

**Testimony to the House Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs**

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Submitted by

Michele Sumilas

Managing Director, Bread for the World

Madame Chairwoman and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity. I am Michele Sumilas, Managing Director of Bread for the World, a collective Christian voice that urges our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. I want to thank the committee for its support for foreign assistance overall and for championing global nutrition. U.S. global leadership is vital at this time, and the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs bill is a reflection of this ideal. I want to especially thank the committee for the \$20 million increase in Global Nutrition in the FY19 bill. This money will lead to more mothers and children receiving lifesaving nutrition interventions that lay the foundation for an effective and prosperous life. Our work is not done, though. Bread for the World supports continued U.S. global leadership and urges the lifting of the budget caps. In addition, we ask that the Appropriations Committee allocate \$60 billion to the International Affairs Budget, which includes the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs bill.

Our faithful members and churches across the country urge Congress to do its part to reduce hunger and poverty in our country and around the world. This year, Bread for the World's Offering of Letters urges our government to accelerate progress on global maternal and child nutrition, by increasing funding for global nutrition programs. Americans from across the U.S., including our network of nearly 2.5 million people, will be making their voices heard. Bread and our members believe that we must scale up what we know works to accelerate progress on nutrition. Every child deserves a chance to survive and thrive but current U.S. funding is not enough to reach our global nutrition goals. Our success in achieving these goals, to say nothing of the opportunity to improve the lives of millions of women and children, is at risk if we continue with business as usual. We at Bread for the World are not alone in this initiative, and a large and growing share of the religious community is working with us.

The burden of malnutrition across the world remains unacceptably high, and progress unacceptably slow. Malnutrition, especially in the 1,000 days between the start of a woman's pregnancy and her child's second birthday, underlies 45 percent of all deaths –approximately 2.6 million – of children under the age of five annually and puts those who survive at risk of impaired brain development, lower intellectual capacity, weakened immune systems and greater risk of serious disease. According to the 2018 Global Nutrition Report, malnutrition, in all its forms, is responsible for more ill health than any other cause. Undernutrition impoverishes families, and reduces critical human capital and capacity, thereby causing long-term detriment to national economies and

social development. The cost of malnutrition to the global economy is an estimated \$3.5 trillion in health care costs and lost productivity every year.

Children under the age of five face multiple burdens: 150.8 million are stunted, 50.5 million are wasted and 38.3 million are overweight. Meanwhile 20 million babies are born of low birth weight each year. Women also have a higher burden than men when it comes to malnutrition: one third of all women of reproductive age have anemia and women have a higher prevalence of obesity than men, while it is also true that millions of women are still underweight. For these reasons, we ask that \$250 million be appropriated to Nutrition in the Global Health Programs account. We also support increased investments in nutrition-focused implementation research to develop best practices in nutrition interventions and ensure that this increased funding is effective.

Bread for the World and its members believe that the need to invest in nutrition programs is straightforward – nutrition lays the foundation for human health and development. Leading scientists, health experts and economists agree that improving nutrition during the 1,000-day window is one of the most cost effective investments that can be made to help achieve lasting progress in global health and development.

Without prioritizing malnutrition — the underlying cause of so many health, development, and economic challenges — the U.S. will not reach the development gains it hopes to achieve. In today’s budget environment, the U.S. must maximize the return on its investment in development assistance and nutrition interventions that consistently generate some of the highest results.

Hunger and malnutrition are issues of equity. This can be seen in the highlands of Western Guatemala, where indigenous groups face a much higher rate of food insecurity and malnutrition than the rest of the country. Programs, such as Feed the Future, target areas where the malnutrition rate for young children is as high as 70 percent because the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) knows that we must reach these children to meet our goals.

Food security issues are not only impacting the countries where they occur but they are now impacting the U.S. through immigration on our southern border. In a 2017 World Food Program survey of migrants from the Northern Triangle, the majority cited “no food” as a reason for leaving their countries. The report states, “There is clearly ... a link between food insecurity and immigration.” The type of migrants coming to our border is changing – there are more families than before and Guatemalans make up an increasingly larger share of migrants, many of whom are from the Western Highlands region. We urge this committee to be part of the solution by investing in the root causes of migration – creating economic opportunities, building nutrition and food security, and strengthening resilience of marginalized communities, rather than proposals that will only band-aid the situation. We must invest in people rather than physical deterrents. This is the smart and moral decision.

Hunger and malnutrition are also issues of gender equality. Where there is unequal gender distribution of household income and nutrition, women are left behind. USAID’s multi-sectoral nutrition strategy makes this connection and states, “When women are empowered, educated, and can earn and control income, infant mortality declines, child

health, nutrition, and development improves, agricultural productivity rises, population growth slows, economies expand, and cycles of poverty are broken." Women are an integral part of development. When girls do not receive proper nutrition, their development potential is hindered from the start. When women are disempowered, development is hindered.

One of the greatest drivers of hunger is protracted conflict. As you know, Yemen is currently facing an extreme humanitarian crisis. The United Nations reports that half of the population is already facing near-famine conditions and is entirely reliant on aid for survival. Two million children younger than the age of 5 are at risk of death from malnutrition, and 24 million people, or double the population of Ohio, need urgent humanitarian aid. This crisis is entirely man-made – a result of the four-year civil war in Yemen between the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition. The near-famine conditions are not only putting people at risk of serious health complications now, but will adversely affect Yemen's population, especially young children, after the conflict has ended. Innocent children are being robbed of their futures because of this crisis. Our God "upholds the just cause of the poor, justice for the needy" (Psalm 140:12). As a person of faith, I call on the U.S. government to use every tool at its disposal to insist all parties stop the fighting and fully support the peace process, allow aid workers to reach those in need and promote peace and economic recovery.

U.S. global nutrition programs funded through USAID are critical but the U.S. government must also leverage investments in multilateral institutions to support our goals. The World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) reduces poverty

by boosting economic growth, reducing inequalities, and improving living conditions. IDA's nutrition programs in emergency and long-term development contexts have been very successful. Not only do these investments save lives, but they are efficient and leverage funding from others. Evidence has shown that every \$1 contribution to IDA from the U.S. leverages or attracts nearly \$13 from other donors and the World Bank. For these reasons, we ask that \$1.097 billion be appropriated to the International Development Association.

We have made significant progress in the fight to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, but there is still much work to be done. Congress has provided modest but relatively steady increases in nutrition program funding over the past several years, in large part due to the compelling new evidence supporting the most cost-effective, high-impact interventions. As we study issues of education, gender equality, health care, and economic productivity – we learn that nutrition is foundational to progress on all of these fronts. Nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programming must be implemented in a cross-sectoral way to have the biggest impact. USAID's Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy developed in 2014 is a good start but it has not been fully implemented because it has not been fully resourced. We can end malnutrition but the U.S. must continue to play a leadership role among other donors. Bread for the World urges Congress to provide sufficient resources to fully operationalize this strategy. Because malnutrition requires a multi-sectoral response, the U.S. government also needs to ensure robust nutrition-related investments are made in other development sectors, including global health, global food security, international food assistance, and water, sanitation, and

hygiene (WASH). Continuing the current level of nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive funding will not allow these efforts to fully deliver on their promise.

Between 2009 and 2016, stunting within USAID's 19 nutrition priority countries decreased from 40 percent to 34 percent. As a result of USAID's integrated effort, more than 22 million children under the age of five were reached by nutrition interventions in 2017 alone. Recent data shows that in Feed the Future focus regions of Kenya, Ethiopia, Nepal and Ghana, child stunting has been reduced by 40%, 30%, 24% and 18% respectively. These dramatic reductions help prevent impaired physical and cognitive development, allowing children to reach their full potential. To keep up the momentum, the U.S needs to recommit to accelerating and scaling up efforts to end malnutrition, and reduce preventable child and maternal deaths.

In order to unlock the transformative power of nutrition, Bread for the World urges Congress to resource this multi-sectoral, integrated and scaled up approach. In doing so, Congress will elevate the vital role nutrition can play in humanitarian crises, strengthen the resilience of communities, achieve long-term development goals, and put countries on a path to self-reliance. Expanded leadership and deeper engagement in support of global nutrition efforts is essential to accelerate progress, to galvanize action, to leverage investments from other donors and governments, and to reach globally agreed-upon nutrition targets.

Bread for the World urges Congress to:

- Allocate \$60 billion to the International Affairs Budget, which includes the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill, to maintain U.S. global leadership.

- Fully fund U.S. global health programs at USAID and the State Department at \$11.4 billion.
- Fully resource the USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy and U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan at \$250 million in the Global Nutrition line item of the Global Health Programs account.
- Address migration push factors in the Northern Triangle, including through investments in household nutrition and food security. We support full funding for the U.S. Global Food Security Strategy at \$1.066 billion.
- Provide adequate funding for humanitarian responses, including by increasing funding for the treatment and prevention of acute malnutrition in these settings. We support funding for International Disaster Assistance at \$4.4 billion.
- Support smart contributions to multilateral institutions, including the International Development Association. We urge the Committee to continue World Bank IDA funding at \$1.097 billion and support a robust U.S. commitment in the IDA19 replenishment.

In closing, the United States has been an unprecedented spirit for good in the world, and thanks in part to this Subcommittee, and your support of humanitarian and international development programs through the years, we have responded to the needs of the poor, hungry, sick, displaced and abandoned. Our decision to act not only promotes our national security and economic interests, but ascends even higher. Whether motivated by spiritual beliefs, or a commitment to the common



good, our actions are bringing forth greater hope to a world in need; a reality that acknowledges the dignity and worth of each person, and creates opportunities for all children to grow into healthy, productive adults capable of pursuing futures of opportunity and promise.