

**TESTIMONY ON FY 2013 STATE DEPARTMENT FOREIGN OPERATIONS
APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE HOUSE STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND RELATED
PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

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On behalf of Save the Children, I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony addressing the needs of children in the FY 2014 State-Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. Save the Children has entered its 80th year as a nonprofit, child-focused organization working to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives. Today, we work in 18 states across the nation as well as in more than 120 countries, serving more than 84 million children to ensure they are safe, healthy, educated, and live in economically and food secure households.

Save the Children supports President Obama's call in his State of the Union address for the United States to "join with our allies to eradicate such extreme poverty in the next two decades: by connecting more people to the global economy and empowering women; by giving our young and brightest minds new opportunities to serve and helping communities to feed, power, and educate themselves; by saving the world's children from preventable deaths; and by realizing the promise of an AIDS-free generation," and hopes Congress will embrace it. Investing in effective programs that enable children – the main cylinder of future progress – to achieve their full potential is the path to a more prosperous and secure world. We acknowledge the critical importance of addressing our budget deficit, but are deeply concerned by cuts that balance the budget on the back of vulnerable children at home and abroad.

More generally, Save the Children supports robust funding for the 150 account, avoiding deep and disproportionate cuts to an account which represents a sliver of discretionary spending. Through our day to day work in the field, we see how effective foreign assistance programs can be in promoting sustainable poverty reduction and helping children and mothers. This investment, however, is not only the right thing to do; these programs also advance U.S. economic interests. Half of all U.S. exports now go to the developing world. These markets represent 95% of the world's consumers and support over 10 million American jobs. If they grow, we grow. In fact, 10 of America's top 15 trading partners were once recipients of foreign aid – meaning that foreign aid works. Moreover, these programs are critical investments in U.S. national security. We therefore ask that the Committee fund the FY 2014 State, Foreign Operations Appropriations bill:

- \$750 million to fund core programs within the Maternal and Child Health Account
- \$200 million for the nutrition-specific account within Global Health Programs Account at USAID
- \$1.45 billion for Food Security & Agriculture in all bilateral accounts
- \$925 million for basic education programs for children overseas
- Maintain FY12 funding levels for emergency and humanitarian accounts
- \$1.4 billion for USAID Operating Expenses
- \$1.8 billion for Food for Peace

Save the Children's recommendations address a range of needs because we have learned from experience that the well-being of children is best approached in an integrated, holistic fashion.

Newborn, Child, and Maternal Health

In 2012 the United States joined 172 countries in a pledge to end preventable child deaths within a generation. India, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria have all come forward with concrete commitments to do their part in ending preventable child deaths. To keep up this momentum, the U.S. must continue to demonstrate visible leadership and robust investments in addressing maternal and child health.

U.S. commitment has contributed to reducing under-5 child mortality in the developing world from 20 million in 1960 to 6.9 million in 2011. In 15 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that received assistance from USAID, under-5 mortality declined by an average of 33 percent between 1996 and 2006 alone, with some countries achieving a reduction as high as 50 percent. And substantial progress in maternal health has been made in many countries including Egypt, Honduras, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Peru, and parts of Bangladesh.

Despite this program, too many children are continuing to die from preventable causes. U.S. leadership is key to reverse this trend.

Child Hunger and Malnutrition

We urge you to support significant funding for international food security programs. Humanitarian and development assistance programs like Food for Peace and the President's Feed the Future initiative support our values, promote national security, help fuel long-term US economic prosperity and most of all - make a difference. These programs reach some of the most vulnerable populations as well as those with some capacity for increased market participation that with the added push from programs like Feed the Future can make it out of extreme poverty. Malnutrition is the underlying cause of death for 1 in 5 children who die before the age of 5, totaling some 3.5 million children each year. The Copenhagen Consensus, an expert panel of economists including several Nobel laureates, concluded that fighting malnutrition in young children should be a top priority of governments and that every \$1 invested in nutrition generates as much as \$138 in better health and increased productivity. US food security projects often pursue effective, multi-sectoral approaches, helping to address both hunger and malnutrition simultaneously.

It is important to realize that foreign assistance that assists people in poor countries to feed themselves, build livelihoods and care for their children, also benefits the US economy. Of our 15

largest trading partners, 11 were at one time recipients of US assistance. It is imperative that we invest in comprehensive approaches to fighting hunger, poverty and malnutrition through food security, which includes sustainable agricultural development, child and maternal nutrition, sustainable safety nets, improved emergency response and management, disaster risk reduction, and early warning systems. With nearly a billion people in the world suffering from chronic hunger, and so much of the world's attention focused on tackling this problem, now is not the time to cut back on these programs.

Education and Early Childhood Development

Save the Children has worked with tens of millions of children, and these children tell us that education is a key to peace, security and their future prosperity. We have seen firsthand – in countries such as Egypt, Haiti and Afghanistan – the difference education makes. Approximately 61 million children are currently out-of-school, over half of whom live in conflict-affected and fragile states. Investing in quality basic education, beginning in early childhood, is essential for economic growth and stability. Early childhood education and development programming is one of the key ways to improve learning and school retention, and should be included in the U.S. government's global education assistance. Research shows that experiences in the earliest years of life play a critical role in a child's ability to grow up healthy and ready to learn.

Ensuring that children have access to school is important but not enough. Too many schools around the world fail to provide a quality basic education. Schools need to ensure students acquire the foundational skills of literacy and math. Save the Children's innovative Literacy Boost program is demonstrating that we can partner with struggling schools to improve children's reading skills. In Pakistan, for example, children enrolled in the Literacy Boost program exceeded the goals in five core reading skills and outperformed their peers in schools without the program.

Children in Emergency and Conflict Situations

Children are always the most vulnerable in any conflict or emergency. Robust investment in the Migration and Refugee Assistance, Food for Peace, and International Disaster Assistance accounts will enable the U.S. to continue addressing the increased needs posed by ever larger and more frequent humanitarian crises. Major cuts to humanitarian budgets would have drastic consequences, including the inability of the U.S. to fully respond to emerging crises in areas of strategic interest like Syria without cutting life-saving assistance in other places of acute need like South Sudan. The reduced inability of the US to provide support for people displaced by conflict or natural disaster, or to provide adequate support to programs aimed at supporting vulnerable women and children in conflict would undermine U.S. foreign policy goals in critical places..

The United States has been the global leader in responding to the needs of vulnerable communities. Retaining this leadership and ensuring effective humanitarian response require up-front funds for life-saving activities at the start of an emergency. They also require investment to support recovery and longer term solutions. Continued U.S. commitment to adequate levels of humanitarian funding is thus important for our interests and the wellbeing of those we help.

Conclusion

We thank the Subcommittee for its leadership on U.S. development programs. Your support for child-focused foreign assistance priorities is very much appreciated as Save the Children works to serve some of the most vulnerable. Robust funding for effective programs helps not only poor and vulnerable people, but it also advances our international leadership as well as our economic and national security interests. We recognize we are in a very difficult budgetary environment. At a minimum, given the stakes involved, it is vital that Congress avoid deep and disproportionate cuts to the international affairs budget.