictions on female humanitarian personnel, funding and supporting humanitarian assistance programs to meet the needs of the most vulnerable Afghans, such as female-headed households, and advancing economic measures that would enable Afghans to access cash to acquire life-saving supplies such as food, shelter, and health services;
- Directing flexible funding to Afghan women's rights organizations and Afghan women leaders to continue critical functions, such as operating shelters for GBV survivors and at-risk women and girls, distributing humanitarian relief, and supporting women human rights defenders;
- Establishing direct and flexible grants to Afghan women's organizations to enable them to continue operations and avoid harassment and closures under Taliban regulations;
- Restoring peacebuilding and development programs previously funded by the U.S. government that were paused or shut down entirely, including programs supporting Afghan women's and girls' rights and organizations focused on delivering assistance to Afghan women and girls;
- Providing support to women's funds and trusted multilateral mechanisms, in consultation with diverse Afghan women leaders and women's rights organizations, to support the distribution of aid coupled with other services, such as advocacy, awareness-raising, engagement in activism, peacebuilding, economic recovery, and development planning;
- Urging the Administration to ensure Afghan women are involved in all diplomatic engagements, at a minimum, through robust consultation in advance and feedback loops after, in line with the aim of the WPS Act, Strategy, and implementation plans;
- Reintroducing, passing, and providing adequate resources to implement the [Afghan Adjustment Act](#);
- Calling on the Administration to expand access to Priority 1 and 2 referrals to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and collect and provide robust and sex-disaggregated data on Afghan applicants to various paths of entry; and
- Appropriating increased funds to allow the Department of State and Department of Homeland Security to address the backlog of Afghan applicants seeking entry to the U.S. and providing gender-sensitive support and protection for Afghan women and girls undergoing resettlement.

Burma/Myanmar

Since the [military coup in 2021](#) and subsequent [brutal crackdowns](#) on civilian protestors, Myanmar has continued to suffer an egregious [humanitarian and human rights crisis](#). In response, the West largely [cut foreign aid](#) and levied sanctions against [junta officials](#), [businesses](#), [arms dealers](#), [state-owned enterprises](#), and [energy companies](#). To date, approximately [14.4 million people](#) in the country require humanitarian assistance, and nearly [3,000](#) have been killed. In the country's northwest, the ethnic armed organization (EAO), the Chin National Front (CNF), and the shadow National Unity Government's (NUG) People's Defense Force (PDF) are [waging intense battles against the junta](#). In the southeast, EAOs the Karen National Union (KNU) and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) are closely coordinating with the PDF to fight against the junta, [resulting in vicious airstrikes by the junta and mass displacement](#). As of December 2022, almost [1.4 million people are internally displaced](#), and more than 70,000 are refugees due to the coup. There has been increasing evidence of crimes against humanity following the coup, including "[murder, torture, deportation and forcible transfer, persecution, imprisonment, and targeting of civilians](#)," and the country is high on the [Administration's](#) and [civil society's](#) watchlists for future atrocities. The military junta consists of the main perpetrators of the August 2017 genocide against the Rohingya, which was [recognized as such by the U.S. in March 2022](#). Around [one million Rohingya refugees](#) continue to live in dire conditions in the largest refugee settlement in the world in Bangladesh.

To address these crises, Congress passed the [BURMA Act](#), which was included in the FY23 NDAA. The law sanctions members of the junta; codifies U.S. support of the efforts of the [shadow civilian government of Myanmar](#), which includes the NUG, the National Unity Consultative Council, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw,



the Burmese Civil Disobedience Movement, and other entities to oppose the Burmese military; requires a report within six months on the impact of sanctions on Burma's energy sector; and authorizes funding to support civil society in Myanmar. Since August 2017, the U.S. has provided [nearly \\$1.9 billion to assist vulnerable populations in the region, with more than \\$170 million announced in September 2022](#).

The 118th Congress should address conflict and fragility in Myanmar by:

- Immediately implementing, resourcing, and providing oversight of the BURMA Act;
- Scaling up humanitarian support of and protection for civilians from Myanmar, including aid delivered across borders. The U.S. must ensure that this assistance—including a scaling up of resettlement support for displaced people and refugees—is conflict-sensitive, gender-sensitive, and does not exacerbate [inequalities experienced by religious and ethnic minorities in Myanmar](#), including the Rohingya, other Muslims, Tamils, Gurkhas, Chinese, Bengalis, Punjabis, and Telugus;
- Providing sustained support to the shadow civilian government of Myanmar, as well as organizations working for democracy and civic empowerment in and outside of Myanmar, especially those led and serving women, youth, and other marginalized communities;



Photo by Saw Wunna

- Supporting accountability mechanisms for genocide against the Rohingya and other atrocities, [following the U.S. formal determination in March 2022](#) that violence committed against the Rohingya minority by Myanmar's military amounts to genocide and crimes against humanity;
- Funding additional atrocities prevention programming, including [supporting documentation of evidence to collect and analyze war crimes and violations of international law](#);
- Holding regular hearings and briefings to ensure the effective implementation of the BURMA Act, as well as the advancement of the U.S. Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities in Myanmar;
- Using hearings, briefings, and other public fora to make clear statements denouncing the upcoming elections, given that the junta [has not created the conditions for credible elections](#); and
- Requesting the Administration include an update on the situation in Myanmar in its annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act for 2023 and 2024.

China

In January 2021, the Trump Administration [issued a determination](#) that “since at least March 2017, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), under the direction and control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), has committed crimes against humanity against the predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other members of ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang.” These include systematic cultural genocide through [internment camps](#), [forced labor](#), and [brainwashing](#). In March 2021, the Biden Administration shared similar findings through the [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#), noting examples of crimes against humanity, such as “imprisonment, torture, enforced sterilization, and persecution against Uyghurs and members of other religious and ethnic minority groups.” The [2022 Congressional Report on the implementation of the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act](#) noted “crimes against humanity and genocide” in Xinjiang.

In recent years, Congress passed two pieces of legislation in response to atrocities in Xinjiang: the [Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020](#), which places sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for human rights abuses in Xinjiang, and the [Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act](#), which prohibits imports made by forced labor in Xinjiang. In August 2022, Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) [introduced](#) the [Sanctioning Supporters of Slave Labor Act](#), which would expand the current scope of sanctions against those committing human rights abuses in Xinjiang to “impose secondary sanctions on those that do business with and provide support for foreign entities who have been sanctioned for their Uyghur human rights abuse.” However, the bill was ultimately not passed in the 117th Congress.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has also sparked [concerns that the Chinese government may feel](#)



[emboldened to invade Taiwan](#). In [August 2022](#), China test-fired 11 ballistic missiles over or around Taiwan, carried out a large-scale naval exercise around Taiwan’s ports, and flew fighter jets across the Taiwan Strait. In the following two months, Chinese fighter jets crossed the boundary between China and Taiwan [more than 600 times](#). These aggressive demonstrations continue, with [47 Chinese planes crossing the maritime boundary](#) into Taiwan over the course of 24-hours in late December 2022.

Additionally, China’s stringent [zero-COVID policy](#) drew social unrest and [rare widespread demonstrations](#) due to the policy’s [significant interruptions to daily life](#) and [slowing of economic growth](#). Some of these demonstrations included [calls for Chinese President Xi Jinping to step down](#). The Chinese government [reversed its zero-COVID policy](#) in December 2022 in response to the protests, and the country faced a [soaring COVID outbreak](#) among a population lacking significant immunity or vaccination protection. While COVID-19 cases declined since the policy reversal, the actual death toll during December 2022 and January 2023, which [could be close to 1 million people](#), is difficult to ascertain due to the Chinese government’s data obfuscation.

The 118th Congress should address conflict and fragility in China by:

- Supporting accountability mechanisms for human rights abuses and atrocities committed in Xinjiang, including through U.S. support of the United Nations Human Rights

Council and a [Special Rapporteur or fact-finding mission to investigate human rights violations in the region](#);

- Supporting protection measures for vulnerable populations in Xinjiang by accepting refugees from the region and building the capacity of neighboring states, such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, to take in Uyghur and other persecuted minority refugees;
 - Providing funding to support atrocity prevention in Xinjiang, including reporting, capacity building, and advocacy efforts around preventing genocide and forced labor, as recommended in the [2022 Congressional report on the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act](#);
 - Reintroducing and passing the Sanctioning Supporters of Slave Labor Act to expand accountability for those profiting from the slave labor of Uyghurs and other persecuted minorities in China;
 - Ensuring robust funding, effective implementation, and close oversight of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act of 2021
- and the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, including through regular briefings and hearings that include civil society organizations and atrocities prevention experts;
 - Providing resources to locally-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly those that are women- and youth-led and serving, and other organizations and movements working toward democratic reform, government transparency, civic empowerment, civil society strengthening, and democracy building throughout China, including in Taiwan; and
 - Incentivizing multilateral organizations currently excluding Taiwan to meaningfully include it—as well as further supporting multilateral organizations that do include Taiwan, such as the World Trade Organization, the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum, and the Asian Development Bank—to facilitate Taiwan’s meaningful inclusion in the international community to present a united front opposing conflict between China and Taiwan.



Photo by Simon Sun

Ethiopia

In [November 2020](#), a brutal civil war erupted in Ethiopia between the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), with [violence soon spreading](#) beyond the Tigray region into Amhara, Afar, and Oromo. By mid-2021, a government-imposed blockade of Tigray led to a [man-made famine](#), with between [425 and 1,021 people](#) dying of starvation each day. Investigations have unearthed [evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity](#), including starvation of civilians, rape, sexual violence, sexual slavery, torture, and murder, mainly, although not exclusively, perpetrated by Ethiopian and [Eritrean](#) forces. While a [communications blackout continues](#) to hamper data collection, an estimated [600,000 civilians](#) have died and [2.5 million](#) more have been displaced during the conflict. Additionally, the conflict has compounded [Ethiopia's struggles driven by climate change](#), as it heads into its [sixth consecutive failed rainy season](#), leading to crisis-level food insecurity. As of the beginning of 2023, [28.6 million people](#) in Ethiopia require humanitarian assistance. The conflict also has [implications](#) for regional security, violent extremism, democracy backsliding, resource management, and refugee flows, as well as lost trust in the Abeyi government by international donors.

In November 2022, the Ethiopian government and the TPLF reached a [cessation of hostilities agreement](#) and [roadmap agreement](#) for future negotiations. In January 2023, the first [heavy weapons transfers](#) from the Tigray Defense Forces to the federal government began. Despite the agreement, however, [peace remains precarious](#) in Ethiopia, and humanitarian and peacebuilding needs must be urgently addressed.



The 118th Congress should address conflict and fragility in Ethiopia by:

- Ensuring U.S. assistance to Ethiopia robustly funds programming that addresses the drivers of conflict and violence, including governance to strengthen political reforms, climate resilience, poverty alleviation, and reconciliation;
- Requiring that U.S. assistance provided to Ethiopia be delivered in a conflict-sensitive manner so that humanitarian aid, reconstruction support, and peacebuilding and development programming do not inadvertently exacerbate existing conflict dynamics and tense political and ethnic relations;
- Providing substantial resources to locally-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly those that are women- and youth-led and -serving, as well for social cohesion and peacebuilding programming that addresses tensions caused by [mass internal displacement within Ethiopia and the greater region](#);
- Supporting accountability mechanisms for atrocities committed during the conflict, as well as funding additional atrocities prevention programming such as documentation of evidence for analysis of potential war crimes;
- Requesting the Administration to include an update on the situation in Ethiopia in its annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act for 2023 and 2024;

- Supporting mechanisms for multilateral peace facilitation through the African Union. Allocating assistance to Ethiopia that robustly integrates climate action and conflict prevention, as well as provides psychosocial support and trauma healing for victims of conflict-related sexual violence;
- Urging the meaningful inclusion of civil society and marginalized communities, such as women, youth, and religious and ethnic minorities, in future negotiations and implementation efforts; and
- Holding hearings on the implementation of the current agreements and further negotiations, as well as Eritrea's influence on the conflict and peace process.



Haiti

Following the assassination of [President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021](#), Haiti spiraled into a [severe political, humanitarian, and economic crisis](#). The [Montana Accord](#), a coalition of civil society groups, came together soon after to [oppose the Haitian government led by interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry](#), due to Mr. Henry's alleged connection to Moïse's assassination and continuously delayed elections. On January 10th, the term of Haiti's 10 Senators officially expired, [leaving the country without any democratically elected national-level officials](#).

As of February 2023, [4.7 million](#) Haitians, nearly half of the country's population, do not have enough to eat, as food inflation is [hitting record levels in the country](#). An unprecedented [20,000 people](#) in the capital's Cité Soleil neighborhood alone face catastrophic levels of hunger. Armed gangs control [around 60%](#) of the capital, Port-au-Prince, hampering the delivery of vital aid and services and leading to a dramatic uptick in crime. For instance, in 2022, Haiti recorded [1,200 homicides—double the number in 2021](#). Gang violence is also fueling an [alarming spike in illicit arms trafficking](#) between Haiti and the U.S. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights [found](#) that these “gangs use sexual violence to instill fear,” [targeting](#) women, children, the elderly, and LGBTQI+ individuals. Gangs have also been [kidnapping](#) large numbers of people as a means of collecting income via ransom. The country is also experiencing a deadly outbreak of cholera, [driven by fuel shortages](#) following gangs' seizure of a major port that undermined water pumping, with [nearly 31,000](#) suspected cases rising as of January 2023.

In April 2022, [Haiti was named as one of the priority GFA countries](#). While Haiti leads the Western Hemisphere on [fragility indexes](#) due to chronic economic, political, and environmental stressors, prior to the assassination of its



President, Haiti was one of the most improved countries on the [Fragile States Index](#) when it was initially selected. Given the challenging operating environment, implementation of the GFA must prioritize citizen security, as well as support community-led approaches to prevent gang recruitment, promote desertion strategies, enhance development to address drivers of violence, and support locally-led efforts to build peace and security. While the central government is weak, collaborative partners abound at the local, regional, and national (ministerial) level. The country represents a unique context that fits within the learning, innovation, and local mandates enshrined in the GFA, and GFA implementation in Haiti can provide important lessons that can be applied through U.S. foreign assistance in states facing similar challenges in the future.



Photo by Heather Suggitt

The 118th Congress should address conflict and fragility in Haiti by:

- Ensuring Haiti receives robust funding from key GFA accounts, including both the Prevention and Stabilization Fund and Complex Crises Fund, to support the successful implementation of the GFA within the country for the next 10 years;
- Providing funding, including for logistical, technical, and security support, for a transparent, long-term national dialogue that includes diverse stakeholders, particularly members of the Montana Accord—a coalition of civil society organizations and political parties—as well as the widest possible range of social, religious, business, and civic leaders, including women and youth, from throughout Haiti;
- Allocating funding for local peacebuilding and humanitarian aid organizations and programming to address drivers of violence, economic hardship, gang recruitment, and instability at the local level. Specifically, Congress should provide direct and flexible resources for Haitian civil society organizations, especially women- and youth-led and -serving organizations around the country;
- Providing resources for stakeholder and engagement mapping that considers formal and informal sources of power within development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding programming, including informal sources of power like “[wealthy individuals or members of the private sector](#),”
- Funding assistance and programming that provides positive opportunities and livelihoods for youth, including agricultural production jobs, vocational training, and support for small businesses, to prevent youth from being recruited into gangs;
- Resourcing sustainable citizen security assistance to better understand how violence is used to exert, maintain, or obtain influence, promote cautious and transparent engagement with gang leaders and the political actors with whom they are linked, and empower local organizations that have the credibility and trust to work in the most heavily impacted communities;
- Providing sustained, impactful humanitarian aid through a conflict-sensitive approach, [including assistance to address the current severe cholera outbreak](#) and food insecurity. However, Congress must ensure it supports the development of sustainable infrastructure without adversely impacting Haitian agricultural, transport, and small business sectors or exacerbating existing tensions;
- Providing support to the Haitian judiciary and creating appropriate mechanisms to investigate and prosecute high-level corruption cases, including gang funding and money laundering;
- Providing support to Haitian National Police that encourages the security sector to shift away from coercive force towards community-driven solutions, as well as grants and financial and technical assistance for training and police and justice sector reform, as well as security dialogues and confidence-building measures that foster trust and collaboration between citizens and security providers;
- Reintroducing and passing the [Haitian Criminal Collusion Transparency Act](#), bipartisan legislation that would require the U.S. Department of State to investigate and provide Congress with annual reports identifying the relationships between criminal gangs and political and economic elites in Haiti, and requiring the Administration to impose sanctions on identified individuals and investigate and prosecute any U.S. nationals who may have colluded with gangs; and
- Exercising oversight and providing resources to curb illicit arms trafficking between Haiti and the U.S.

Iran

Widespread [protests](#) led by women and youth have rocked Iran [since 22-year-old Mahsa Amini died](#) on September 16th, 2022 while in police custody for violating hijab laws. The movement is being led with the clarion call of “Woman, Life, Freedom,” [which is uniting men and women](#) across ethnic, class, geographic, and socio-economic divisions. These protests, pushing back against the repression that has [intensified](#) under President Ebrahim Raisi, led to [government crackdowns](#), the arrests of nearly 20,000 people, and the deaths of over 500 in February 2023. The instability is heightening the [risk of large-scale abuses and atrocities](#) among the persecuted minority Baha’i community.

On November 24, 2022, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) adopted [Resolution SS35](#), which created an independent fact-finding mission to investigate alleged abuses against Iranian citizens. On December 14, 2022, the UN Economic and Social Council voted to [remove Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women](#) due to suppression of the rights of women and girls. The [FY23 NDAA](#) expresses support for the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and calls for an immediate end to violations of the human rights of political prisoners, the use of all diplomatic tools to ensure the prisoners’ release, and application of sanctions on those responsible for human rights violations pursuant to the [Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act](#).

The 118th Congress should address violence and human right rights violations in Iran by:

- Providing substantial, direct, and flexible resources to locally-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly those that are women- and youth-led and -serving to promote democracy and respect for human rights and the rights of women in Iran;



- Working with the Biden Administration and global partners to exert international pressure to promote respect for human rights and justice and accountability for crimes committed against protestors;
- Holding hearings on the evolving situation in Iran featuring diverse members of the diaspora and human rights activists; and
- Exercising oversight to ensure the appropriate application and enforcement of sanctions on those responsible for human rights violations in Iran.

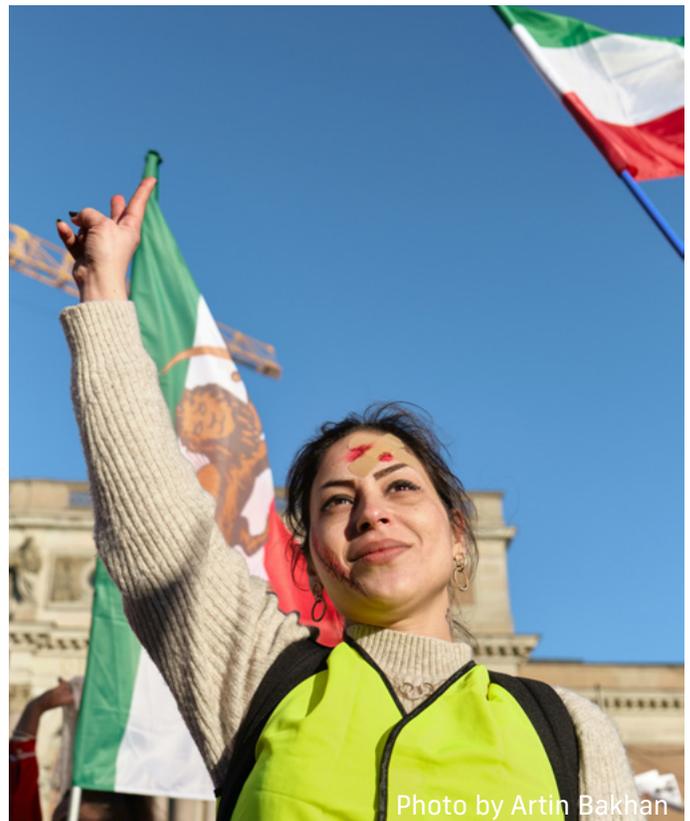


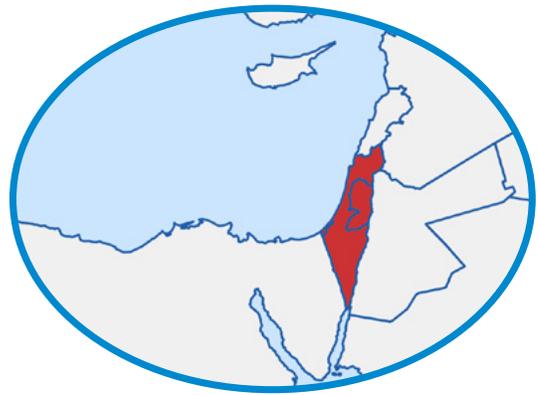
Photo by Artin Bakhan

Israel-Palestine

The conflict in Israel-Palestine continues to experience [escalating tensions](#) following the return to power of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in late 2022. In [January 2023](#), a raid by Israeli forces killed nine Palestinians in the West Bank, and a Palestinian killed seven people in a Jerusalem synagogue—the deadliest attack on civilians in the city since 2008. [Israeli raids continued in the first few months of 2023](#), killing 61 Palestinians, injuring dozens, and destroying substantial property. The new Israeli government—a coalition that includes [a number of far-right parties](#)—is [increasing hostility between Israelis and Palestinians](#) by seeking to [expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank](#), strip Palestinians of health care, social security, and residency rights, increase Palestinian home demolition, and [inhibit efforts towards a two-state solution](#).

In recent years, previous governments oversaw [Israeli demolitions of Palestinian property](#), [crackdowns on Palestinian civil society](#), [violent confrontations between Israeli and Palestinian protesters](#), and a [significant outbreak of violence between Israel and Hamas in Gaza in May 2021](#). 2022 was the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since the UN began tracking in 2005. Meanwhile, Hamas continues to run [afoul](#) of international law by indiscriminately firing rockets against Israeli targets, as [2.1 million Palestinians](#) require humanitarian assistance.

Congress has taken important steps to address the conflict. In December 2020, Congress enacted the [Nita M. Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act of 2020](#) (MEPPA), which established the People-to-People Partnership for Peace Fund and the Joint Investment for Peace Initiative, as well as authorizes up to \$250 million over five years to advance peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians to enable a sustainable two-state solution. In FY23, Congress [allocated \\$75 million](#) to the United



Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). As a result of Congressional leadership, hundreds of U.S. and local civil society organizations are working to promote equity and build cross-community ties. However, continued resources are essential to support innovative approaches to prevent further conflict and create sustainable peace.

The 118th Congress should address conflict and fragility in Israel-Palestine by:

- Funding conflict-sensitive people-to-people programming and economic development through the bipartisan MEPPA to engage civil society, tackle escalating tensions and violence, build peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and strengthen the Palestinian economy and its private sector;
- Leveraging MEPPA by supporting a multilateral institution, utilizing U.S. taxpayer dollars with international support, modeled after the International Fund for Ireland, to address drivers of conflict and build social cohesion in Israel and Palestine;
- Supporting initiatives to research and evaluate people-to-people peacebuilding programs to ensure future programming is evidence-based, does not exacerbate conflict dynamics, addresses power imbalances, supports local organizations, and builds upon lessons learned to increase effectiveness;

- Funding diverse peacebuilding initiatives, including through direct and flexible resources for civil society organizations, especially faith and women- and youth-led and -serving organizations, and programs to address the drivers of political, social, religious, cultural, and economic inequities and conflict, as well as civilian protection measures;
- Supporting programming that addresses the intergenerational trauma experienced by Israelis and Palestinians, utilizing a trauma-informed approach, to promote reconciliation and participation in peace processes and initiatives;
- Providing technical assistance and resources to address intra- and inter-community conflict resolution and reconciliation, enabling local leadership and knowledge to guide these processes;
- Ensuring assistance to Israel complies with the [Leahy Act](#), [Arms Export Control Act](#), [U.S. human rights laws](#), and international human rights law;
- Ensuring robust oversight, end-use monitoring, transparency, and accountability on all U.S. military and foreign assistance, as well as codifying that U.S. aid should not be used to support or expand settlements in occupied territory;
- Supporting resource management and energy-efficiency in Israel and the Palestinian territories, two key potential sources for conflict; and
- Continuing to provide significant funding to the UNRWA and bilateral assistance through the Economic Support Fund and ensure the timely delivery of development and humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza and the West Bank.

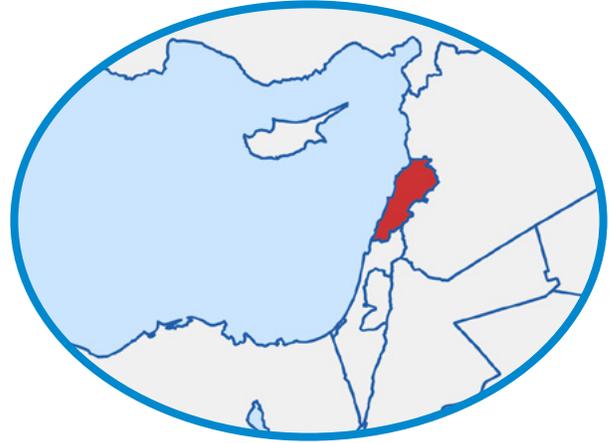


Lebanon

Lebanon is facing [increasing fragility](#) amidst a multi-pronged economic, social, and political crisis. Since October 2019, the [Lebanese economy has declined](#) rapidly, leaving Lebanon with the world's [third-highest ratio of debt-to-gross domestic product](#). At the beginning of 2023, accelerated currency collapse led to a [devaluation of more than 97%](#) since 2019. The financial and economic crises were exacerbated by the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and a massive [explosion in the Port of Beirut](#) in August 2020 that killed 218 people, injured 7,000, and displaced 300,000. Lebanon's political elite [blocked investigations](#) into the explosion, avoiding accountability, fomenting civil unrest, and continuing a norm of corruption and impunity.

The current political system is based on [power-sharing](#) among 18 officially recognized ethno-religious groups. This system regularly results in political deadlock, most recently causing a [presidential vacuum](#) as parliamentary blocs are making no progress in appointing a replacement for President Michel Aoun, whose six-year term ended on October 31, 2022. Two opposition politicians have been staging a sit-in in the Lebanese Parliament since January 2023 when an [11th attempt to elect a president](#) proved unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, regional instability and a large refugee population are stoking existing internal divides, particularly [increasing sectarian tensions](#) and Hezbollah's destabilizing influence. Lebanon is [the world's biggest refugee-hosting country per capita](#), hosting 1.5 million Syrian refugees and more than 12,300 refugees of other nationalities. Nearly 2 million people in Lebanon faced [acute food insecurity](#) between September and December 2022. [Local organizations play a critical role](#) in addressing the needs of these populations and also in highlighting the government's ineffectiveness and lack of



crucial services. However, these organizations, especially those led by women, youth, and other marginalized populations [face many barriers](#) to support and effective completion of their goals.

The 118th Congress should address fragility in Lebanon by:

- Funding programs that address the drivers of conflict and fragility in Lebanon to promote conflict prevention and sustainable peace in line with GFA principles;
- Providing substantial, direct, and flexible resources to locally-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly faith - and youth-led and -serving organizations, to promote an inclusive national dialogue, accountability, democracy, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and peace education as an early-intervention mechanism with the country's large youth population;
- Providing substantial funding for international organizations working to support refugees in Lebanon and alleviate strain on the Lebanese economy caused by regional instability and mass migration; and
- Exercising oversight on foreign assistance to prevent corruption, encourage transparency, and apply conflict-sensitive approaches to programs and aid distribution.

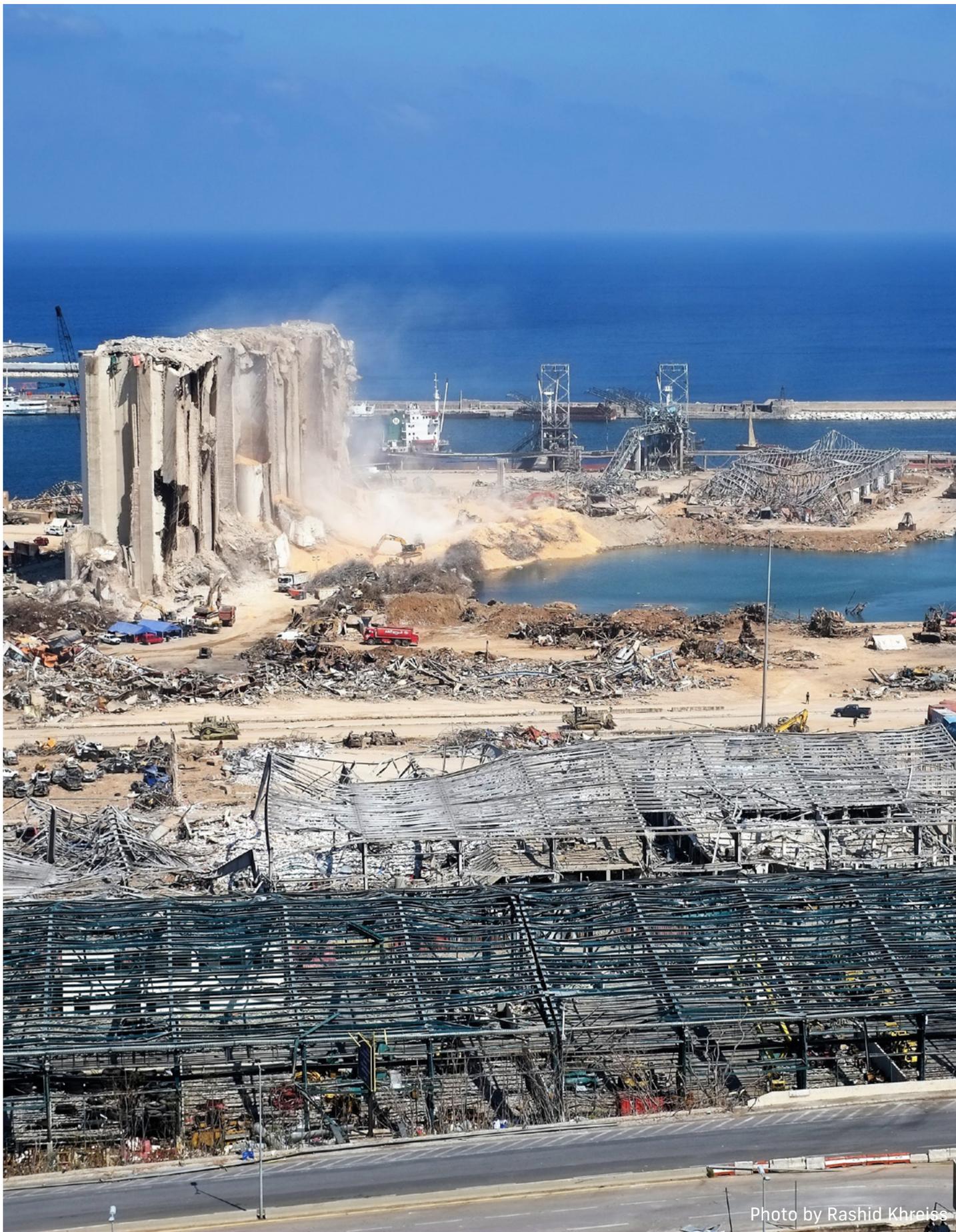


Photo by Rashid Khreiss

Nigeria

Nigeria has the largest economy and population in Africa, but [conflict and fragility](#) remain rampant, much of which is closely linked to [climate change](#), driven by longer dry seasons, intense rainy seasons and flooding, and desertification. Corruption, banditry, cult groups, human rights abuses by state security forces, violent extremism, and farmer-herder clashes continue to [undermine](#) social cohesion and stability. [8.3 million people](#) in the country are in need of humanitarian assistance, with Boko Haram and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-West Africa insurgencies causing “[population displacement, disrupted livelihoods, food insecurity, and protection concerns in northeastern Nigeria—primarily Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states—since 2015.](#)” The Middle Belt across the country’s central region is experiencing [violence driven by competition over land and natural resources](#). Additionally, U.S. arms sales to [Nigeria](#)—which totaled [nearly \\$1 billion in 2022](#)—are exacerbating violence and fragility by spurring [excessive force against unarmed civilians by Nigerian forces](#). 2022 saw at least [3,941 civilian deaths](#).

In addition, [the 2023 national election](#) held on February 25th poses heightened risks of violence, as sectarian tensions and [charges of fraud and a lack of transparency](#) are exacerbating existing conflict dynamics. Opposition parties are calling for cancellation of the results and a new election. As the votes were slowly tabulated, [reports of voting delays, voter suppression, and violence in Lagos, Borno, and Amambra](#) emerged, and the Independent National Electoral Commission has yet to determine a winner. [Fuel and cash shortages](#) caused by a recent currency swap increased citizens’ frustration with the government ahead of the election.



The 118th Congress should address conflict and fragility in Nigeria by:

- Ensuring peace and security issues are a diplomatic and development priority in Nigeria and targeting funding to reduce violent conflict and achieve development outcomes;
- Prioritizing investment in local leaders to prevent and reduce violence via mediation—a cost-effective action compared to increasing police and security presence in Nigeria. For instance, a [2022 evaluation by USAID and Mercy Corps](#) found that training and mentoring 340 leaders over the course of a year cost approximately \$60,000—and the program showed evidence of effective reduction of violence and improvement of security;
- Resourcing community programming that addresses ethno-religious violence, preventing and countering violent extremism, and justice and reconciliation programs and providing substantial, direct, and flexible resources to locally-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly those that are faith-based and women- and youth-led and -serving;
- Funding [programming](#) that promotes synergies between preventing and countering violent extremism; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR); and screening, prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration (SPRR);
- Funding initiatives to address drivers of electoral violence through appropriations



Photo by Emmanuel Ikwuegb

mechanisms like the Complex Crises Fund to impact intersecting conflict factors in pre- and post-election Nigeria;

- Directly supporting early warning systems to monitor the ongoing security crises affecting the middle belt and Northeastern Nigeria;
- Reducing and exercising oversight of U.S. arms sales to Nigeria to ensure they do not contribute to human rights abuses and worsen the security situation of citizens in the country;
- Funding security cooperation between the U.S. and Nigeria that focuses on preventing violence at all levels, including through a “peace architecture” approach, which brings government, security, and civilians together to identify warning signs of violence and conflict and produce non-violent solutions;
- Supporting the implementation of the WPS Act and Strategy in Nigeria to increase the number of Nigerian women in the police and security sector and to reduce and address the occurrence of gender-based violence;
- Investing resources and programming that strengthen the judiciary to properly charge and prosecute individuals who commit terrorism;
- Ensuring assistance and programming in Nigeria centers youth by including investment in Nigerian youth organizations and programs, increasing access to education, and reducing violence in urban and rural areas experiencing high levels of criminality and banditry impacting youth;
- Incentivizing public and private sector investments in agriculture and cattle value-chain development that improve food security, create jobs, and reduce resource pressures;
- Providing resources for humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding programming that robustly integrates climate action and conflict sensitivity, particularly around [climate-driven natural resource conflict between herders and farmers](#);
- Allocating funding that provides [mental health and psychosocial support/training for those impacted by the ongoing insurgencies and violence](#), including trauma recovery and healing; and
- Exercising oversight of GFA implementation—particularly within the Coastal West Africa priority region—to ensure that U.S. interagency coordination regarding Nigeria is a strategic imperative to promote stability across the full region.

Northern Triangle

The countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, which comprise the Northern Triangle, face [extreme levels of poverty, insecurity, and violence](#). Throughout the region, rates of [homicide against women](#) are among the highest in the world, and [criminal groups](#), quick to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, have taken advantage of lockdowns and economic uncertainty to exert influence in local communities. Violence and insecurity are being [compounded by the effects of climate change](#) as natural disasters devastate the region and farming grows more difficult. The number of [food-insecure people in the Northern Triangle nearly quadrupled](#) from 2.2 million in 2019 to eight million in 2022. These ongoing crises have driven an estimated [two million](#) people from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras since 2014. Meanwhile, [hundreds of thousands of guns trafficked from the U.S.](#) are driving deadly violence in the region.

In December 2020, Congress enacted the [United States-Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement Act](#) via the [FY21 appropriations bill](#). The law calls



on key development agencies within the U.S. government to submit to Congress a five-year strategy on promoting economic prosperity, combating corruption, strengthening democratic governance, and improving civilian security in the Northern Triangle, as well as requires the creation of an “Engel List” that compiles corrupt and undemocratic actors in the region. In 2021, the Biden Administration released the [U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America](#) (Root Causes Strategy) and proposed a [\\$4 billion](#) investment in the region. Additionally, in November 2021, USAID announced its [Centroamérica Local](#)



Photo by Christian Burri

[initiative](#), a five-year, \$300 million initiative to empower local organizations in the region to address the drivers of migration to the U.S. To directly address issues of corruption, USAID launched its “[Strategic Approach to Combating Corruption in Northern Central America](#)” in April 2022. In December 2022, Congress [introduced](#) the [Americas Regional Monitoring of Arms Sales \(ARMAS\) Act](#), which “seeks to disrupt firearm trafficking from the United States to Latin America and the Caribbean by implementing stronger transparency, accountability, and oversight mechanisms for U.S. small arms exports.” In February 2023, the Administration announced that private companies had pledged [almost \\$1 billion](#) in assistance for the region as part of the Root Causes Strategy.

However, Congress has not fully funded the Biden Administration’s Root Causes Strategy, but has resourced key programs to address humanitarian challenges, enhance locally-led development, reduce violence against women and girls, and support anti-corruption activities. Still, structural reforms such as improving governance [have struggled to gain footing amid severe declines in rule of law and rampant corruption](#). Attention to the region provided by these policies and strategies is welcome, but must be followed by robust funding to address the drivers of violence and conflict and oversight of spoilers.

The 118th Congress should address fragility and violence in the Northern Triangle by:

- Funding and monitoring the U.S. government strategies and programs, particularly those that implement the Root Causes Strategy and seek to address the drivers of violence and violent conflict;
- Providing substantial, direct, and flexible resources to locally-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly those that are

women- and youth-led and -serving;

- Resourcing programs and initiatives to combat corruption, such as the previous [International Commission Against Impunity](#) in Guatemala, and promote the rule of law;
- Reintroducing and passing the ARMAS Act to disrupt firearm trafficking from the U.S. to the region;
- Exercising oversight to ensure appropriate designation and sanctioning of corrupt and anti-democratic actors, particularly government officials, from the Northern Triangle to the State Department’s “[Engel List](#),” and
- Incentivizing private sector engagement and investment to promote stability and opportunity in the region.

Somalia

Somalia remains [one of the most impoverished, underdeveloped, and fragile](#) states in the world. Climate change, drought, and other natural disasters are compounding ongoing violent conflict and food insecurity. The country has now faced [five consecutive failed rainy seasons](#), causing the country's most severe drought in 40 years and [displacing more than 1.3 million people](#). Nearly [7.1 million](#) people across Somalia are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity. In July 2022, USAID provided \$476 Million in food, humanitarian, and development assistance in July 2022 and announced an additional [\\$151 million in assistance](#) in September 2022. The UN is calling on the international community to provide at least \$1 billion for emergency food, water, and shelter to avert famine as [needs continue to outpace](#) the delivery of aid.

Violence perpetrated by armed groups remains widespread throughout Somalia. In 2022, Al-Shabaab, in particular, was responsible for the [deaths of more than 613 civilians](#) and injuries to more than 948 others, including a [twin car bombing in Mogadishu](#) that killed 121 and injured 333—the second deadliest attack in the group's history. Meanwhile, local tribes in central Somalia are increasingly [mobilizing against Al-Shabaab](#) after an attack against a humanitarian aid convoy in September 2022. This "[people's uprising](#)," in concert with Somali military maneuvers, has given rise to the [most significant offensive against Al-Shabaab](#) in more than a decade. The U.S. government has also [redeployed Special Operations forces](#) inside Somalia and authorized numerous drone attacks against militants over the last two years. The [FY23 NDAA](#) mandates an independent assessment of U.S. efforts. To date, several other countries are providing security assistance to the Somali government and more than [20,000 African Union peacekeeping troops](#) are in the country.



The 118th Congress should address conflict and fragility in Somalia by:

- Funding assistance for preventing and countering violent extremism, democracy and governance, peacebuilding, economic development, and rule of law programming to address the drivers of radicalization and conflict and promote long-term stability in the country and region;
- Providing substantial, direct, and flexible resources to locally-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly those that are women- and youth-led and -serving;
- Providing significant funding to address the dire food insecurity situation;
- Maintaining close oversight of U.S. security assistance to Somalia and ensuring that operations prioritize civilian protection and align with a coordinated diplomatic and development strategy that emphasizes peacebuilding and the provision of development and humanitarian assistance;
- Providing a thorough review of the [Independent Assessment of United States Efforts to Train, Advise, Assist, and Equip the Military Forces of Somalia](#), as mandated by the FY23 NDAA and due by December 31, 2023, and holding public hearings to discuss results;



- Providing oversight of the Administration’s strategy in Somalia to support a political settlement to the conflict that works towards [stability and reconciliation](#); and
- Providing technical capacity and financial incentives to develop a transparent and well-functioning private sector, including related to high-value resources such as fisheries and livestock, and support for the development of Somali-led financial markets that meet international standards.

Sudan

After decades of oppressive rule and the perpetration of atrocities, former President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown in April 2019, pushing Sudan into an [extensive transition process](#). In October 2020, the transitional government and military representatives signed the [Juba Peace Agreement](#). However, tensions quickly escalated due to the civilian government's investigations of military leaders for alleged human rights abuses, as well as efforts to reduce the military's economic dominance, especially around [oil revenues](#).

In October 2021, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces and Chairman of the Transitional Sovereign Council, dissolved the transitional government in a [successful coup](#). The U.S. then [paused foreign assistance](#) intended to aid Sudan's democratic transition until February 2022, at which point all funds were funneled around the military government, with most supporting humanitarian needs, local civil society, human rights, and an inclusive political dialogue. In November 2021, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok [reached a political agreement with the junta](#), reinstating him as Prime Minister and establishing a technocratic government that failed to [include the main civilian political coalition](#). In January 2022, however, [Hamdok resigned](#) after he was unable to form a civilian government, upon which a "[securocrat](#)" government led by the junta retained power. Subsequent pro-democracy protests against the military faced [violent suppression](#).

In December 2022, the junta and a number of political parties [signed an agreement](#) to establish a new, two-year transitional civilian government. Negotiations, however, omitted key political parties and former rebel groups. Due to a lack of political consensus, the agreement brought [widespread protests](#), as well as [violent crackdowns against protesters](#), with some [opposing civilian groups](#) arguing that the



negotiations excluded too many stakeholders, too much ambiguity exists around elections, too much control remains with the military, and too many hard-won gains from the Juba Agreement will be lost. Many in Sudan [remain skeptical](#) of the likelihood that the agreement will be implemented due to the exclusion of many contentious issues in negotiation, as well as the exclusion of major groups.

Compounding matters, outside of Khartoum, violence in the Darfur, Blue Nile, and West Kordofan regions continues, with [several flare-ups](#) throughout 2022. Meanwhile, the country's population faces dire humanitarian needs caused by the conflict and numerous complex crises. [15.8 million](#) people require humanitarian assistance, 3.7 million are internally displaced, and [a quarter of the population is experiencing food insecurity](#). The country is also facing [economic suffering](#) from severe inflation, currency depreciation, and ongoing violence and instability.

The 118th Congress should address fragility in Sudan by:

- Investing in the institutions that have been at the forefront of demands for democracy and will be essential to supporting a pluralistic society, including civil society organizations, trade unions, the university system, media, and the creative arts;

- Providing substantial, direct, and flexible resources to locally-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly those that are women- and youth-led and -serving, as well as civilian-led peacebuilding and local formal and informal peace processes throughout the country, including in the Kordofans, Blue Nile, Darfur, and the contested Abyei region;
- Continuing to [direct foreign assistance only to civilian groups and organizations in Sudan](#)—and not to any government entities associated with the junta—until a civilian-led government is in power that is endorsed by all Sudanese;
- Supporting the protection of civilians in the Kordofans, Blue Nile, Darfur, and Abyei, including through community-led civilians protection strategies and strengthening the UN’s role;
- Using sanctions, asset freezes, and travel bans for spoilers of the peace process and junta leaders violating human rights, especially targeting assets funding the military, such as oil revenue and money laundering, to create leverage that supports a permanent transition to a civilian government;
- Resourcing democratic security sector reform and civilian oversight of the security sector, including full civilian control over the economic assets of the security sector and its proxies;
- Supporting trust-building mechanisms between civilians and political/military forces, and ensuring political processes are inclusive across gender, class, ethnic, tribal, religious, and geographic lines;
- Investing in local governance systems, like local legislative councils, and building the capacity of civilians in areas related to political participation and government monitoring and oversight;
- Supporting the development of a unified vision for transitional justice with the participation of the key stakeholders, such as the families of victims of violence, people affected by violence perpetrated by the state and armed groups, and local civil society; and
- Providing regular oversight of U.S. assistance, the transition process, the impacts of existing sanctions, and overall U.S. government engagement in Sudan.



Photo by Mohamed Tohami

South Sudan

Since South Sudan's [independence in 2011](#), deeply rooted and unaddressed grievances, disenfranchisement, and a political struggle between President Kiir and Vice President Machar led to violence and eventually [civil war](#) in 2013. The conflict's main two parties were Kiir's Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and Machar's Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-opposition (SPLM-IO). An estimated [400,000 people were killed](#) and [four million were internally displaced or fled the country](#) before a ceasefire and the [2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement for South Sudan](#) (R-ARCSS) were reached in 2018. [Implementation](#) of the R-ARCSS, however, continues at an alarmingly slow pace, and the government has missed numerous deadlines, such as for the formation of a Hybrid Court, a Commission for Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing, and a reparations process. A national army, which aims to unite warring factions, has also not been formed, and national elections have been postponed to [December 2024](#). This postponement [leaves several leaders who bear responsibility for past atrocities in power](#) until



at least February 2024, slowing progress on accountability efforts and heightening risks to civilians.

Meanwhile, government officials are using the country's oil and gas revenues as a "[slush fund](#)" that fuels patronage and personal enrichment, leading to additional unrest from conflict and crisis-affected citizens in need of government support and services. In response, the government continues to [heavily restrict civic space](#). In August 2021, nationwide protests planned by the People's Coalition for Civil Action (PCCA) were met with [heavy repression](#), including arbitrary arrests, an internet shutdown, and harassment of civil society. The National Security Service (NSS) continues to carry out [surveillance](#) and [arbitrary arrests](#)



Photo by Chetan Sharma

of citizens, journalists, activists, and critics, creating widespread fear of expression.

South Sudan is one of the [most fragile states](#) in the world. The [humanitarian situation](#) remains dire, with approximately [9.4 million people](#) in need of assistance and [1.9 million people](#) internally displaced stemming from [decades of conflict](#) and exceptionally limited development. Climate change is contributing to extreme weather patterns, rendering [7.7 million people](#) food insecure. To address these compounding crises, the U.S. has long been South Sudan's [largest bilateral aid donor](#)—contributing \$1 billion annually in humanitarian and development assistance and peacekeeping support to South Sudan since 2013. Citing the lack of commitment to the peace agreement shown by South Sudanese leaders, however, [the U.S. ended its assistance for peace process monitoring mechanisms](#) in July 2022.

A coordinated, integrated approach to this assistance can set South Sudan on the path to sustainable peace amid its complex conflict and crises. The severely flawed peace process in South Sudan requires new strategic thinking, a reworking of the current peace agreement, and concerted action to alleviate the country's humanitarian crisis.

The 118th Congress should address conflict and fragility in South Sudan by:

- Supporting the timely implementation of the R-ARCSS, and, if implementation remains severely delayed, providing messaging and assistance to reshape the peace process so that it more effectively prevents conflict in South Sudan and enables a democratic, transparent civilian government;
- Developing and resourcing innovative, localized funding mechanisms that promote integrated programming given South Sudan's complex and interconnected crises, including modeling the UN-led [South Sudan Trust Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience](#), which "[concentrates resources in conflict hotspots to comprehensively address the underlying drivers of conflict](#)" and requires the involvement of local partners through the program design, implementation, and evaluation phases;
- Providing full diplomatic and financial support to civilian-led peacebuilding and local formal and informal peace processes;
- Providing substantial, direct, and flexible resources to locally-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly those that are women- and youth-led and -serving, to support programming that advances social cohesion, depolarization, local dialogue, democracy, freedom of expression and association, open civil society spaces, government transparency, and human rights;
- Supporting robust and democratic security sector reform, including the dissolution of the National Security Service;
- Considering the use of sanctions, asset freezes, and travel bans for government officials who are corruptly receiving oil and other government revenues and laundering the profits;
- Investing in documentation initiatives and efforts to identify atrocities committed and estimate the number of people who have been killed in the course of the conflict, [which has not been updated since 2018](#);
- Supporting efforts to prosecute atrocity crimes in international, domestic, and local fora, strengthening the anti-corruption commission, and re-committing support for the Hybrid Court; and
- Robustly funding humanitarian support for those affected by violence, displacement, food insecurity, and extreme weather.

Yemen

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the [worst in the world](#). Decades of conflict, including a civil war since 2014, have left [23.4 million people](#) in need of assistance, including nearly 13 million children. Aid obstruction, economic collapse, and the COVID-19 pandemic [further exacerbated the humanitarian situation](#).

In 2011, [large protests](#) swept the country as part of the Arab Spring. On February 27, 2012, President Ali Abdullah Saleh [ceded power](#) after 33 years, paving the way for a democratic transition and national dialogue. In the subsequent months, Yemen undertook a [National Dialogue Conference](#) where an [agreement](#) for the basis of a new constitution and political transition plan was reached. However, the [interim government](#) led by President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi was unable to stabilize the situation. Unpopular policies, such as [ending fuel subsidies](#), led to widespread protests, and [civil war broke out in 2014](#), as the Iran-backed Ansar Allah, known as the Houthis, marched on the capital and forced the government to flee.

Beginning in 2015, under both the Obama and Trump Administrations, the U.S., [with little accountability](#), supported the military intervention of a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against the Houthis. The arms sales and training provided by the U.S. enabled grave [international humanitarian and human rights law violations](#) by the coalition, while undermining the U.S.'s ability to play a constructive role in conflict mediation processes. Although the U.S. has provided [nearly \\$4.5 billion in humanitarian aid](#) since 2015, the overall U.S. response to the crisis has been inconsistent and often contributed to [drivers of conflict](#)—poverty, illness, lack of governance, insecurity, and economic distress—and served to radicalize desperate, vulnerable individuals.



In February 2021, [President Biden announced](#) the end of all support for offensive operations, including arms sales, and U.S. support for the UN-led peace initiative. Biden also announced the appointment of veteran diplomat Tim Lenderking as a special envoy to Yemen. In April 2022, the UN brokered a two-month [truce](#) that was extended twice until October 2022 when talks to extend it a third time collapsed. As of early 2023, [fighting remains limited](#), however, and the UN special envoy for Yemen recently [expressed optimism](#) about intensified regional and international diplomatic activity to end the conflict.

The 118th Congress should address violent conflict in Yemen by:

- Providing substantial, direct, and flexible resources to locally-led peacebuilding organizations, particularly faith organizations and those that are women- and youth-led and -serving, to foster dialogue and contribute to state-wide stabilization;
- Supporting the ongoing UN-mediated peace process;
- Increasing U.S. aid to Yemen to fully support an international humanitarian response;
- Retooling all CT/CVE interventions in Yemen away from security-focused to instead address the drivers of violence and radicalization;

- Exercising oversight of U.S. P/CVE interventions in Yemen to ensure they do not exacerbate the drivers of conflict and radicalization; and
- Providing oversight of U.S. policy and sanctions to ensure they do not inhibit peacebuilding and humanitarian organizations from delivering critical support in areas controlled by the Houthis and foreign terrorist organizations.



Photo by Saif Albadni



Photo by Mathias Reding

The Case for Peacebuilding: Evidence of What Works

Since “[peacebuilding](#)” was coined in 1975, it has developed into a robust field with proven approaches, programs, and case studies. Peacebuilding is implemented in complex, fragile, and conflict-affected states and regions, where the drivers of violence, poverty, inequality, human rights abuses, and weak institutions are intricately linked. Therefore, peacebuilding programs can require more nuance to measure and evaluate than development or health programs. Conflict is not linear, so programs must also be adaptive to the needs of the environments in which they are implemented.

With a [30-year high](#) in global violent conflict, the need for effective and impactful peacebuilding programming could not be more pressing. Robust evidence and agile design, monitoring, and evaluation (DM&E) processes form the backbone for any successful program. Although the peacebuilding community continues to make significant strides, challenges remain in efforts to aggregate evidence across programs to analyze, understand, and advocate for what works to reduce violence. Congress can improve evidence collection and analysis by providing oversight of foreign assistance to ensure its effective monitoring and evaluation as mandated under the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](#) to engage in evidence-building activities to support efficient and effective policymaking. For instance, Congress can promote impactful implementation of the GFA, which requires implementing agencies to:

- “[Conduct] an up-to-date baseline analysis for each selected country or region, including an analysis of the conditions that contribute to violence and fragility;”
- “[Develop] prioritized descriptions of the goals and objectives for stabilizing conflict-affected areas, reducing fragility, and preventing the spread of extremism and violence in each selected country;”
- “Describe the criteria, metrics, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation

of programs and objectives in the strategy to ensure planning, implementation, and coordination are appropriately executed and updated;” and

- “Include specific objectives and multisectoral approaches to reduce fragility and the causes of violence, including those that strengthen state-society relations, curb extremist ideology, and make society less vulnerable to the spread of extremism and violence.”

The field continues to develop evidence about what works, [how to measure results](#), and whether programs are having the desired impact. A 2020 Evidence Gap Map from the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) found a 150% increase in [the evidence base for peacebuilding](#) between 2015 and 2019. Yet, they also found that key areas that are “considered critical to sustainable peace”—such as interventions supporting civil society, natural resource management, and conflict-focused early warning systems—lacked sufficient evidence of effectiveness. There were also few studies reporting on measures of cost-effectiveness - an important question for funders and decision-makers. A gap in evidence remains for even the top 15 most fragile states as ranked [The Fragility States Index 2022](#). Actualizing a long-term, focused research agenda under the GFA through Congressional oversight could provide evidence to fill this gap.

Several notable sector-wide research initiatives are demonstrating the effectiveness of peacebuilding programming, helping policymakers and practitioners design their interventions to be more impactful. AfP’s and One Earth Future’s [Some Credible Evidence: Perceptions About The Evidence Base In The Peacebuilding Field](#) found a fairly strong consensus on the need for evidence and what it should look like, but participants reported higher confidence in the evidence base for which conditions are needed for achieving sustainable peace, in particular the structural or general conditions needed for peace in the absence of active conflict, than in how to

effectively deliver these interventions. Very few interventions to deliver the conditions identified were found to have evidence supporting them. It is significant that only three—increasing women’s engagement in economic and political life, education, and including women in peacemaking processes— had a mean score corresponding to “some credible evidence” or higher. This suggests that there is fairly widespread endorsement that these are effective interventions. On the lower end, issues of violent extremism or preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), including countering, combatting, preventing extremism, and deradicalization, were rated as having less evidence supporting their import.

AfP’s [Violence Reduction and Subsector Review and Evidence Evaluation](#) found strong evidence to support a reduction in violent behavior through programming focused on conflict resolution capacity-building and access to peaceful alternatives, such as education, civic engagement opportunities, vocational training, psycho-social care, and employment opportunities. For instance, [recent research](#) has shown that multi-pronged approaches to violence reduction that combine pro-social and behavioral support to be effective in reducing criminal activity later in life. In Liberia, the [Sustainable Transformation of Youth in Liberia program](#) found a 40% decline in the number of thefts committed in the past two weeks by program participants and found a marked reduction in aggressive and hostile behaviors among participants who received cognitive behavior therapy.

[Evidence from the peacebuilding](#) field is increasingly illuminating the [nexus between the effects of climate change and increased fragility and risks of violence and conflict](#). Climate change, violent conflict, and fragility are compounding crises. Climate change in conflict-affected and fragile states undermines a country’s ability to adapt, mitigate, and address climate risks and climatic hazards. Of the 39 states with the highest or high fragility, 26 have “[more than one million](#)

[people and/or more than 10% of the population liv\[ing\] in high \[climate\] exposure areas.](#)” Clashes over land, natural resources, and access to critical services caused by the effects of climate change can [exacerbate existing social, economic, and environmental tensions](#)—particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states. Some studies have posited that a rise of 0.5 degrees Celsius in local temperature is associated, on average, with a [10 to 20% heightened risk of deadly conflict](#). Long term, climate change can also be expected to affect serious [climate migration](#), reshaping geo-political boundaries and stressing conflict drivers as people flee unlivable conditions. The most recent [UN Global Humanitarian Overview](#) report estimated that up to 216 million people “may have to move within their own countries due to the effects of climate change.”

Peacebuilding, and especially [local peacebuilding](#), [is needed more than ever](#). [Research](#) and [case studies](#) consistently demonstrate peacebuilding is more effective and [sustainable](#) when it is [driven](#) and [led locally](#). Programs that support local stakeholders are often highly effective by [improving the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as the norms and structures, on which peace is built](#). In November 2021, USAID Administrator Power, delivered a [speech](#) that [outlined a pledge](#) to dramatically increase the amount of USAID’s funding to local organizations and that 25% of USAID funding would go to local partners within the next four years and 50% by the end of the decade. Yet, only [6%](#) of USAID’s funding currently goes to local partners.

Furthermore, peacebuilding programming repeatedly marginalizes religious actors, who often have [deep and trusted relationships in their communities](#), and are [well-placed to address social inequities](#) and mediate conflicts. [Recent evidence](#) from [faith actors’ engagement in the COVID-19 response](#) globally has demonstrated the unique role and impact of faith actors’ support in peacebuilding efforts. In light of emerging evidence, Congress should increase

levels of sustained funding to local peacebuilding initiatives, particularly involving trusted religious and community leaders, to ensure its most effective use of resources .

The COVID-19 pandemic invigorated the field to push for better and [creative data collection techniques](#) to build our evidence base and understand what works. These examples are just a few of the critical advances the peacebuilding field has taken to understand and prove the

impact of its work, demonstrating that while DM&E of peacebuilding is complex, it is possible. Given the imperative of understanding and resolving conflict peacefully, Congress should prioritize and strengthen research on the effectiveness and impact of peacebuilding, as well as support for evidence-based programs that increase the sustainability of peace, such as those involving locally-led peacebuilding, engagement of religious actors, and holistic approaches to address conflict drivers.

Resources:

- [Some Credible Evidence: Perceptions About the Evidence Base in the Peacebuilding Field](#), AfP and One Earth Future (2021)
- [Key Themes on Building Evidence-Based Practice in Peacebuilding](#), AfP, Better Evidence Project, and One Earth Future (2021)
- [Violence Reduction Subsector and Evidence Evaluation](#), AfP (2019)
- [Peacebuilding Approaches to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism](#), AfP (2018)
- [Local Peacebuilding: What Works and Why](#), AfP (2019)
- [Building Peaceful Societies: An Evidence Gap Map](#), International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (2020)
- [The Edge of Crisis: COVID-19's Impact on Peacebuilding and Measures to Stabilize the Field](#), AfP (2020)
- [#CreativityInCrisis Video Series](#), AfP (2020)

Annex I: Definitions and Key Terms

<u>Assets Freeze</u>	A targeted sanction involving the blocking of bank accounts and other financial assets of persons listed in legal acts.
<u>Asylum-Seeker</u>	An individual that has been forced to flee their own country for the safety of another but has yet to receive any legal recognition or status.
<u>Atrocities Prevention</u>	Efforts to avoid the occurrence of atrocities through strategic preventative action.
<u>Ceasefire</u>	An agreement that regulates the cessation of all military activity for a given length of time in a given area.
<u>Cessation of Hostilities</u>	A broad declaration by one or both sides to a conflict declaring that they will suspend fighting over all. A step that is meant to be the start of a larger peace process, but is provisional and nonbinding.
<u>Civil Society</u>	Any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level.
<u>Climate-Sensitive</u>	The integration of localized climate risk assessments into programmatic planning throughout the stages of a peacebuilding programme life-cycle from early warning and response to mediation and peacekeeping.
<u>Closing Civic Space</u>	Actions by governments to shut down civic space using means such as legal and regulatory tools, extra-legal intimidation and harassment of activists, public vilification of international aid groups and their local partners, and restrictions on foreign funding to curtail the critical work of independent civil society.
<u>Conflict Drivers</u>	The underlying factors that cause conflict and instability and contribute to people's grievances.
<u>Conflict Prevention</u>	A diplomatic approach that refers to a variety of activities and strategies within peacebuilding fields that are deployed to pre-empt and subsequently neutralize potential triggers to widespread violent conflict.
<u>Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)</u>	Rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict.

<u>Conflict-Sensitivity</u>	An approach that involves gaining a sound understanding of the two-way interaction between activities and context and acting to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts of intervention on conflict, within an organization's given priorities/ objectives.
<u>Countering Violent Extremism</u>	Proactive actions to counter efforts by extremists to recruit, radicalize, and mobilize followers to violence; intended to address the conditions and reduce the factors that most likely contribute to recruitment and radicalization by violent extremists.
<u>Counterterrorism</u>	Efforts to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism.
<u>Crimes Against Humanity</u>	Murder, enslavement, deportation, imprisonment, torture, rape, or other inhumane acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population.
<u>Democratic Backsliding</u>	A process by which states become gradually less democratic over time, usually through the increasing concentration of power in the hands of the executive, and erosion of political and constitutional norms.
<u>Development Assistance</u>	Government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries.
<u>Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)</u>	The complex process to help ex-combatants transition, recover, and develop in the post-conflict society.
<u>Disinformation</u>	The deliberate spread of false and malicious content such as hoaxes, spear phishing and propaganda that spreads fear and suspicion among the population.
<u>Famine</u>	A situation in which a substantial proportion of the population of a country or region are unable to access adequate food, resulting in widespread acute malnutrition and loss of life by starvation and disease.
<u>Food Insecurity</u>	When a person lacks regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life.
<u>Foreign Assistance</u>	Aid given by the U.S. government to support global peace, security, and development efforts, and to provide humanitarian relief during times of crisis. This aid promotes American leadership and is a strategic, economic, and moral imperative for the United States.

<u>Fragility</u>	<p>The combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system, and/or communities to manage, absorb, or mitigate those risks. (OECD)</p> <p>The extent to which state-society relations fail to produce outcomes that are considered to be effective and legitimate. (USAID)</p> <p>The absence or breakdown of a social contract between people and their government. Fragile states suffer from deficits of institutional capacity and political legitimacy that increase the risk of instability and violence conflict and sap the state of its resilience to disruptive shocks. (Brookings)</p>
<u>Gender Analysis</u>	Collects and analyzes relevant quantitative data and qualitative information as regards differences in women’s and men’s roles, values, power dynamics and behaviors that shape their access to economic assets, productive resources and participation in decision-making.
<u>Gender-Based Violence (GBV)</u>	Harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender.
<u>Gender Mainstreaming</u>	Efforts to address and incorporate gender into all levels of planned policy actions.
<u>Gender-Related Persecution</u>	A term used to encompass the range of different claims in which gender is a relevant consideration in the determination of refugee status.
<u>Genocide</u>	Killing, causing bodily or mental harm, inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births, or forcibly transferring children with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.
<u>Foreign Terrorist Organization</u>	An organization designated as a terrorist organization under Sec. 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.
<u>Humanitarian Assistance</u>	The actions of governments and NGOs to alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity in the face of disasters and human crises.
<u>Internally Displaced Person (IDP)</u>	Someone who is forced to flee their home but has not sought shelter across any international borders.
<u>Junta</u>	A coordinated group of high-ranking military officers who exercise authoritarian or totalitarian rule over a country after taking power by force.

LGBTQI+	The terms lesbian, gay, bisexual and pansexual refer to people's sexual orientation, that is, who they experience sexual attraction towards; while transgender refers to gender identity, that is, "someone whose gender differs from the one they were given when they were born." Terms like genderqueer and non-binary refer to people who fall outside the construction of gender as male or female. Intersex people are born with physical or biological sex characteristics such as reproductive or sexual anatomy, hormones or chromosomes that do not seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.
Local Stakeholder	Persons, groups, or institutions with an interest in the project or the ability to influence the project outcomes, either positively or negatively.
Locally-Led Peacebuilding/ Development	Locally led development is the process in which local actors – encompassing individuals, communities, networks, organizations, private entities, and governments – set their own agendas, develop solutions, and bring the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality.
Material Support	Any property, tangible or intangible, or service, including currency or monetary instruments or financial securities, financial services, lodging, training, expert advice or assistance, safehouses, false documentation or identification, communications equipment, facilities, weapons, lethal substances, explosives, personnel (one or more individuals who may be or include oneself), and transportation, except medicine or religious materials.
Migrant	An individual that has chosen to leave their home but not strictly on the basis of threat or persecution.
Misinformation	False or inaccurate information.
Nonviolent Civil Resistance	The use of tactics such as strikes, boycotts, mass protests, and many other nonviolent actions to resist cooperation with an oppressive system in order to fight for greater rights, freedom, or justice.
Peace Agreement	Legal agreement between two or more hostile parties, usually countries or governments, which formally ends a state of war between the two parties.
Peacebuilding	A broad range of measures implemented in the context of emerging, current, or post-conflict situations, and which are explicitly guided and motivated by a primary commitment to the prevention of violent conflict and the promotion of a lasting and sustainable peace.

<u>Psychosocial Support/ Services</u>	Interventions that relieve stress and can help prevent mental conditions.
<u>Radicalization</u>	The process by which individuals may become violent extremists.
<u>Refugee</u>	An individual that has received legal status as a migrant who has been forced to flee their home country due to persecution.
<u>Resilience</u>	The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.
<u>Sanctions</u>	Economic and trade sanctions (restrictions or penalties) based on foreign policy and national security goals against targeted foreign countries and regimes, terrorists, international narcotics traffickers, those engaged in activities related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and other threats to the national security, foreign policy or economy.
<u>Social Cohesion</u>	The extent of trust in government and within society and the willingness to to participate collectively toward a shared vision of sustainable peace and common development goals.
<u>Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (SPRR)</u>	Comprehensive and tailored strategies for the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration (PRR) of terrorism suspects, including foreign terrorist fighters, and members of their families, through: taking a whole-of-government approach beyond just prosecution and punishment; involving civil society actors; avoiding stereotypes regarding terrorist groups; and paying particular attention to the situation of women and children associated with terrorist groups.
<u>Trauma-Informed Programming</u>	Understanding the connection between brain science, mental health, psychology, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding, and applying this knowledge to programs and policies to create more holistic and effective outcomes.
<u>Travel Ban</u>	Preventing people from traveling somewhere, especially preventing a particular person or group from entering a particular country.
<u>Violent Extremism</u>	Actions advocating, engaging in, or supporting violence to further ideologically motivated social, economic, or political objectives.

<u>War Crimes</u>	Violations of international humanitarian law that incur individual criminal responsibility under international law. Must always take place in the context of an armed conflict.
<u>Women, Peace, and Security Agenda</u>	Increasing the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peacemaking, conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.
<u>Youth</u>	Persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years.
<u>Zero-COVID</u>	A policy implemented by the Chinese government that includes mass testing, quarantine in government facilities, and strict lockdowns spanning entire cities with the goal of keeping cases as close to zero as possible.

Annex II: The U.S. Government & Peacebuilding

The peacebuilding community works closely with several elements of the U.S. government.

Six key Congressional committees and subcommittees shape policy on peacebuilding:

Authorizing	
House Foreign Affairs Committee	Senate Foreign Relations Committee
House Armed Services Committee	Senate Armed Services Committee

Appropriating	
House State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee	Senate State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee

Peacebuilding and conflict issues may be covered across all foreign policy agencies within the Executive Branch. Those who most often work with the peacebuilding community include:

State Department	Office of the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) • Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL)
U.S. Agency for International Development	Bureau of Conflict Prevention & Stabilization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Violence and Conflict Prevention (CVP) • Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)
Department of Defense	Office of the Under Secretary of Defence for Policy (OSD-P)
National Security Council	

Annex III: Alliance for Peacebuilding Members

ACLED (Armed Conflict & Event Data Project)	Bridge USA	Counterpart International
Acquaint	Bridgeway Group / The	Creating Friendships for Peace
Adapt Peacebuilding	Build Up	Creative Associates International
Aid Gate Organization	Business Plan for Peace	Crossing Party Lines
AidKonekt Data (formerly Konektid)	The Carter Center	Cure Violence
Alliance for International Youth Development (AIYD)	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	DAI
Alliance For Middle East Peace (ALLMEP)	CDA Collaborative Learning Projects	Dexis Consulting Group
Amani Institute	Center for Conservation Peacebuilding (Cpeace)	Digital Peace Now
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)	Center for Media Peace Initiatives	DT Global
American University, International Peace and Conflict Resolution Program (IPCR)	Center for Non-violent Solutions	Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Center for Justice & Peacebuilding
Arcadia University, International Peace and Conflict Resolution Program	Center for Policy Analysis (Horn of Africa)	Environmental Law Institute (ELI)
Association Haitienne de Solidarité (ASHAS)	Charity & Security Network	Environmental Peacebuilding Association (Enpax)
Association Jeunesse pour la Paix et la Non violence (AJPNV)	Chemonics International	Envision Zimbabwe Women's Trust
Avila University The Buchanan Initiative for Peace and Nonviolence (BIPN)	Children's Peace Initiative-Kenya	Equal Access International
Aware Girls	Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)
Baker Institute for Peace & Conflict Studies at Juniata College	Citizens for Global Solutions	Everyday Peace Indicators
Beyond Conflict	Civilian Peace Service Canada (CPSC)	FHI 360
Brandeis University, Graduate Programs in Coexistence and Conflict	Colors of Connection	Friends Committee On National Legislation (FCNL)
	Communities Organizing For Haitian Engagement & Development	Fund for Peace
	Conciliation Resources	Generations For Peace
	Conducive Space for Peace	Generations Without Qat (GWQ)
	Conflict Resolution Institute, University of Denver	George Mason University, Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution
	Conservation International (CI)	

George Washington University, Gender Equality Initiative in International Affairs (GEIA)	International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)	National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM)
GHR Foundation	International Storytelling Center (ISC)	Navanti Group
Global Media Foundation	Interpeace	Neem Foundation
Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)	IREX	Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
Global Peace Building Foundation (GPBF)	Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)	Never Again Coalition
Global Peace Foundation	Karuna Center For Peacebuilding	New York University, School of Professional Studies, Peace Research and Education Program
Hands Across the Hills	Kennesaw State University, School of Conflict Management Peacebuilding and Development	NewGen Peacebuilders
Harvard Law School, Program on Negotiation (PON)	Kent State University School of Peace & Conflict Studies	Nonviolent Peaceforce
Ideas Beyond Borders	Life & Peace Institute	Nuru International
Ideos Institute	Love for Life	One Earth Future Foundation, Inc.
Initiatives of Change USA	Management Systems International, Inc. (MSI)	Open Art Space
Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)	Martti Ahtisaari Foundation (Formerly Crisis Management Initiative)	Outward Bound Center for Peacebuilding
Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention (I-GMAP) Binghamton University	Mediators Beyond Borders International (MBBI)	Pakistan Partnership Initiative (PPI)
Institute For Integrated Transitions (IFIT)	Melbourne Peacebuilding Initiative	Palladium Group
Institute For Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD)	Mennonite Central Committee	Parallel Networks
Institute For State Effectiveness (ISE)	Mercy Corps	PartnersGlobal
Institute of World Affairs (IWA)	Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc.	Pax Christi International
InterAction	Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute	PCDNetwork
International Alert	Movilizatorio	Peace Action Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR)
International Association of Practitioners of Process Oriented Psychology (IAPOP)	Muslim Community Network	Peace Appeal Foundation
International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD)	NAFSA: Association Of International Educators	Peace Catalyst International
		Peace Direct
		Peace Initiative Network (PIN)
		Peace Network for Social Harmony

Peace News Network	STAND Now	Urban Rural Action
Peace of Art	Stimson Center	War Prevention Initiative
Peace Promise Consulting, LLC	Syracuse University, Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC)	Women In International Security (WIIS)
PeaceTech Lab		Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation (WCAPS)
Police2Peace	Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding	World Faith
Post-Conflict Research Center (PCRC)	Tetra Tech	World Vision
Proceso de Comunidades Negras	The Asia Foundation	Young-adult Empowerment Initiative (YEI)
Programme d'Appui à la Lutte contre la Pauvreté pour l'Emergence et la Restauration d'un développement durable	The Educators' Institute for Human Rights (EIHR)	Youth for Homeland
Proximity International	The Horizons Project	413
Purdue Peace Project (PPP) / Purdue Policy Research Institute	The Peacemaker Corps Foundation Kenya	
Quaker United Nations Office, New York (QUNO)	The Plunk Foundation	
RAHO Somalia	TheContactProject	
Refugees International	Toda Peace Institute	
Renew Democracy Initiative	Transform Trauma Solutions	
Rondine Cittadella della Pace	UC Irvine, Center for Citizen Peacebuilding	
Rotary Peace Fellowship	United Nations Association Of The National Capital Area (UNA-NCA)	
Rural Education and Agriculture Organization	University of Massachusetts-Boston, Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance	
Saferworld	University of Notre Dame (UND), Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies	
Salam Institute For Peace and Justice	University of San Diego, Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies	
Search for Common Ground (SFCG)		
ShelterBox USA		
Shift Network / The	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Partnership for Sustainability and Peacebuilding (Institute for Systems Change & Peacebuilding)	
SIL International		
SIT Graduate Institute, World Learning		