

**TESTIMONY ON FY2020 STATE DEPARTMENT, FOREIGN OPERATIONS,
AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS BILL PREPARED FOR THE
HOUSE STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

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 indispensable role United States leadership plays in addressing them. Save the Children is a nonprofit, child-focused organization working in 14 U.S. states and territories as well as in more than 120 countries around the world. We build capacity for countries to deliver and provide direct support for health, nutrition, education, protection, food security and livelihoods and disaster relief for more than 157 million children. **I will be testifying today on the International Affairs Budget as well as investments through the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill in the Maternal and Child Health, Nutrition, Global Food Security, Basic Education, International Disaster Assistance, Migration & Refugee Assistance, and USAID Operating Expenses.**

Globally, we have seen progress that every child is able to survive and thrive, reminding us that U.S. leadership is making a difference. We have witnessed dramatic declines in the number of people living in extreme poverty, child and maternal deaths, childhood stunting (a severe form of childhood malnutrition), and out of school school-aged children.

However, at a time of important progress for children around the world, many still face tough challenges. More than half the world's children – 1.2 billion – are living in poverty, facing deadly conflict, and impacted by gender discrimination. These circumstances threaten girls' safety, education, and health, and often their very survival.

As the nature of conflict changes, so does its impact on girls and boys. We are witnessing an increasing number of children living in harm's way: 420 million children – nearly one in five children worldwide – live in a conflict zone, according to our recent report, an increase of nearly 30 million children from 2016. Verified incidents of grave violations against girls and boys, including killing, abduction, attacks on schools, and denial of humanitarian aid, rose to an all-time high of over 25,000. In addition to the direct effects of conflict, children's well-being is further compromised in indirect ways, including malnutrition, the breakdown of educational systems, and the destruction of health, water, and sanitation systems. Although all children affected by conflict face increased protection risks and response needs, girls, by virtue of their age and gender, experience particular vulnerabilities, and too often fall through gaps in age- or gender-blind policies and programming that target women or children. When armed violence increases, exacerbated risks of gender-based violence, including trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual violence, combined with entrenched gender norms at the family and community level, drastically impact girls' mobility and access to needed services such as education and healthcare. We need to step up efforts to protect and improve the lives of all children living in conflict zones and adopt a gender-responsive approach.

Families – and children in particular – around the world face escalating challenges, thus putting a premium on strong American leadership and increased demands on the International Affairs Budget (function 150), which accounts for only one percent of the federal budget. U.S. leadership in addressing these humanitarian and development challenges has never been more

critical. We applaud bipartisan Congressional leadership in rejecting the deep and disproportionate cuts proposed in the President's FY2018 and FY2019 budget requests. Addressing those myriad challenges around the world advances our national interests, positioning America as a dynamic force for human progress in the world. Now is not the time to shortchange these accounts, which would and cripple our foreign policy and assistance tools.

We urge Congress to support a bipartisan budget deal that protects children both here in the U.S. and around the globe. Congress should support \$60 billion for the International Affairs Budget in FY2020 in order to sustain U.S. leadership in supporting poverty-focused development, global health, global gender equality, and humanitarian assistance programs. Any cuts below the current level would, in our view, threaten that leadership and pose unacceptable risks both to American interests and to vulnerable children around the world. In fact, additional base funding will be required simply to mitigate the impact of declining caps for overseas contingency operations (OCO) funding in FY2020.

We welcome USAID Administrator Green's concept of the journey to self-reliance as a pathway for sustainable development, promoting global stability and prosperity. U.S. partnership remains fundamental; transitions will only be successful if the U.S. upholds its foreign assistance budget as central to the foreign policy goals. If countries are to achieve self-reliance, select funding increases may be necessary in the short-term. For this reason, we call on Congress to maintain USAID Operating Expenses at the level of at least \$1.45 billion in FY20 to implement the reorganization and sustain important reforms. In addition to robust resources, country partnerships, domestic resource mobilization, and gender-transformative programming are critical to ensuring effective and sustainable results for the long term.

We therefore urge the Committee to protect funding at robust levels for these critical programs that impact children and project the kind of strong U.S. international leadership that has been a catalyst for building stronger, more stable communities and countries, all key to advancing our national interests.

Maternal and Child Health (FY20 request: \$900 million) and Nutrition (FY20 request: \$160 million): Investments in maternal and child health and nutrition, including U.S. contributions to GAVI, cement the foundation for healthy, stable societies. U.S. leadership and effective programming that produce results have contributed to more mothers, newborns, and children accessing basic health care services including immunizations, treatment of pneumonia or diarrhea, and nutrition. U.S. leadership and assistance contributed to cutting child and maternal mortality around the world in half since 1990. This means 18,000 more children will survive *today* than did on any day in 1990 – and 650 more mothers. Since 2008, USAID's efforts have helped save the lives of 4.6 million children and 200,000 women. America can be proud of this record, and communities I have visited express gratitude for American support. Child stunting has also dropped significantly in at least eight countries supported by USAID. Stunting prevalence dropped by 36 percent in Nepal and 16 percent in Ethiopia.

Despite this progress, 5.4 million children under-5 still die each year, almost one million of them on the day they are born, and 303,000 women die annually. Moreover, malnutrition is the underlying cause of 45 percent of deaths in children under-5. Robust resources are needed to tackle stubborn challenges that remain. For example, newborn deaths account for 44 percent of all child deaths under the age of five worldwide, and one million newborns will die on the very day they are born. And while deaths from illnesses such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV have dropped significantly, progress in preventing deaths from pneumonia has been much slower.

Pneumonia is the single biggest infectious cause of death for children under five, despite the existence of vaccines to prevent it.

USAID – through its focus on maternal health, newborn health, child health, nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene – has the tools, expertise, and data to implement a strategic plan to save the lives of 15 million children and 600,000 women by 2020, but only if these programs are properly resourced. Achieving this goal represents a benchmark in the work towards our shared goal of ending preventable maternal and child deaths within a generation.

Global Food Security (FY20: \$1.0006 billion): Last year, Congress passed the Farm Bill and the reauthorization of the Global Food Security Act. Both pieces of legislation demonstrate strong bipartisan commitment to international food security programs for the most vulnerable families. Sustained and robust resources are required to support U.S. global food security programs through initiatives such as Feed the Future. Feed the Future is a dynamic whole-of-government approach that tackles global hunger and malnutrition through high-impact solutions improving agricultural productivity, expanding markets and trade, preventing child malnutrition, and strengthening the resilience of vulnerable people. Feed the Future has helped an estimated 23.4 million more people stay above the poverty line, protecting 5.2 million families from hunger, and 3.4 million more children living free from stunting. Without robust resources, all the progress that the U.S. has made to date in USAID priority countries will be put at risk.

Basic Education (bilateral) and Global Partnership on Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (FY20 request: \$925 million with at least \$800 million for bilateral): U.S. international basic education assistance has a positive impact on children worldwide. Between 2011 and 2017, USAID programs indirectly benefitted more than 83 million children and youth. USAID has also extended education opportunities for a total of 22.6 million individual children and youth in crisis and conflict environments during the same time-period. Access to safe, inclusive and quality education in particular, has been shown to be one of the most transformative investments we can make to promote gender equality, unlock economic opportunities for all and promote peace and security in the world's most volatile regions. Studies have shown that each additional year of education can increase income by 10 percent: if all children left school with basic reading skills there would be a 12 percent reduction in world poverty. USAID's programs ensure that students have safe learning opportunities and equitable access to quality education and thus develop the necessary skills to be part of the global workforce.

Adequate resources are required to enable USAID to continue to help children, especially girls, access to safe, quality basic education around the world, and to support education in emergency settings. There are approximately four million refugee children out of school globally despite a commitment that all refugee children should return to learning within 90 days. Only 61 percent of refugee children attend primary school, 23 percent attend secondary school, and one percent attend university. The U.S. must work with others to ensure they return to learning as soon as possible, ideally within three months of arrival in a host country.

There are also significant and persisting gender disparities in literacy and enrollment and girls face distinct and often disproportionate barriers to education in most regions of the world, including increased domestic chores and care responsibilities, child marriage and early pregnancy, and mobility restraints. Girls are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of primary school if they live in conflict-affected countries, and 90 percent more likely to be out of

secondary school. Safe, quality education is critical for girls to reach their full potential and prerequisite for women's economic empowerment globally. The U.S. has a responsibility in doing its part to reach the 262 million children and youth who are still not in school and the millions more who are failing to acquire even basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills.

Children in Emergency and Conflict Situations: Children most vulnerable in any conflict or emergency. Amid the record levels of global displacement, there are now 31 million forcibly displaced children worldwide. In Syria and as refugees in neighboring countries, nearly six million Syrian children are in need of humanitarian assistance. A staggering 80 percent of Yemen's population are now in need of humanitarian assistance. Save the Children has estimated that at least 85,000 children have died of malnutrition in Yemen's conflict, and one in every 10 Yemeni children is now displaced. Robust investment in the Migration and Refugee Assistance (FY20 request: \$3.6 billion) and International Disaster Assistance (FY20 request: \$4.4 billion) accounts will enable the U.S. to play a leadership role set out in the Administration's National Security Strategy in addressing the increased needs posed by humanitarian crises. When disasters strike, these funds ensure that vulnerable populations around the globe have access to health programs, food, clean water, safe shelter and other life-saving assistance. They can also ensure children living in protracted crises have access to education, psychosocial support, protection, and other vital needs that often go overlooked. In 2017-2018, Congress robustly responded to a simultaneous famine threat across Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, and U.S. funds directly helped avert famine in Somalia. U.S. leadership galvanized others to act. If enacted, proposed cuts to humanitarian assistance would have drastic consequences and cripple the ability of the U.S. to respond fully to crises in other places of acute need. The reduced ability of the U.S. to provide support for people displaced by conflict or natural disaster, or to conduct programs aimed at supporting vulnerable children and their families in conflict, would harm our national interests by undermining U.S. efforts to build stability. Continued U.S. commitment to adequate levels of funding for humanitarian responses, particularly interventions which prioritize the needs of children, is thus important for the well-being of those we help and for our national interests.

Gender Equality: The U.S. government must continue investments in programs that promote global gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment across development and humanitarian assistance. U.S. investments in gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment programs, such as those that combat child marriage and gender-based violence, save lives and contribute to the effectiveness of programs, sustainable development and global stability. Countries are more likely to be prosperous and stable when girls are educated, empowered, healthy, and free from gender-based violence and discrimination. Gender inequality and gender-based violence in particular are early warning signs of instability and violent conflict and undermine the effectiveness of existing investments in global health, development, and stability. The World Bank estimates that global gains from ending child marriage could reach more than \$500 billion per year. The benefits of ending all early child births (both within and outside marriage) could exceed \$700 billion per year by 2030. Cumulatively, for the post-2015 period, the welfare gains from ending child marriage and early childbirth could be almost \$5 trillion. Girls with a secondary education and access to gender-responsive healthcare services are more likely to marry later, earn more income over their lifetimes, and face fewer complications from childbirth. These girls are also more resilient through economic and environmental shock --

contributing to the resilience of their families and communities.

Experience has shown that gender equality investments and comprehensive funding for women's and girls' empowerment initiatives have a multiplier effect that magnify the initial investment at both community and national levels. We urge continued US leadership on global gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, including robust funding for gender analysis, as mandated by Congress, and gender equality programming that is strategic, coordinated, and easy to track, monitor, and evaluate. Increased U.S. investment must be made in gender and age disaggregated data to measure the progress for women and girls toward the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. It is also important to ensure the integrity and monitoring of the USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy throughout the agency, including throughout USAID's transformation process. Significantly, in order to maintain strong gender programming it is also essential to adequately fund the Office of Global Women's Issues Ambassador-at-Large position in the State Department, the Senior Coordinator for Gender position at USAID, and the gender coordinator positions in the regional and functional bureaus of the State Department and USAID.

USAID Transformation: As the U.S. works on transitioning countries from receiving assistance toward ever-greater program sustainability through USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance, we encourage Congress to continue to engage with USAID in a thoughtful process that ensures incorporation of feedback from Congress, the development community, and key civil society stakeholders in partner countries. This transition process, in order to be successful, must address inequality so the world's poorest people and those disadvantaged because of gender, age, disability or ethnicity are no longer bypassed by development. Furthermore, the transition process must be locally-owned and locally-led in order to be successful. Transition priorities should be aligned with country plans and will require a coordinated effort that includes all donors, local government, civil society, and the private sector to drive development outcomes. Gender and other equality metrics will also be critical to measuring a country's capacity and commitment for transition. Inequality undermines growth and development and can play a role in exacerbating fragility and driving insecurity. Topline, national metrics and individual metrics that are age- and gender-blind often mask deep inequalities within populations as well as missing key early warning indicators for fragility.

Conclusion: We thank the Subcommittee for its continued leadership on investing in U.S. humanitarian and development programs and its demonstrated strong support for these priority programs in the prior appropriations processes. 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 look forward to your continued leadership and partnership with us to invest in children so they have what every child deserves – a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn, and protection from harm.