



**Safe from the Start is a State Department and USAID program that prioritizes prevention and protection from gender-based violence (GBV). The Safe from the Start Act will make humanitarian assistance more efficient and effective at addressing the needs of the communities it serves.**

## About the Act

The Safe from the Start Act (H.R. 4092) will formalize this important, vital program and expand it. The legislation will help humanitarian actors prevent GBV, provide critical protections and, at the same time, open opportunities for affected women to lead and make decisions that impact them and their communities as they react to and recover from crises.

In humanitarian emergencies, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to GBV as it is often used to intimidate and exert control in an unstable situation. GBV can range from increased levels of child marriage, human trafficking, intimate partner violence (IPV); sexual assault or exploitation; to other harmful practices such as female genital cutting.

## The Act will ensure:

- Context-appropriate services for girls and women who are exposed to GBV during crises;
- Tools and structures for greater efficiency and accountability of response and recovery efforts;
- Financial and institutional support for female-led Civil Society Organizations (CSOs); and
- Prioritization of local prevention and response efforts.

## H.R. 4092 Original Cosponsors

1. Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY-6)
2. Rep. Chris Stewart (R-UT-2)
3. Rep. Lois Frankel (D-FL-21)
4. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL-25)
5. Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA-6)

## Women's Leadership and Local Involvement Makes a Difference

Time and again, it has been demonstrated that prioritizing the needs, voices, and leadership of women before, during and after emergencies helps communities recover faster and build stronger foundations to deal with future shocks. When an emergency strikes, women and girls are uniquely positioned to act as first responders and agents of change, as well as the best representatives of their needs. Yet too often, women and girls themselves are never consulted before or during a crisis. When women have the tools and space to help lead their communities during times of crisis, they are able to contribute to creating a stable environment during non-emergency settings.

The Safe from the Start Act recognizes that the U.S. Government should provide assistance and protection where needed but also build the capacity of women and women-led local organizations to act as first responders, community leaders, and drivers of sustainable change. These women leaders have the networks, cultural understanding, and reach within their communities to access those who are the most vulnerable and in need of assistance. This is particularly crucial in developing interventions to prevent and address gender-based violence in emergencies in their own communities with culturally appropriate responses.

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