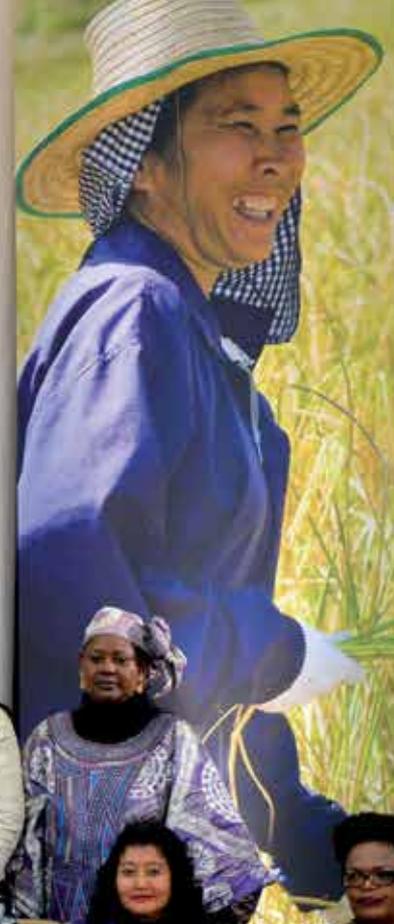
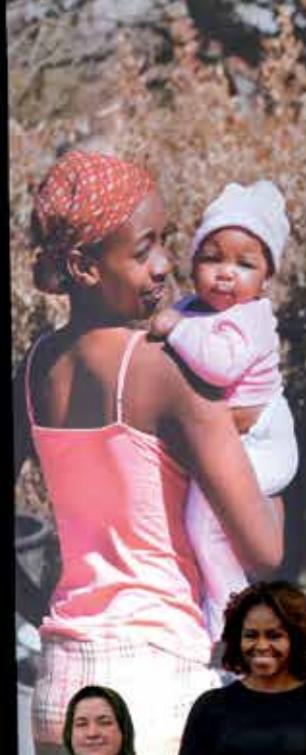


INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE AWARDS



PREFACE

THIS BOOK REFLECTS PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S commitment to advancing women's participation in preventing conflict and keeping peace. It is inspired by the countless women and girls on the frontlines who make a difference every day in their communities and societies by creating opportunities and building peace. Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, and the administration are working with partners across the international community to engage women leaders and ensure they have a seat at the table as decisions are made that impact their lives and the future of their countries.

Around the globe, policymakers and activists are working to empower women as agents of peace and to help address the challenges they face as survivors of conflict. When women are involved in peace negotiations, they raise important issues that might be otherwise overlooked. When women are educated and enabled to participate in every aspect of their societies—from growing the economy to strengthening the security sector—communities are more stable and less prone to conflict.

Every moment of every day our world is becoming more interconnected, and we are wise to engage all stakeholders in finding solutions to our most difficult challenges. Acknowledging the barriers many societies still impose on women's participation and encouraging the potential of women to promote peace—in their own countries and around the world—are parts of this process.

Our understanding of the importance of women in building and keeping peace is informed by a wide range of experts, from diplomats to military officials and from human rights activists to development professionals. The goal of this book is to bring together these diverse voices. As leaders in every region of the world recognize, no country can reach its full potential without the participation of all its citizens. This book seeks to add to the chorus of voices working to ensure that women and girls take their rightful place in building a stronger, safer, more prosperous world.

CATHERINE RUSSELL
U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for
Global Women's Issues

left: First Lady Michelle Obama, Deputy Secretary Heather Higginbottom, and U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Catherine Russell with 2014 Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Awardees, Washington, DC, March 2014 (State Department)