

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 31, 2022

The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Administrator Power,

We greatly appreciate USAID's efforts to assist the people of Ukraine, particularly the women and children fleeing to surrounding countries including Poland, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, and Slovakia. Nevertheless, more must be done. **The gendered dynamics of this war cannot be overstated. Of the more than 3 million Ukrainians who have fled the country, 86 percent are women and children.** Similarly, the majority of Ukrainians who have been internally displaced are also women and children. Yet, there has not been enough attention or resources dedicated to addressing the rising risks of gender-based violence (GBV). We know from experience in so many other conflicts around the world that the risks of GBV inevitably increase during conflict and humanitarian emergencies. More than 70% of women, globally, have experienced gender-based violence in some crisis settings. We are extremely concerned that as this conflict continues, incidents of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, will take place. We must ensure that humanitarian funding and assistance strategies prioritize efforts to prevent, mitigate, and address GBV.

For displaced Ukrainian women and girls, the risks of GBV are already extremely high. The overwhelming nature of this conflict has left border crossings with limited oversight. Women and girls face heightened risks due to displacement and the breakdown of normal protection structures and support. Many unaccompanied minors have been forced to make the crossing into neighboring countries alone, putting them at heightened risk. As the situation worsens, more women and girls will be displaced, resulting in additional risk of GBV, including trafficking and exploitation. Further, while there is an increase in GBV, there is a decrease in basic services and support within Ukraine, including health care, as well as GBV-specific services, such as shelters.

Given the scale and pace of this crisis, government and civil society systems are overstretched. While supporting national actors with direct sufficient and flexible funding, it is critical to not only fund INGOs to quickly scale up services but also to accompany and share capacity with national and local CSOs. Inside Ukraine, it is particularly important to support national and local actors abide by humanitarian principles. Maintaining impartiality will be critical for CSOs to operate and deliver / rebuild lifesaving services, including GBV.

We urge USAID to coordinate with the State Department to prioritize the needs of women and girls in humanitarian funding and assistance strategies, in accordance with Safe from

the Start programing. To do so, USAID, in conjunction with our allies and partners, should ensure that aid is channeled through local organizations, including diverse women-led and women's humanitarian and peacebuilding groups. In particular, the United States should provide rapid financial support to women's rights organizations and women human rights defenders who are providing frontline support to refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). International actors should ensure that financial assistance reaches local organizations providing legal advice and healthcare to women and girls and marginalized populations.

Thank you for your consideration and for your work to address GBV.

Sincerely,



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



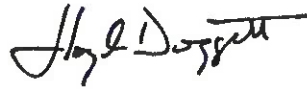
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Member of Congress



Chrissy Houlahan
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/s/

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



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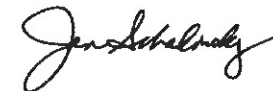
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Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
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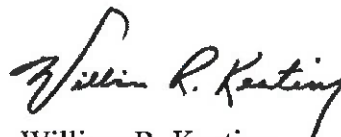
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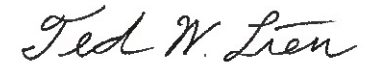
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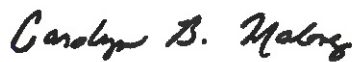
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Kathy Manning
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/s/

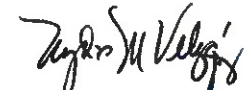
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Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Antony Blinken, Secretary of State.