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# 2023 EQUITY ACTION PLAN

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

2023



## Message from Secretary of State Antony Blinken

Inequity is a national security challenge with global consequences. President Biden recognized this challenge and issued two executive orders directing all federal agencies to take comprehensive action to address barriers to opportunity for underserved communities and to embed equity into all aspects of federal decision-making.

The Department of State has a long track record of promoting equity globally because we know it will make the world more peaceful, more prosperous, and more stable – and that is good for everyone inside and outside the United States’ borders. To guarantee a consistent and systemic approach for all, we must continue to advance equity for members of marginalized racial, ethnic, and Indigenous communities; women and girls; persons with disabilities; refugees and internally displaced persons; members of religious minority groups; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons; rural residents; and those adversely impacted by environmental inequities, persistent poverty, or inequality. We have embraced the President’s calls to action and are taking stock of the progress we’ve made, gathering the lessons we’ve learned, and using those insights to inform future efforts.

Last year, I released the Department of State’s first Equity Action Plan. Over the past two years, we increased our efforts to embed equity in our foreign affairs work through diplomatic engagements, high-level dialogues, multilateral efforts, foreign assistance, public diplomacy programs and messaging, and procurement and contracts. These efforts have raised the visibility of racial and other inequities globally and generated better-informed foreign policy to decrease barriers to equity and equality worldwide. But there is much more work to be done.

The following pages outline our strategy for advancing equity over the next year. The way we do this and the tools we use will vary. Sometimes, our work will be visible, and sometimes it will be quiet and behind the scenes. Regardless of the tactic we choose, we will continue to lead with diplomacy that is rooted in American values – upholding and defending universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for all – which are critical to U.S. national security.



## **Advancing Equity Through Agency Mission**

Around the world, members of marginalized and underserved communities are on the frontlines of global challenges – from economic and social inequality to the climate crisis to threats to democracy, peace, and stability. The Department of State is committed to advancing equity for individuals who experience heightened or compounded discrimination, violence, and inequality from existing, emerging, and growing global challenges. When we seek to engage, inform, and understand the perspectives of all community members and address systematic exclusion, we will mitigate corruption, distrust, disinformation, economic migration, and authoritarianism. In so doing, we will safeguard democratic principles, inclusive security, and prosperity. We will lead with diplomacy that is rooted in America’s most cherished democratic values: upholding and defending universal human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as dignity for all, championing opportunity for all, and respecting the rule of law. These values are the critical foundation for advancing U.S. national security, democracy, and global equality.



## Executive Summary

Around the world, members of marginalized and underserved communities are on the frontlines of global challenges – from economic and social inequality to the climate crisis to threats to democracy, peace, and stability. Members of marginalized and underserved communities are often excluded from political participation and economic development and subjected to discriminatory laws, regulation, and practices in their countries, which erodes the rule of law and democratic governance. Often, these communities cannot safely and sustainably access and participate in U.S. diplomatic engagements and programs nor inform U.S. foreign policy. Yet in the face of inequality, members of marginalized communities are tackling challenges in their communities and global threats to peace and prosperity. Communities are waiting for us to see them, engage them, listen to them, and amplify their voices. When we work together to mitigate inequity, discrimination, and violence targeting members of marginalized communities and invest in advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, societies as a whole will prosper and our work to advance U.S. national security priorities through foreign affairs will have lasting impact.

The Department of State (“the Department”) will focus on the following strategies to advance equity globally:

1. Pursue Diplomatic Efforts to Combat Hate and Protect Inclusive Democracy
2. Advance Racial Equity and Justice Globally
3. Protect LGBTQI+ Persons Globally
4. Promote Respect for International Disability Rights
5. Advance Gender Equity and Equality Globally

The Department will approach this work as follows:

### ***Technical Leadership***

Each Equity Action Plan (“Plan”) strategy to advance equity focuses on technical leadership driven by the Equity Principals in the Department. Equity Principals are senior Department officials appointed to lead U.S. foreign affairs efforts to advance equity for specific populations marginalized or excluded from around the world. The strategies target challenges and opportunities for specific communities, including compounded and intersectional

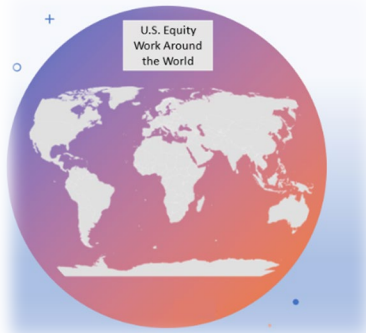


discrimination experienced by individuals from multiple and overlapping marginalized groups. Each Equity Principal's approach to implementing the Plan ensures authenticity and accountability through public participation, community engagement, and accessibility.

### ***Equity Integration***

Each strategy is global and leverages the U.S. government's diplomatic tradecraft, public diplomacy, foreign assistance, and consular affairs to advance national security goals, bearing in mind that engagements are tailored to the local context with direct leadership and support from U.S. missions. This approach includes actions to institutionalize equity strategies across the Department, including:

- **Equity Infrastructure:** Internal communication, investment in personnel, data capabilities, accessibility requirements, and other resources, as well as technical excellence for equity implementation.
- **External Engagement:** Bilateral and multilateral engagements with foreign governments and civil society to support comprehensive legislative, judicial, and regulatory frameworks; and community consultations and/or public engagement with members of marginalized communities to inform foreign policy, programs, and processes.



## Equity Progress Updates and Accomplishments

- **Embassy Hanoi:** Braille Project Brings English Learning Materials to more than 600 Blind Students
- **U.S. Mission to NATO:** Women in International Security, Brussels (WIIS Brussels) podcast series, “Mini-series 2: WIIS Talks Climate Security”
- **Embassy Dhaka:** OES Climate Grant Empowers Marginalized Coastal Communities Pilot Nature-Based Sand Dunes Regeneration Project in Cox’s Bazar
- **Embassy Kyiv:** PEPFAR Ukraine Expands Access to HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) During Wartime
- **U.S. Mission to the Netherlands:** Engaging on Racial Equity and Justice During Dutch Slavery Memorial Year
- **U.S. Mission to Canada:** Hosting a U.S.-Canada Chinatown Solidarity conference
- **Embassy Athens:** Supporting a Women in Law Enforcement and Security Series
- **Embassy London:** Championing Science Technology Engineering Arts and Math (STEAM) Inclusion
- **Embassy Kingston:** Forging new links between Jamaican law enforcement and the LGBTQI+ community and protecting U.S. citizens visiting the island
- **Embassy Sofia:** Empowering young Roma women and girls through summer leadership camp
- **U.S. Mission to Poland:** Leading as Likeminded Embassies Coordinator on LGBTQI+ issues as ally embassies to combat hate and promote an inclusive environment



- **Embassy Harare:** Increasing Women with Disabilities' Political Participation in Zimbabwe
- **Embassy Stockholm:** Community and law enforcement agencies can work together for racial justice
- **Bureau for Education and Cultural Affairs:** Protecting Arctic indigenous Cultural Heritage
- **U.S. Mission to Germany:** Combatting antisemitism and Holocaust distortion and denial
- **Embassy Rome:** Amplifying the lived experiences of Afro-Italians during Black History Month
- **Mission Brazil:** Advancing the U.S.-Brazil joint Action Plan to Elimination Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality (JAPER)
- **Embassy Bogota:** Secretary Blinken announced the U.S. as the first International Accompanier to the Ethnic Chapter of the 2016 Peace Accord



## 2022 Equity Action Plan Update (pursuant to Executive Order 13985)

### *Foreign Policy*

The cornerstone of equity in foreign policy is direct action through the Department's Equity Principals who traveled the world to listen to and amplify the voices of marginalized populations. The Department produces numerous public reports that have strengthened their specific focus on equity, such as [Human Rights Report](#), [Trafficking in Persons Report](#), [International Religious Freedom Report](#), and several equity-related Congressional reports. The Department also established its first [Equity Agency Priority Goal](#) (APG), outlined in the 2022 Plan, to advance equity in U.S. foreign policies, programs, and processes. As an example of how the APG drove significant organizational change by identifying outcomes and measuring results, the United States negotiated more than 50 United Nations outcome and/or consensus documents that expanded inclusive language of historically marginalized and underserved groups. This included United Nations General Assembly resolutions on the rights of Indigenous peoples, people of African descent, and eliminating gender-based violence.

### *Foreign Assistance*

The implementation of equity and inclusion into foreign assistance programs, policy, and practice is being led by the Office of Foreign Assistance, in coordination with the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and key bureaus and offices across the Department. Chief to this effort is global tracking of Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) foreign assistance programs addressing the specific needs of marginalized racial, ethnic, and other underserved communities. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, planned foreign assistance investments totaled \$56.8 million, spread across all geographic regions. This complements existing tracking of programs and planned investments for other marginalized populations, such as Indigenous groups, LGBTQI+ communities, women and girls, persons with disabilities, children in adversity, young and emerging leaders, and religious minorities. Additionally, the Department is creating a Social Inclusion Analysis Tool outlined in the 2022 Plan to help Department officials integrate and operationalize equity and inclusion into externally-facing foreign affairs areas: foreign policy implementation, foreign assistance program design, and diplomatic statecraft. Focus group beta-testing in 2022 was essential to the tool's drafting, which is still in progress and will be custom-tailored for Department needs.





Since the release of the Department of State's 2022 Agency Equity Plan, the bureaus and offices responsible for public diplomacy and public affairs have worked to embed equity into the Department's public diplomacy (PD) programs, policies, and communications in the following ways:

- **Build the PD Infrastructure to Embed and Sustain Equity Principles in PD Programs and Activities:** The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs' Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources (R/PPR) is responsible for helping to build the capacity of the PD workforce to ensure PD practitioners have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to advance the equity agenda as they work to carry out their primary mandate – to inform, influence, and persuade foreign publics. R/PPR has established guidance, built the capacity of PD practitioners to help them plan and execute activities that incorporate intersectional equity principles, and leveraged data and technology to track equity in PD program participation.
- **Enhance the Recruitment of Diverse Participants for PD Programs:** The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) sponsored a third-party literature review [assessment to increase understanding of the barriers underrepresented individuals experience](#) in accessing exchange opportunities and better understand the context in which exchange programs are implemented. An ECA-wide programmatic strategic plan is being drafted to focus on embedding equity principles across the life-cycle stages of exchanges, including increasing and measuring underrepresented participant inclusion through the collection of demographic data across all ECA programs.
- **Promoting Equity through Global Communications and Engagement Strategies:** Global Public Affairs (GPA) has expanded its outreach and engagement with underserved communities to include providing live captioning services for deaf and hard of hearing and launching the inaugural [Sign@State Symposium](#) and [Minority Serving Institutions Conference](#). GPA has increased accessibility of U.S. government messaging on high-level policy priorities to underserved audiences worldwide by expanding the breadth of voices engaging with the media, deploying Regional Media Hub teams to more regional summits and events, and increasing translations of press releases and other informational products. GPA also continues to provide inclusive messaging guidance to PD practitioners throughout the Department. Finally, GPA issued guidance to Department communicators to increase access to information on the Department website for persons with disabilities.



## **Consular Services**

The highest priority of the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) is to protect the lives and serve the interests of U.S. citizens abroad. As such, the bureau is committed to providing more equitable and more accessible consular services to U.S. citizens.

- **X Gender Marker in Travel Documents:** The Department has been issuing [gender X passport books](#) to the general public since April 2022. In addition, the Department is updating other passport and citizenship forms to allow the selection of the X gender marker for passport cards, expedited passports, and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad.
- **Diversity in Travel Documents:** In FY 2022 and FY 2023, the Office of Passport Services held meetings with CA's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Council, the Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (S/ODI), and employee organizations to seek feedback on proposed artwork themes and imagery to ensure a better representation of our country's broad diversity in United States travel documents, including the U.S. passport.
- **Communication on the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Public Facing Website:** CA established and filled a full-time Travel.State.Gov managerial position. This position will develop a detailed roadmap for implementing recommendations about how to strengthen communication with the travelling public.

## **Procurement**

The Bureau of Administration Office of the Procurement Executive (A/OPE) and Office of Small Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) work across the Department's five strategies to advance equity in order to ensure equity in contract and federal assistance programs advance equity for members of marginalized and underserved communities.

## **Policy and Training Initiatives**

OSDBU and A/OPE have a vested interest in increasing contracting opportunities for small business by monitoring and ensuring regulatory compliance with current policies and have issued specific new policies and training during FY 2023. To further bolster our policy goals, we also added a recognition program in support of key milestones for advancing equity in procurement initiatives. Implementation of the existing procurement policy has resulted in a



two percent increase in small business awards within the simplified acquisition threshold (between \$10,000 and \$250,000).

**Strategic Planning and Public Reporting Initiative**

On June 13 and 14, 2023, OSDBU and A/OPE led the [Annual Small Business Summit](#) held in Charleston, South Carolina. OSDBU, in collaboration with A/OPE, led a diversity and inclusion panel that addressed barriers to contracting opportunities and overcoming those for small businesses. The event was attended by 470 small businesses to include all socioeconomic categories.

**Tools and Analysis**

The chart below provides a snapshot of the Department goals and achievements by socioeconomic categories as of July 5, 2023. The Department is committed to providing U.S. small businesses with maximum practical opportunity to win Department contracts and ensure equity in procurement. The Department's mission is, by definition, globally diverse and requires technical, managerial, and financial capabilities that are very often far in excess of those necessary to perform successfully on domestic federal contracts.

**Table: State Department Totals as of September1, 2023 For Small Businesses**

Date Ran 9/1/2023

Total Small Business Eligible	Total Small Business	Total Small Business Disadvantaged
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligible actions - 53,116</li> <li>• Eligible Dollars - \$7,740,191,908.92</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Actions – 17,175</li> <li>• Business Dollars - \$2,282,299,960.34</li> <li>• Small Business Percentage- 29.49%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disadvantaged Actions – 9,051</li> <li>• Disadvantaged Business Dollars - \$1,570,767,452.17</li> <li>• Business Percentage – 20.29%</li> </ul>

**Environmental Justice Scorecard (pursuant to section 223 of Executive Order 14008)**

To further this administration priority, the Department has taken steps to incorporate environmental justice throughout its policies, including:



- The Bureau of Energy Resource’s Power Sector Assistance project provided support such as national-level reviews of renewable integration plans, the launch of competitive international renewable energy tenders, and power system and ancillary services analysis support to renewable energy integration.
- Department support for U.S. efforts to combat the biodiversity crisis pledged \$600 million to combat global environmental threats, combating nature crimes such as criminal forms of logging, mining, wildlife trade, and land conversion – all of which have a particularly devastating impact on Indigenous communities globally – and working bilaterally to support biodiversity conservation.

### **Additional Highlights of Department Efforts to Advance Equity**

- The Special Advisor for International Disability Rights helped develop the first [Disability Rights cohort within President Biden’s Summit for Democracy initiative](#).
- In recognition of the disparities that exist in access to finance for certain groups and individuals, the Department and U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) developed a standing certification from the Secretary of State that authorizes DFC to provide support in upper middle-income countries for projects that provide access to finance for members of marginalized, Indigenous, and underserved populations.
- In December 2022, the Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues (S/GWI) released the [2022 U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally](#); and in January 2023, S/GWI released the first-ever [U.S. Strategy on Global Women’s Economic Security](#), in collaboration with USAID and the White House Gender Policy Council. In July 2023, the Department submitted its Action Plan for the U.S. National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, pursuant to Executive Order 14020.
- In December 2022, the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs updated their Notice of Funding Opportunity template in an effort to be more inclusive of a wider range of foreign assistance implementers, while at the same time working to ensure project proposals meaningfully consider and integrate equity, inclusion, and intersectionality.
- In 2022, the GPA Spokesperson and the Press Office began to provide live captioning services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals during the Daily Press Briefing to advance equitable access for all.



- The Special Representative for Racial Equity and Justice (SRREJ) joined the Secretary of State for the signing of the [North American Partnership for Racial Equity and Inclusion](#) at the 2023 North American Leaders' Summit in Mexico City.
- SRREJ led the Department's international Indigenous issues with bilateral, multilateral, and civil society stakeholders and serves as liaison to the White House Council of Native American Affairs International Indigenous Issues Committee.
- The United States, represented by the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and the Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons, led a coalition of countries, along with the United Nations LGBTI Core Group, which called upon the [United Nations Security Council to better integrate LGBTQI+ human rights under its international peace and security mandate](#).
- President Biden rolled out the first-ever [U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#) at an event held at the White House for Jewish American Heritage Month. The strategy includes over 100 new actions the Administration will take to counter the recent spike in antisemitism.
- The Department is developing rules which would institute a comprehensive nondiscrimination policy in Department-funded foreign assistance contracts and grants. Additionally, the rules would ensure that employees paid with Department of State foreign assistance funds be hired following the same nondiscrimination policy.

### **Advancing Equity Through Key Legislation**

The Department continued to advance the Women, Peace, and Security Act (WPS) of 2017 through its Plan to Implement the U.S. WPS Strategy and coordinated the drafting and submission of interagency progress reports released to Congress and publicly in 2022 and 2023. For the first time, the United States is cochairing with Romania the WPS Focal Points Network, which assists United Nations Member States and regional organizations, in close collaboration with civil society, to improve and strengthen the implementation of the WPS agenda.

The Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) is working with interagency partners to align implementation of the Global Fragility Act of 2019 and Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2018 with the Department's equity efforts. For example, the development of the Global Fragility Act priority countries and regional implementation plans



involved hundreds of consultations with local civil society organizations and peacebuilders, seeking out the perspectives of women, youth, members of faith-based communities, and marginalized groups, as appropriate, to consider their unique needs and identify efforts to advance their meaningful participation in conflict prevention, governmental reform, and peacebuilding efforts. The interagency Atrocity Prevention Task Force’s revised [Atrocity Risk Assessment Framework](#) incorporates inclusion of the needs and perspectives of members of historically marginalized and oppressed communities and takes into account the risk of gender-based violence and other violence against women and girls. Atrocity prevention work incorporates the promotion and implementation of gender equality through consultations with diverse stakeholders.



## Strategies to Advance Equity in FY 2024

### Orienting Principles of Equity in State's Foreign Affairs Work

*Approach: Rooting Equity to National and Global Security to Advance Universal Values, Human Rights, Human Dignity, and Fundamental Freedoms*

*"Inequity is a national security challenge with global consequences. The systematic exclusion of individuals from historically marginalized and vulnerable groups from full participation in economic, social, and civic life impedes equity globally, while fueling corruption, economic migration, distrust, and authoritarianism.*

*We know that embedding equity across our foreign affairs work will raise the visibility of racial and other inequities globally and generate better-informed foreign policies to decrease barriers to equity and equality worldwide."*

[Secretary Antony Blinken \(Press Statement on Equity Action Plan, April 14, 2022\)](#)

#### EQUITY ROOT SYSTEMS & INFRASTRUCTURE ARE FOUNDATIONAL TO STATE'S EQUITY ACTION PLAN

##### ROOT 1 - U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND ASSISTANCE, AND DIPLOMATIC STATECRAFT

Integrating equity into U.S. and Department foreign policy and assistance and diplomatic statecraft to safeguard national security; mitigate corruption, conflict, and authoritarianism; and to promote economic prosperity, democracy, universal values, human dignity, and fundamental freedoms.

##### ROOT 2 - EQUITY INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT, AND TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

Ensuring the whole of U.S. foreign affairs is equitable, fosters learning and sharing of best practices, is appropriately staffed, and receives the necessary resources to create and sustain impact over time. Also advancing equitable, externally-focused processes and practices, both formal and informal, that further strengthen the conduct of foreign affairs.





### **ROOT 3 - PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Engaging diverse communities and populations to advance equity principles in U.S. foreign policy and support social inclusion by promoting greater access to quality education and cultural programming, economic prosperity, environmental justice, health, information, and democratic values.

### **ROOT 4 - CONSULAR AFFAIRS AND CRITICAL PUBLIC-FACING TOUCHPOINTS**

Promoting a welcoming culture at U.S. consular sections overseas and providing services that are respectful of diverse individuals, identities, groups, cultures, and communities for U.S. citizens at home and living and traveling abroad, and foreign nationals seeking visas.

The Department builds upon its previous Equity Action Plan by focusing on the technical leadership of its Equity Principals to lead the Plan's implementation and investment in equity as central to strengthening U.S. foreign affairs work globally. Each strategy focuses on the whole-of-government equity objective of global equality. Progress will be achieved through community engagement, outreach, and accessibility. Challenges for each strategy address specific equity needs and overlapping and intersecting discrimination, which compounds inequality for communities who are targets of oppression. Barriers to equity are evidenced in Department reporting, including public Department reports, embassy reporting, and program evaluations, as well as external sources to ensure strategies are community-driven and community-informed. Actions to deliver equitable outcomes are proposed by Equity Principals, bureaus, and embassy and mission-led initiatives tailored to meet the needs of marginalized communities around the world in the context of our bilateral relationships and multilateral efforts. Department investments are measured by existing and newly developed equity metrics.





## Strategy 1: Pursue Diplomatic Efforts to Combat Hate and Protect Inclusive Democracy

*Protect inclusive democracy globally by combating hatred, discrimination, and violence through advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms (expression, peaceful assembly, association, and religion or belief) and the rule of law.*

### **Strategy 1: Equity Principals:**

- [Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights](#)
- [Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism](#)
- [Ambassador At Large for the Office of International Religious Freedom](#)

### **Strategy 1: Whole-of-Government Equity Objective:**

- **Global equality:** Promote equity and human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.

### **Strategy 1: Barriers to Equity:**

- Religious, ethnic, and racial minority communities are vulnerable to discriminatory laws, regulations, and practices in their host countries. They are often excluded from political participation and economic development, which make safe and sustainable access to and participation in diplomatic engagements and programs difficult.
- Department, U.S. government, and diplomatic partners lack a full understanding of what it means to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief, and the intersection between freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression and other human rights and fundamental freedoms, which includes protection of members of marginalized and underserved non-belief communities.
- There is a lack of statistical hate crime reporting disaggregated by religious or other communities affected.
- Instability, lack of governance, and lack of U.S. subnational engagement impacts meaningful consultation with human rights defenders, religious actors, marginalized,



underserved, and vulnerable communities to effectively engage governments on inclusive governance and conflict resolution.

- There is an ongoing, insufficient understanding of antisemitism by the general public and diplomatic partners, including inadequate reporting of antisemitic acts or speech, and judicial mechanisms to address hate crimes. Additionally, societal normalization of antisemitism and mis- and disinformation that promote false narratives contribute to a challenging landscape for policy interventions.
- Democratic decline, including the rise in populist politics supported by authoritarian regimes, such as the governments of Russia and the People's Republic of China, contributes to ongoing distrust and intentional efforts to undermine international human rights institutions and instruments.

### ***Strategy 1: Evidence Base to Support Strategy:***

- Qualitative reporting from our embassies and consulates in cables and consultation with the subject matter experts informs policy advisors on the ongoing efforts by authoritarian regimes such as the governments of Russia and the People's Republic of China to undermine international human rights institutions and instruments.
- Reporting from [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom](#) on blasphemy laws, [reporting from Humanist International](#) and [Freedom of Thought report](#) from former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief note the use of criminal anti-blasphemy laws often erode freedom of thought of religious or belief minorities, including humanists, atheists, and non-believers and criminalize and censor free expression on and off-line.
- Qualitative reporting detailed through the Department's Congressionally mandated annual [Human Rights Report](#), [Trafficking in Persons Reports](#), [International Religious Freedom \(IRF\) Reports](#) and other Department reporting mechanisms tracks trends in laws, governmental actions, and societal acts affecting the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by members of marginalized and underrepresented populations. This reporting may be used in connection with designations under the Global Magnitsky sanctions program and other authorities or with the designation of Countries of Particular Concern or Special Watch List countries under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act.



- The [U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#), [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom reports](#), and Anti-Defamation League [Global 100: Index of Antisemitism](#)
- Multiple reports from civil society and multilateral monitoring mechanisms (such as the [Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#)) tracking democracy and authoritarianism through data sets noted a global trend in democratic decline (e.g., [Freedom in the World 2023 report](#), [Global State of Democracy Report for 2022](#), [Global State of Democracy](#)). Infringement on freedom of expression is a key driver of global democratic decline including the overlap in restricting other fundamental freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and religion or belief, as well as a free media.

### ***Strategy 1: Actions to Achieve Equity:***

To address these barriers, the Department will:

- Embed community consultations and public engagement on reported violations and abuses against members of marginalized and underserved communities into strategic bilateral and multilateral human rights dialogues and action plans to generate evidence and actions that will improve respect for human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, and inclusive democracy in countries under sanctions for gross human rights violations and abuses under the Global Magnitsky Act and other authorities, or those with the designation of Countries of Particular Concern or Special Watch List under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act.
- Collaborate and coordinate travel and public messaging by Equity Principals to elevate the interconnectedness of hate related to religious, ethnic, racial, and other aspects of identity that are exploited for discrimination and violence. For example, a [U.S. delegation traveled to Bosnia and Herzegovina to commemorate the Srebrenica genocide and promote peace and tolerance](#).
- Provide counter messaging and alternative narratives through bilateral and multilateral engagements, community consultations, and public engagements to counter foreign state- and non-state disinformation and propaganda overseas, malign influence, and authoritarian attempts to reshape global rules and institutions.



- Amplify Summit for Democracy multilateral commitments that impact members of marginalized communities through Department senior leadership and initiatives, such as the [Export Controls and Human Rights Initiative Code of Conduct](#).
- Work with partners to implement the suggested commitments of the youth democracy cohort of the Summit for Democracy to strengthen and support meaningful inclusion of youth at all government levels, strengthen transparent and inclusive electoral processes, and build capacity for youth in politics through civil society support and education and participation in the Youth Democracy Network.
- Promote the meaningful participation of youth from marginalized communities in peace building and conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as post-conflict relief and recovery efforts.
- Consult and partner with foreign governments, multilateral and regional organizations, and civil society through events, statements, and institutional mechanisms, like the [Istanbul Process 16/18](#), to combat the rise in global antisemitism, Islamophobia, religiously, racially, and ethnically motivated violent extremism, homophobia and transphobia, and other regressive anti-rights movements.
- As the U.S. lead agency for coordinating efforts to combat global antisemitism, consult and partner with foreign governments, multilateral and regional organizations, and civil society to engage stakeholders to combat global antisemitism.

### ***Strategy 1: Near to Medium-Term Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):***

- U.S. government employees are trained annually on how to effectively conduct religious actor or other underrepresented civil society engagement in support of U.S. foreign policy goals, such as through the Office of International Religious Freedom mandatory training.
- Increased number of community consultations and public engagement activities (meetings, conferences, etc.) conducted with underrepresented or non-traditional religious or belief groups to engage them on U.S. foreign policy priorities.



- Increased number of public statements, media outreach activities, and private and public diplomacy efforts that address the interconnectedness of hatred and protect inclusive democracy.
- Improved safety and security for Jewish, Muslim, and other religious, ethnic, and racial communities overseas as measured by civil society organizations.

### ***Strategy 1: Longer Term Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):***

- Greater capacity of human rights defenders, journalists, and religious actors to address transnational challenges, advance respect for the human rights of all, including the freedom of religion or belief, and promote the rule of law, as part of building a stronger and more resilient community of rights-respecting democracies.
- Increased support of likeminded and emerging democracies to be capable of contesting authoritarian attempts to reshape global norms, rules, and institutions that respect human rights and democracy under the pretext of addressing economic or national security challenges.
- Overall reduction in hate crimes with attention to global decrease of hate-fueled attacks and incidents and reduction of acts of transnational repression against human rights defenders and members of marginalized groups.



## Strategy 2: Advance Racial Equity and Justice Globally

*Support the development and implementation of policies, programs, and processes to advance the human rights of members of marginalized racial, ethnic, and Indigenous communities, including people of African descent, and combat systemic racism, discrimination, violence, and xenophobia globally.*

**Strategy 2: Equity Principal:** [Special Representative for Racial Equity and Justice](#)

### **Strategy 2: Whole-of-Government Equity Objective:**

- **Global Equality:** Promote equity and human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.

### **Strategy 2: Barriers to Equity:**

- Generations of discriminatory laws, regulations, and practices have built international, national, and local governance structures and community attitudes that compound [systemic racism, discrimination, and xenophobia, which continue to have devastating outcomes](#) for members of marginalized racial, ethnic, and Indigenous communities. These communities are often excluded from equitable access to political participation, employment, and education opportunities and can even face violent suppression and statelessness due to their race or ethnicity.
- U.S. foreign affairs efforts and national security interests are weakened by a lack of data, attention, and coordination with international partners to address the impact of systemic racism on institutional practices and entrenched norms that contribute to economic inequality, the climate crisis, rising authoritarianism, and other shared [global challenges](#).

### **Strategy 2: Evidence to Support Strategy:**

- [UNESCO Global Forum Against Racism and Discrimination + Toolkit](#): Evidence suggests that with increased immigration, global warming, and the COVID-19 pandemic, among other recent events, racism and racial inequalities and violence have become more – not less – virulent.



- [UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent](#): In coordination with existing mechanisms, expert advice and recommendations to the Human Rights Council, the Main Committees of the General Assembly and organs, programs, funds and agencies of the United Nations aimed at addressing challenges of all the scourges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance and all their contemporary forms and manifestations confronted by people of African descent and that impede the full and effective realization and enjoyment of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- [UN Fight Racism](#): In addition to People of African Descent and the descendants of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, racism directly impacts the lives of many other communities and groups.
- [UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#): Indigenous peoples frequently raise concerns about systemic discrimination and outright racism from their governments and their authorities. These forms of discrimination are often either difficult to quantify and verify, simply not documented by the authorities, or not disaggregated based on ethnicity.

### ***Strategy 2: Actions to Achieve Equity:***

To address these barriers, the Department will:

- Revitalize and work to achieve the objectives of the 2010 U.S.-Colombia Action Plan on Racial and Ethnic Equality and the 2008 U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality.
- Release a U.S.-New Zealand Bilateral Statement on Indigenous issues as part of the 2024 U.S.-New Zealand Strategic Dialogue, which will outline cooperation for addressing challenges and opportunities for Indigenous communities.
- Bolster and ensure robust U.S. support of the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues.
- Work to achieve the objectives of the [Declaration on the North American Leaders' Summit for the United States, Mexico, and Canada to advance equity and racial justice](#).



- Embed racial equity and justice across the Department by providing technical assistance for bureau-specific Racial Equity and Justice Frameworks through the internal SRREJ Community of Practice.
- Connect U.S. best practices to combat systemic racism, such as Executive Orders 13985 and 14091, to global efforts through the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Global Forum against Racism.
- Work with the Council of Europe (COE) Secretariat to urge member-States to appoint Independent Experts to the COE's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance that are representative of diverse communities within Europe.

### ***Strategy 2: Near to Medium-Term Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):***

- Increased number of U.S. public statements, media outreach activities, and private/public diplomacy efforts in support of specific racial, ethnic, and Indigenous groups under increasing threat of racist violence, discrimination, and xenophobia globally.
- Increased number of targeted community consultations and public engagement activities on U.S. foreign policy priorities with members of marginalized racial, ethnic, and Indigenous communities.

### ***Strategy 2: Longer Term Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):***

- Establish, revitalize, and build concrete actions of partnerships with civil society, bilateral, and multilateral partners around the world to advance a global agenda on racial equity and justice.
- Improved coordination and adoption of actions across the Department to identify specific and targeted policies and programs to reduce political, economic, and social inequities for racial, ethnic, and Indigenous communities.





## Strategy 3: Protect LGBTQI+ Persons Globally

*Support the development and implementation of policies, programs, and processes to advance equity for and eliminate discrimination against LGBTQI+ persons.*

**Strategy 3: Equity Principal:** [U.S. Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons](#)

### **Strategy 3: *Whole-of-Government Equity Objective:***

- **Global Equality:** Promote equity and human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.

### **Strategy 3: *Barriers to Equity:***

- More than 60 countries worldwide criminalize homosexual status or conduct ([Statement from President Joe Biden on International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia](#)), which leads to increased violence and discrimination against LGBTQI+ persons in those countries.
- While there are 136 million intersex persons around the world, intersex persons face significant barriers to health equity and full inclusion in civic and social life. In particular, intersex children continue to experience medical interventions that cause lifelong physical and mental health challenges.
- Few countries provide a pathway for legal gender recognition for transgender and nonbinary persons creating barriers to critical services and enjoyment of fundamental freedoms.



### ***Strategy 3: Evidence Base to Support Strategy:***

- [ILGA 2023 Annual Review](#): Europe-focused report which details increased anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric from political leaders and an increase in both occurrence and severity of violence, which has led to increased migration and asylum seekers. Europe, at least, is seeing some positive movement in ending harmful intersex surgeries on minors.
- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#): catalogues acts of violence, criminalization, and other abuses based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. It includes country-specific examples of criminalization; violence and harassment; discrimination; status of legal gender recognition; involuntary or coercive medical or psychological practices; and restrictions on freedom of expression, association, or peaceful assembly.
- [Human Rights Watch Country Profiles: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#): reports focused on legal activities countries are taking to advance or restrict LGBTQI+ rights. Criminalization, legality of same-sex marriage, specific notable events around rights, and rights of intersex persons are focus areas of the reports.
- [Outright International Country Overviews](#): focuses on whether same-sex relationships are legal, if legal gender recognition is available, and whether LGBTQI+ advocacy groups can register in that country.

### ***Strategy 3: Actions to Achieve Equity:***

To address these barriers, the Department will:

- Continue to develop a nondiscrimination rule for all grants and contracts. The first year of the Equity Action Plan, we focused on development of a nondiscrimination rule for all grants and contracts. In 2024, the Department will implement the rule and socialize it with relevant stakeholders.
- Institutionalize advocacy by all officers in the Department for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons. This effort will focus on developing strategies, toolkits, one-pagers, training, talking points, and other policy documents for three specific advocacy areas: decriminalization of homosexual status or conduct; legal gender recognition; and ending violence against intersex persons.



- Implement an action plan to end so-called conversion therapy. In the first year of the Equity Action Plan, we focused on development of an action plan to end so-called conversion therapy, as directed by President Biden’s executive order. The Department is currently focusing on designing output and outcome measures and monitoring implementation.
- Strengthen and provide resources to LGBTQI+ advocacy groups around the world. We will push for funding for local LGBTQI+ advocacy groups through participating in relevant grant panels and advocating through bureau resource requests, focusing on funding intended to build sustainable advocacy groups/networks.

***Strategy 3: Near to Medium-Term Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):***

- Nondiscrimination rule is codified and standard in all grants and contracts for foreign assistance awards unless there is an applicable waiver.
- Number of action plans, strategies, toolkits, one-pagers, trainings, or policy documents to support each of the three priority advocacy areas.
- Number of targeted community consultations and public engagement activities on U.S. foreign policy priorities with LGBTQI+ persons.
- Number of U.S. public statements, media outreach activities, and private/public diplomacy efforts in support of LGBTQI+ persons.

***Strategy 3: Longer Term Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):***

- Three additional countries outlaw conversion therapy practices.
- Increased foreign assistance in support of the human rights of and inclusive development for LGBTQI+ persons.



## Strategy 4: Promote Respect for International Disability Rights

*Advance the rights of persons with disabilities globally through a values-based approach to U.S. foreign policies, programs, and processes that respects human rights.*

**Strategy 4: Equity Principal:** [Special Advisor on International Disability Rights](#)

### **Strategy 4: Whole-of-Government Equity Objective:**

- **Global Equality:** Promote equity and respect for human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.

**Strategy 4: Collaborating Agencies:** Department of Labor, Department of Education, Department of Transportation, Health and Human Services, Executive Office of the President

### **Strategy 4: Barriers to Equity:**

- Inaccessibility of transportation, physical infrastructure of buildings, and digital infrastructure are tangible barriers for persons with disabilities seeking to access education, healthcare, public spaces, and employment.
- Governments and private sector cite a lack of capacity, technical expertise, and political will to make society more accessible and inclusive of persons with disabilities with very little mechanisms to hold such governments accountable. This is especially critical in moments of crisis.
- Social stigma and narratives in society surrounding persons with disabilities perpetuate attitudinal barriers about persons with disabilities' abilities and roles in society. Traditional media and social media further perpetuate harmful social stigmas.
- Institutional barriers from rules, restrictions, requirements, routines, traditions, or habits within society that are seamlessly integrated into education, workplace, relational, and other subcultures are often unnoticed inhibitors to equity for persons with disabilities. Changing institutional barriers to provide greater equity is often met with resistance to change a tradition or habit with the excuse that it would harm the others for a few potential benefactors.



#### ***Strategy 4: Evidence Base to Support Strategy:***

- Analysis of the low participation of persons with disabilities in the labor market and higher education as compared to non-disabled persons in each country (see [International Labor Organization database](#)).
- A lack of or minimal academic research on persons with disabilities in health and medical literature (see [UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities for the UN General Assembly report](#)).
- Civil society outreach and literature on the ongoing barriers, discrimination, and harassment experienced by persons with disabilities.
- [World Health Organization report on disability](#) on the lack of services available to and obstacles faced by persons with disabilities.

#### ***Strategy 4: Actions to Achieve Equity:***

To address these barriers, the Department will:

- Amplify Executive Order 14095 on Increasing Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers outside the United States through initiatives led by the Special Advisor on International Disability Rights to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in the Care Agenda as receivers and givers of care. Draw attention internationally to the fact that gaps in care could occur that have a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities.
- Strengthen and resource disability advocacy groups around the world by pushing for funding for local persons with disabilities advocacy groups through participating in relevant grant panels and advocating through bureau resource requests, focusing on funding intended to build sustainable advocacy groups/networks.
- Advocate for greater implementation of disability laws. As countries around the world ratify and implement the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD), we must help ensure that they have the technical assistance and capacity to implement the CRPD and advance the livelihoods and promote independent living and self-sufficiency of persons with disabilities.



#### ***Strategy 4: Near to Medium Term Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):***

- Increased number of U.S. public statements, media outreach activities, and private/public diplomacy efforts to raise awareness, build capacity, promote disability-inclusive and accessible democratic frameworks that respect human rights, and promote accountability for violations and abuses of the rights of persons with disabilities.
- Increased number of dialogues led by the U.S. on accessibility, disability rights, and inclusion as a neutral foreign policy tool to navigate complex relationship dynamics and establish a strategic entry point for engagement on other human rights issues.
- Increased number of targeted community consultations and public engagement activities on U.S. foreign policy priorities with persons with disabilities.

#### ***Strategy 4: Longer Term Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):***

- At least six states parties to the CRPD note that as a result of U.S. support, they were able to better implement CRPD-aligned legal frameworks that protect the rights of persons with disabilities.
- A dedicated disability-inclusive democracy working group is institutionalized within the Global Action on Disability Network while the United States serves as the group's cochair, and the United States takes significant action to drum up support for a G7 Inclusion Summit.
- Improvement in access and inclusion gaps for emergency planning and crisis preparedness to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind during moments of crisis. Further, persons with disabilities should be included in recovery and peacebuilding processes to lay the foundation for a more accessible society for everyone.



## Strategy 5: Advance Gender Equity and Equality Globally

*Bolster strategic messaging and diplomatic engagement on the rights and empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity as a fundamental principle of democracy and improve outcomes in gender equality.*

**Strategy 5: Equity Principal:** [Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues \(S/GWI\)](#)

### **Strategy 5: Whole-of-Government Equity Objective:**

- **Global Equality:** Promote equity and human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.

**Strategy 5: Collaborating Agencies:** U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Treasury

### **Strategy 5: Barriers to Equity:**

- When [women’s rights are viewed as a separate issue from human rights](#), or gender equality is misconstrued as a threat to the enjoyment of all human rights, the sovereignty of states, or national values and traditions, democracy as both a political system and shared societal commitment to fundamental values cannot flourish.
- Over the last decade, [anti-women’s rights movements have become more visible, vocal, widespread, and successful](#) and are often tied to pushback on broader human rights issues. These movements are transnational in nature and associated with or supported by authoritarian regimes that seek to attain or retain power, contributing to global democratic backsliding. Per [Freedom House’s annual Freedom in the World report](#), 2022 marked 16 consecutive years of democratic decline.
- These movements and authoritarian regimes, such as the governments of Russia and the People’s Republic of China, strive to dismantle human rights institutions and instruments, employ disinformation aimed to fuel identity politics, and promote discriminatory national legislation – encouraging and supporting other countries to do the same.



### ***Strategy 5: Evidence Base to Support Strategy:***

- There is overwhelming quantitative evidence that women and girls' empowerment and [gender equality are associated with peace and stability in society](#). [Promoting gender equality demonstrates American values](#) of democracy, respect for human rights, and inclusivity and improves the effectiveness of [U.S. foreign policy](#). Democracy, a governing system based on the will and consent of the governed, is founded on institutions that are accountable to all citizens, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for all individuals' human rights, which [requires that women and girls are safe and empowered](#). Both democracy and gender equality, longstanding U.S. values, are effective and successful in delivering long-term stability and prosperity.
- Despite decades of progress and long-standing multilateral instruments on advancing the rights and empowerment of women and girls, gains in gender equality are stalled or regressing around the world. The United Nations estimates that, at the current rate, it will take an estimated [286 years to close gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws](#); 140 years for women to be represented equally in positions of power and leadership in the workplace; and 300 years to end child, early, and forced marriage.

### ***Strategy 5: Actions to Achieve Equity:***

To address these barriers, the Department will:

- Enhance strategic communications in partnership with civil society, including clear, consistent, and tailored messaging on gender equality as fundamental to the advancement of human rights and democracy.
- Pursue targeted diplomatic engagement on the rights and empowerment of women and girls and the wide-ranging benefits to societies as core democratic principles and build coalitions with government partners to share information and align narratives and approaches.
- Strengthen integration of gender equality in the Department's efforts to counter corruption and racially or ethnically-motivated violent extremism, address the misuse of technology and disinformation, invest in data and evidence-based policymaking, and reinforce gender equality as a core tenant of the multilateral system.





- Expand support to, and meaningful engagement with women leaders, including by establishing the Department’s first Women’s Leadership Network; a diverse range of civil society organizations; and journalists to better understand, safely identify, and counter pushback on gender equality, with guidance for Department personnel on inclusive consultations.
- Enhance Department personnel capacity, training, and understanding of how to advance gender equality through policy development, diplomatic engagement, and foreign assistance programming, including through new and strengthened courses at the Foreign Service Institute.

#### ***Strategy 5: Near to Medium Term Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)***

- Number of community consultations and public engagement activities with women and girls focused on better understanding and countering anti-women's rights movements.
- Number of U.S. public statements, media outreach activities, and private/public diplomacy efforts on the intersections between gender equality and democracy, and their proven benefits to stability and prosperity.
- Number of joint bilateral and multilateral efforts to combat discriminatory national legislation and/or address the role of technology in global anti-rights movements.
- Establishment of the Women’s Leadership Network and number of participants engaged.
- Number of Department personnel taking gender equality-focused courses at the Foreign Service Institute.

#### ***Strategy 5: Longer Term Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes)***

- Enhanced tracking of data on, and mapping of, transnational financial and advocacy activities of anti-rights groups and movements to better inform targeted interventions and engagement.
- Percentage of participants in the Women’s Leadership Network and related ongoing consultations that report improved messaging that effectively counters attacks on women's rights as part of broader global anti-rights movements and authoritarianism.