

**House Committee of Appropriations Subcommittee of State, Foreign Operations and  
Related Programs**

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Testimony FY 2012

**Madam Chairwoman and distinguished Members of the Committee:**

Thank you for allowing me to speak today before the subcommittee. I am here on behalf of Women's Campaign International, an organization that was founded in 1998. We are requesting \$3 million.

Following my short stay on the hill, I was appointed to be the Director of the U.S. Delegation to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Here, we saw, in action, what happens when women leaders come together and demand their seat at the decision making table. It was out of this conference that Women's Campaign International was born –to support women's participation and to create a platform from which their voices could be heard.

Since this conference, the importance of women's participation has been cited by the United Nations, the World Bank, and USAID. These organizations emphasize the connection between the economic and political empowerment of women and social change. Ban-ki Moon stated that, "Women must be full partners in development, so they can lift themselves and their communities out of poverty." Currently, however, that full partnership has yet to be realized. Women perform 66 percent of the world's work, produce 50 percent of the food, but earn 10 percent of the income and own 1 percent of the property. Women are 51% of the population,

but only account for 19% of seats in national government. Of the 500 largest corporations in the world, only 13 have a female chief executive officer. It has been shown that with the money they do get, women are more likely to invest it in their families and communities. With what decision making power they have, women are more likely to direct funds towards social programming, health, education and peace building. This is and has been the cornerstone of this movement and this is the foundation of WCI's work.

Since its founding, WCI has worked in 2 dozen countries around the world to promote women's participation in public advocacy, market and political processes. WCI's impact can best be shown through its stories.

Let me tell you about Her Excellency Callista Mutharika. We first met her as a parliamentary hopeful at our campaign skills training in Malawi in 2003. Callista, along with 26 other trainees got elected to parliament that year, doubling the number of women in Malawian parliament. Due to her strong work ethic and charisma Callista was eventually appointed to the Presidential Cabinet. In office, Callista and her female colleagues were a force. WCI worked with these newly-elected women members to come together, across party lines, to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in Malawi. They led by example and made it publicly known that they would be tested for HIV. Their ability to address the issue as a unified group, not only reduced the stigma of getting tested for HIV/AIDS, but also increased their visibility as agents of change and politicians who kept their campaign promises.

Since her time in Parliament Callista has taken on a new role in leading the country of Malawi as its First Lady. Here, Callista decided to use this platform in the most effective way she knew—advocating for women's leadership, safe motherhood, health care for women and girls, prevention of HIV/AIDS and Malaria, and promoting girls' education. She is now playing

a significant role in WCI's First Ladies Strategic Initiative, a program helping to build the capacity of the Offices of First Ladies in Africa.

WCI is also committed to supporting sustainable community based development. Currently, in Liberia, we support a national network of rural women's groups. These groups are often overlooked by economists, politicians and humanitarian workers. However, they are a strong force—together, they worked to elect the first female head of state in Africa—and together, they have established the beginnings of strong community organizations—formed to make their own change in their own communities. It is from here that WCI works with these groups. WCI's approach is simple—build on the existing skills and structures that are in place and provide strategic support to make sustainable community programs.

Take, for example, the agriculture collective in Beatoe a small village in Gbarpolu County, Liberia. As a group, these farmers came together to plant 30 acres of cassava. What they didn't have were plans to distribute the profits from the farm, a system to make collective decisions or a plan of how to best price and sell their goods. This is where WCI came in. We worked with them to choose a value added tool to increase the overall profit they make as a group. Over the next 2 years, WCI will work with this group as they create and implement a plan to maintain the tool, manage the profits and ensure that the benefits reach all members of the group in a fair and transparent manner.

As you can see, our programs, like the needs of women around the world, are diverse. They range from value added agriculture to healthcare to economic empowerment and financial literacy. We work with members of parliament and First Ladies. We work with rural farmers and market women. What unites all of our projects is a focus on women's leadership, confidence building and the ability of women to work together to collectively overcome the obstacles that

they face in a sustainable way, long after our programs are over.

### **WCI Request**

I am here today to respectfully ask the committee to support WCI's request for \$3 million in order to expand and continue our vital work supporting political candidates like Callista and community groups like the agriculture collective in Beatoe town. With this funding WCI hopes to continue its programs to provide women leaders with tools and resources to identify their own needs and to spearhead their own solutions to the challenges we all face. We may not speak the same language but we all speak the same mo