



**TESTIMONY ON FY 2016 STATE DEPARTMENT FOREIGN OPERATIONS
APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE HOUSE STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND
RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

Request to Testify: March 3, 2015

Michael Klosson, Vice President, Policy and Humanitarian Response
Save the Children

On behalf of Save the Children, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the needs of vulnerable children and families around the world, and the critical role the United States can play in addressing them, all while advancing our national interests. Save the Children is a nonprofit, child-focused organization working in 19 states across the nation as well as in some 120 countries. We build capacity for countries to deliver and provide direct support for health, education, protection, and disaster relief for more than 125 million children. For FY 2016 State, Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, Save the Children supports:

- \$850 million to fund the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Account
- \$200 million for the nutrition-specific USAID account within Global Health Programs
- \$1.2 billion for Feed the Future
- \$800 million (bilateral) and an additional \$125 million for Global Partnership on Education (GPE) for basic education programs for children overseas
- \$5.8 billion for humanitarian accounts, including \$2.5 billion for International Disaster Assistance (IDA) and \$3.3 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)
- \$1.5 billion for USAID Operating Expenses

Save the Children supports robust funding for the 150 account and opposes deep and disproportionate cuts to an account which represents only about 1% of the budget – a sliver of overall discretionary spending. At a time when we face many challenges around the world and tight budget constraints, it is more important than ever to remember that the well-being of our nation is inextricably linked to creating a more stable and prosperous world that this investment supports. We are dedicated to working with Congress to support and maintain investments in international development and humanitarian programs.

We appreciate Congress' efforts to deliver robust funding for our shared priorities in the FY2015 Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, particularly for Maternal and Child Health, Ebola, and humanitarian programs. Strong and continued U.S. commitment has contributed to: the reduction of child and maternal deaths by nearly half since 1990; a 35% decline of new HIV infections globally among children under 15 years old between 2009 and 2012; and a decrease in global hunger by more than 34 percent since 1990. In addition, U.S. support has helped develop resilience in communities and helped millions of people rebuild their lives after natural disasters and other crises.

As you know, these programs not only have tremendous impact on improving our world, but they also advance U.S. security and economic interests. Nearly half of all U.S. exports now go to the developing world--representing 95% of the world's consumers and supporting over 10 million American jobs. Ten of America's top 15 trading partners were once recipients of foreign aid. Our leadership and influence is threatened when our investments are outpaced by other countries – like China.

We therefore urge the Committee do its best to protect funding at robust levels for these critical

programs that impact children and demonstrate strong U.S. international leadership.

Maternal and Child Health, and Nutrition: Robust investments in MCH and nutrition are required to further the U.S. goal of ending preventable maternal and child deaths within a generation. The June 2014 launch of USAID's *Acting on the Call: Ending Preventable Maternal and Child Deaths* report provided an evidence-based roadmap to save 15 million children's lives and 600,000 women's lives by 2020. This goal is achievable, but requires strong support by the U.S. and others for these critical child survival and nutrition programs. USAID's multi-year, multi-sectoral nutrition strategy committed to reducing stunting among 2 million children also requires committed and robust resources.

With U.S. assistance, almost a billion cases of child diarrhea are treated each year; more than 100 million children received basic immunizations and 75 million infants and children with pneumonia received treatment annually. Robust resources are needed to tackle stubborn challenges -- such as newborn deaths, which account for 44% of all child deaths under the age of five worldwide and malnutrition, the underlying cause of 45% of child deaths. U.S. leadership has been catalytic in promoting country ownership of maternal and child health, resulting in many countries developing their own multi-year national child health and nutrition plans. With the increased multi-year US pledge for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, it is critical that multilateral funds are in addition to bilateral funds, to ensure that vaccinations reach children most in need and deliver maximum impact.

Hunger and Food Security: *Feed the Future (FtF)* is a whole-of-government strategy aimed at tackling global hunger and malnutrition through high-impact approaches improving agricultural productivity, expanding markets and trade, preventing child malnutrition, and strengthening the resilience of vulnerable people. FtF requires robust funding to achieve its ambitious goal to reduce poverty and child stunting by 20% in the 19 FtF priority countries, by leveraging work done by all relevant US federal agencies and offices. FtF has consistently achieved or surpassed most objectives, including working with millions of small producers to adopt improved technologies or practices, and getting critical nutrition programs to millions of children. We are thankful to the House of Representatives for passing the *Global Food Security Act of 2014* last year and are hopeful that both the House and Senate can pass similar legislation this session.

Basic Education (bilateral) and Global Partnership on Education (GPE): Around the world, 57 million primary school aged children are still not in school. Many more who are in school fail to acquire even basic reading, writing and numeracy skills. Support for basic education is imperative to help USAID reach its strategic goals of improving reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades and increasing equitable access to education in crisis environments for 15 million children by 2015. Investments in education are critical to further poverty reduction: if all students in low-income countries completed school with basic reading skills, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty. The US Government is funding ten projects in ten countries building off Save the Children's Literacy Boost program, which studies show leads to significantly higher school retention rates and up to 4.5 times greater gains on key reading skills than peer groups. In addition to bilateral funding, we ask this Subcommittee to increase support for the Global Partnership for Education, the only multilateral exclusively focused on giving all children around the world the opportunity to learn.

Children in Emergency and Conflict Situations: Children are always the most vulnerable in any conflict or emergency. About 6 million Syrian children, for example, inside Syria and in neighboring countries are in need of humanitarian assistance. Robust investment in the Migration and Refugee Assistance, and International Disaster Assistance accounts will enable the U.S. to continue addressing the increased needs posed by humanitarian crises. When disasters strike, these funds ensure that vulnerable populations around the globe have access to health, food, clean water, safe shelter and other lifesaving assistance. And U.S. leadership, as we saw in the strong U.S. response to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, galvanizes others to act. Cuts to humanitarian budgets could have drastic consequences, hobbling the ability of the U.S. to respond fully to emerging crises in areas such as the Middle East without cutting life-saving assistance in other places of acute need such as South Sudan or the Central African Republic. The reduced ability of

the US to provide support for people displaced by conflict or natural disaster, or to conduct programs aimed at supporting vulnerable women and children in conflict, would undermine U.S. efforts to build stability in critical places. Continued U.S. commitment to adequate levels of funding for humanitarian and child protection purposes, as well as implementation of the Action Plan for Children in Adversity (APCA), is thus important both for the well-being of those we help and for our national interests. With ongoing crises in Syria, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and the Middle East, it is critical that the U.S continue to make the necessary investments into vital programs.

USAID Operating Expenses: Robust funding for the USAID Forward agenda, USAID Operating Expenses, and a Working Capital Fund will allow key foreign assistance reforms to move forward and strengthen programs. Proper funding for USAID will help ensure effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars by modernizing our implementation and procurement systems and rebuilding the capacity for USAID to make smart choices. By increasing USAID's capacity to evaluate programs, we can ensure U.S. foreign assistance programs are based on strong evidence in order to have the most impact for children and their families in the developing world.

Conclusion: We thank the Subcommittee for its continued leadership on U.S. humanitarian and development programs and its demonstrated strong support for these priority programs in the FY15 appropriations process. Save the Children appreciates this bipartisan support for programs that are essential for fighting poverty and giving children at home and around the world a fair chance in life. We ask for your continued partnership with us to invest in children so they have what every child deserves – the right to survive and thrive.