

THE INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (IVAWA)

One out of every three women worldwide will be physically, sexually or otherwise abused during her lifetime—with rates reaching 70 percent in some countries. This type of violence ranges from rape to domestic violence and child marriage to so-called “honor killings.” Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation, a public health epidemic, and a barrier to solving global challenges such as extreme poverty, HIV and AIDS and conflict. Violence against women and girls also has an economic cost to both household incomes and broader economic development around the world. Gender-based violence (GBV) occurs in peacetime and in conflict and knows no national or cultural barriers.

The bipartisan **International Violence Against Women Act (H.R.1340 & S.713)**, also known as **IVAWA**, makes ending violence against women and girls a top diplomatic, development, and foreign assistance priority by ensuring the U.S. government has a strategy to efficiently and effectively coordinate **existing** cross-governmental efforts to prevent and respond to GBV globally. The U.S. government’s current strategy is set to expire in summer 2015, making IVAWA’s timely passage critical if such efforts are to continue.

IVAWA would ensure transparency by putting in place Congressional oversight of U.S. GBV initiatives that have been ongoing for years. Key to this accountability are two existing positions that would be tasked with overseeing a GBV strategy: the Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment at USAID and Ambassador-at-Large at the State Department’s Office of Global Women’s Issues.

IVAWA supports measures to prevent violence, protect survivors and bring perpetrators to justice. It contains best practice provisions for preventing and responding to violence against women during times of peace and times of conflict. IVAWA will streamline and better coordinate anti-GBV programming across various U.S. government agencies. Since this legislation is aimed at coordinating and integrating existing programs, it does not require the appropriation of additional funding. IVAWA was developed by Amnesty International USA, Futures Without Violence, and Women Thrive Worldwide with expert input from more than 40 international and 150 U.S. based groups. More specifically, the IVAWA would help to accomplish the following:

- Address violence against women and girls comprehensively by supporting health, legal, economic, education, law enforcement and humanitarian assistance programming.
- Support public awareness programs to change attitudes that condone violence against women and girls, as well as men and boys, and emphasize community-based solutions.
- Alleviate poverty and increase the cost effectiveness of foreign assistance by investing in women.
- Enable the U.S. government to develop a faster and more efficient response to violence against women in humanitarian emergencies and conflict-related situations.
- Build the effectiveness of overseas non-governmental organizations – particularly women’s non-governmental organizations – in addressing violence against women.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✓ U.S. Representatives should co-sponsor IVAWA, H.R. 1340
- ✓ U.S. Senators should co-sponsor IVAWA, S.713