

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

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Submitted by

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Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity. Before I begin I want to specifically thank the Chairwoman for all of her years of leadership on this subcommittee. Madame Chairwoman you have been a champion of poverty focused programs for the last 30 years and your service on this committee has been crucial to the progress the world has made in global health, gender equality, and the promotion of human rights. For this, I thank you.

I am Rev. David Beckmann, representing Bread for the World, a collective Christian voice that urges our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad, where I have been the President since 1991 and will retire this year. Over the last 30 years, I have seen incredible strides made in international development, specifically the area of hunger, and I want to thank this committee for the bipartisan support for vital programs that assist in the eradication of hunger and poverty. When I started at Bread for the World around 25% of the world's population were hungry and that number has fallen to nearly 10% of the world's population in 2019. That means that over 100 million people are not hungry that would have been in 1990. We have truly made great progress. I believe that this would not have been possible without the support of the U.S. government, and specifically this committee to invest in humans across the world with the shared goals of prosperity and well-being for all, regardless of where they were born. As I reflect on my past 40 years in working in development, and the progress that we have made, I recognize that the opportunity to make even more progress over the next 40 years is possible, but it will not occur on its own. If we earnestly want to eradicate poverty and malnutrition in all its forms, it will take courageous decisions to continue to advance poverty focused development assistance no matter the political climate to overcome some of the major roadblocks that stand in our way.

For the first time ever, the world has committed to end malnutrition in all its forms. This ambitious target, enshrined in the 2030 Global Goals, focuses on a problem that holds back the growth and development of both people and countries. The burden of malnutrition across the world remains unacceptably high, and progress unacceptably slow. Malnutrition, directly or indirectly causes 45 percent of all deaths – 2.4 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.

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.

Children under the age of five face multiple burdens: 149 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. Africa and Asia bear the greatest share of all forms of malnutrition by accounting for more than nine out of ten of all stunted children, over nine out of ten of all wasted children, and nearly three-quarters of all overweight children worldwide. For these reasons, we ask that \$200 million be appropriated to Nutrition in the Global Health Programs account. This commitment is extremely important especially in 2020 as it signals to the international community our support for nutrition leading into Japan's Nutrition for Growth Summit. Furthermore, \$200 million would reach more than 9 million woman and result in more than 20,000 lives saved. It would also provide for the treatment of more than 2 million acutely malnourished children, and the prevention of stunting for more than 369,000 children. 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. The administration's decision to halt all aid to the Northern Triangle was counterproductive and will only exacerbate many of the issues in the region that result in increased migration. U.S. poverty focused assistance programs in the Northern Triangle are crucial to meeting desperate human needs and addressing

the root causes of migration such as violence, hunger, and poverty. 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. Freezing aid has already resulted in negative effects on NGOs in the region that are having to cut staff and rework projects because of the uncertainty of aid flows. Bread for the World supports all language that ensures aid appropriated by congress reaches the people that so desperately need it in the Northern Triangle. We must invest in people rather than physical deterrents. This is the smart and moral decision.

One of the major threats in inhibiting the great progress that we have made over the last 30 years is the ever growing of effects on of climate change for on the world’s most vulnerable. Climate change is already having effects on farmers all over the world, and threatens to push 100 million people back into extreme poverty by 2030. Climate change does this in a few ways. Near the equatorial tropics every 1°C increase in temperature results in 10 percent decrease in yields. Additionally, in many fragile contexts, the World Food Program estimates that a 1 percent rise in food insecurity is associated with a 2 percent increase in migration. Climate shocks and food security are going to continue to rise if we fail to have the moral courage to face this problem. We must partner with communities to increase resilience, to address the challenges of growing food due to changes in the environment. We also need to invest in research, to create climate resilient crops that have the nutritional density to address problems of malnutrition that will be connected with climate change. Finally, we must invest in climate-smart farming techniques, so that we can lower greenhouse gas, responsibly care for our environment, and continue to push to end malnutrition in all of its forms.

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. The president’s request for an 8% cut to IDA undermines US leadership at the Bank. Congress should send a clear signal of US support for the multilateral development banks by reauthorizing IDA and the African Development Fund.

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 \$200 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 \$4.52 billion.
- Support smart contributions to multilateral institutions, including the International Development Association, African Development Fund, International Fund for Agricultural Development We urge the Committee to continue World Bank IDA funding at \$1.127 billion, \$175 million for the African Development Fund, and \$40 million for the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

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. Over the last 30 years at Bread for the World, I have met incredible people who have truly made a difference in the lives of others. 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. I hope that you continue the legacy of those set before you by promoting human rights, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, partnering with countries for shared goals of prosperity, and investing in humans across the world. I have seen the great progress that we have made over the last 40 years, to ensure the same progress for the next 40 we will need people like you to make the morally courageous decisions.