

**Written Statement of Trey Hicks**  
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**Before the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug**  
**Administration, and Related Agencies**  
**Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives**

**Introduction**

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Fortenberry, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to speak with you today about international food-assistance programs.

My name is Trey Hicks, and I am the Director of the Office of Food for Peace (FFP) within the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the largest provider of food assistance to the world's most-vulnerable people. Earlier this year, we celebrated the 65th anniversary of the Food for Peace program. We were one of the first permanent, peacetime foreign-aid programs, and, to this day, we remain a cornerstone of USAID's work overseas. While our programs have changed and improved since 1954, our mission has remained constant: save lives and end hunger.

**Overview of DCHA/FFP**

DCHA/FFP predicts, prevents, and responds to hunger overseas with food assistance. We do so because alleviating global hunger represents the best of America's generosity and goodwill. It also advances our national security: where hunger persists, instability may grow. Our efforts help to build a more stable world and ensure people have the chance to lead productive lives. These programs are in addition to USAID bilateral programs funded with other foreign assistance that address long-term food security and resilience overseas.

The majority of our programs respond to immediate needs caused by humanitarian crises, many of them increasingly man-made. Through emergency food-assistance activities, USAID saves lives, reduces suffering, and supports the early recovery of people affected by conflict and natural disasters, including refugees. Last year, roughly 88 percent of DCHA/FFP's work responded to crises.

Through the Feed the Future initiative, USAID's Bureau of Food Security leads the interagency Global Food Security Strategy for development programs to increase food security.

DCHA/FFP's multi-year development programs, support the FTF initiative and address food security and the root causes of hunger in areas of chronic crisis, like drought, to build resilience and food security among vulnerable populations. This helps equip people with the knowledge and tools to feed themselves, and reduces the need for future emergency assistance.

DCHA/FFP provides assistance primarily via two types of funding: 1) Funds under Title II of the Food for Peace Act, most recently amended by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, over which this Subcommittee has jurisdiction; and, 2) International Disaster Assistance (IDA) funds under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended.

Under Title II, U.S. commodities such as wheat, rice, and sorghum are provided to meet emergency food needs around the world. We also use these funds to carry out development activities that address the root causes of food-insecurity and malnutrition.

IDA funds support emergency humanitarian-assistance operations in response to international crises, including emergency food-security activities. The Global Food Security Reauthorization Act of 2017 recently amended the FAA and reauthorized IDA funds, including the Emergency Food-Security Program (EFSP), which allows us to help people buy food in their local markets or provide food grown locally or regionally.

The President has not requested funds for Title II, IDA, overseas humanitarian assistance funding in the Migration and Refugee Assistance (managed by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration [PRM] at the U.S. Department of State), and the President's Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance accounts in his Budget Request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, and proposes instead to use a new International Humanitarian Assistance (IHA) account to provide food and non-food assistance through the most effective and appropriate means for each crisis. The IHA account would consolidate all overseas humanitarian-assistance funding into a single new, flexible account administered by USAID under the authority of the Secretary of State. Through the IHA account, DCHA/FFP (and, soon, the new Bureau for Humanitarian

Assistance [BHA] at USAID) would continue to purchase food from U.S. farmers, which would remain a vital part of U.S. food-assistance programs overseas.

Given the focus of this Subcommittee, I will highlight how our current Title II food assistance program operates. As I discuss below, the creation of BHA, which is ongoing, will allow for more seamless coordination in humanitarian assistance to reduce costs, duplication, and gaps in USAID's assistance.

## **How DCHA/FFP Works**

### Deciding to Respond

DCHA/FFP continuously monitors food-insecurity levels worldwide and makes emergency funding decisions on a monthly basis, often to meet anticipated emergency food needs several months in the future. Natural disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes, and political crises that result in population displacements often require immediate assistance to avoid famine. USAID balances these changing needs by continuously adjusting programming priorities to ensure food assistance is reaching the most-vulnerable populations worldwide.

To anticipate food-insecurity needs, USAID uses data from the Famine Early-Warning Systems Network, or FEWS NET—including analyses of weather, markets, and trade conditions—to inform our programmatic decisions. This information is critical in enabling USAID to respond early and robustly so our assistance has maximum impact.

In addition to data from FEWS NET, DCHA/FFP often looks to a disaster declaration from a U.S. Embassy, an emergency appeal issued by the United Nations (UN), or a request from local authorities for assistance because they do not have the capacity to respond. If DCHA/FFP determines there is a need that cannot be met without humanitarian assistance, we decide how best to respond.

### Response Options

USAID provides people with life-saving food assistance in four ways: 1) food procured and shipped from the United States; 2) locally, regionally, and internationally procured food, primarily from developing countries; 3) food vouchers; or, 4) money for families to buy food in local markets. Food—either U.S. commodities or commodities from farmers in or near the

country that is experiencing the crisis—is essential when a community cannot grow its own and food is not readily available. Market-based options allow people to use vouchers or cash to shop locally, which strengthen local economies and communities and reduce overall humanitarian needs. No single option is better than others; how we respond depends on the context of the emergency.

To purchase and deliver U.S. commodities, or in-kind food aid, by using Title II funds, DCHA/FFP works closely with two types of partners: Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs), such as Catholic Relief Services and World Vision; and International Organizations (IOs), such as the World Food Program (WFP).

#### Procuring U.S. In-Kind Food Aid

There are 25 U.S. commodities available for Title II programs, and we work with agriculture organizations and university researchers to constantly improve them.

Once we assess and determine the need for an in-kind food assistance program, we work with our partners to help them choose from the list of eligible commodities, based on local assessments of markets and needs. We help our partners identify the types and amounts of U.S. commodities required, as well as a schedule for their delivery. Once approved by DCHA/FFP, they place an order, or "call forward," for the commodities. Via the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), we issue a tender to U.S. producers, evaluate the resulting offers, and purchase the commodities on the open market.

After we procure the commodities, we work closely with our partners, by using a tender process, to arrange for the shipment of the cargo from a U.S. port to the recipient country. Upon arrival, which typically takes from four to six months from when we decide to respond, the food goes to the hungriest people: children under age five, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, and other vulnerable populations.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation

Our assistance must get to the right people. We take the responsibility of investing U.S. taxpayer dollars seriously, work to ensure that we are as effective and efficient as possible under current law, and target and monitor our assistance so it gets to those who need it most.

We deliver our assistance under very difficult circumstances, often in conflict environments, but we try to mitigate risks through monitoring and regular reporting. USAID uses a variety of approaches to verify our aid is reaching its intended beneficiaries, including third-party monitoring, geo-tagged photos and videos of distributions, and feedback hotlines for beneficiaries. We also work closely with our partners, other donors, and our Inspector General to identify risks and take steps to protect our assistance.

### **Global Priorities**

For the first time in decades, the number of hungry people is rising across the world. More than 113 million people are experiencing acute hunger and need urgent humanitarian assistance. A record high of over 70 million people are displaced; every minute of 2018, 25 people were forced to flee their homes, and many of them rely on humanitarian assistance in the places they settle. Conflict is the largest driver of increased hunger and displacement globally. Conflict-driven crises are happening more frequently, often compounded by natural disasters like drought. As a result, today's crises—in places like Syria, South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, Burma, Venezuela, and Yemen—are bigger, last longer and are more complex, which challenges traditional humanitarian capabilities and strains our ability to respond. Today, I will highlight a couple crises in which funding under Title II has played an important role in our response efforts.

### Yemen

Yemen is suffering the world's largest food-security crisis, the result of years of conflict between the Government and Houthi opposition forces. Nearly 17 million people—56 percent of the country's population—are in urgent need of food assistance. To put this in perspective, this is more than the total populations of both Georgia and Nebraska combined. In December 2018, more than 63,000 people in eight Yemeni Governorates were experiencing Catastrophe (Integrated Phase Classification 5) conditions and are at risk of death from starvation. Food-insecurity is worst in areas with active fighting, and those with limited access to work and services are among the most vulnerable populations. Significant declines in commercial imports and conflict that cuts populations off from trade and humanitarian assistance for an extended period would likely lead to famine conditions in Yemen, according to FEWS NET.

To date in FY 2019, USAID has provided nearly \$434 million dollars of emergency food assistance, of which \$344 million dollars of Title II which helped purchase more than 454,000 metric tons of food, to the people of Yemen. Emergency food assistance—including U.S.-sourced wheat, beans, and vegetable oil— has helped to feed approximately 11 million people this year, life-saving in a country that historically imported 90 percent of its food and most of its fuel and medicines.

Without the current, large-scale international humanitarian efforts, many Yemenis could starve or die from preventable diseases. It is critical that humanitarian supplies and commercial imports reach all people in need, and that all parties allow aid workers full and unhindered access to help communities in need.

The United States is one of the largest donors of humanitarian assistance in Yemen, and we remain committed to helping the Yemeni people. However, no amount of humanitarian or development assistance will end this conflict. A peaceful resolution to the crisis is the only way to end the suffering of millions.

### Republic of South Sudan

Years of intense violence have transformed the world’s youngest nation into one of the most food-insecure countries in the world. Ongoing fighting has disrupted livelihoods, agricultural production, markets, and access to basic services and sanitation, which has resulted in displacement, outbreaks of disease, and extremely high levels of acute malnutrition. A robust international humanitarian response, including substantial funding from USAID, helped roll back famine in parts of South Sudan in February 2017, but the failure of South Sudan’s leaders to prioritize their people means the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate.

South Sudan’s Summer lean season—the period when food and income sources are at a seasonal low—left nearly seven million people, or more than 60 percent of South Sudan’s population, in need of food assistance, including an estimated 21,000 people who likely faced famine-like conditions in various Counties across the former Jonglei, Lakes, and Upper Nile States. This is the largest number of people ever to require urgent food assistance in South Sudan. Between September and December, food security conditions will likely improve somewhat as seasonal harvests become available, with more than 4.5 million people projected to need urgent food

assistance. Despite these developments, the food-security situation remains fragile, and FEWS NET notes that a risk of famine will persist in South Sudan through early 2020.

The United States is the single-largest donor of humanitarian assistance to South Sudan; DCHA/FFP has provided nearly \$375 million in FY 2019 of which \$113 million is Title II—including more than 168,000 metric tons of urgently needed cereals, pulses, fortified vegetable oil, and specialized nutrition foods. Our life-saving assistance reaches about 1.3 million South Sudanese people every month.

DCHA/FFP also funds Catholic Relief Services to provide families in Jonglei State with emergency food assistance; expanded access to safe drinking water; and livelihoods interventions, including agricultural training for farming households.

Additionally, with our financing, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization helps food-insecure South Sudanese countrywide increase their households' production of food by distributing seeds, tools for planting, and fishing kits. The FAO also uses DCHA/FFP funding to provide vulnerable families with nutrition vouchers, which improves access to nutritious foods for mothers with malnourished children.

### People's Republic of Bangladesh

In late 2017 and early 2018, more than 700,000 Rohingya fled state-sponsored violence in Burma and crossed the border into Bangladesh. They joined the more than 212,000 Rohingya who were already living in Bangladesh prior to August 2017. Most of these refugees live in temporary housing in Cox's Bazar, where they formed the world's largest refugee settlement in a matter of months. Recent monsoon rains have made a tenuous situation even worse by causing flooding and landslides.

In this setting, reliance on U.S. commodities alone would not meet the food-security needs of the Rohingya. Our response in Bangladesh – nearly \$87 million to date in FY2019, including over \$41 million of development Title II resources, -- exemplifies how we use the full range of food assistance options, including cash, electronic food vouchers, locally and regionally procured foods, and in-kind U.S. food assistance. Emergency food assistance fed roughly 700,000 people last year. Title II funds purchase U.S.-sourced wheat, peas, vegetable oil, and therapeutic foods

and additional nutrition for women and children. IDA funds provide locally and regionally sourced food and electronic food vouchers to Rohingya refugees, which improve their dietary diversity by enabling them to buy local options like vegetables and fish.

When assessments indicated a much higher number of acutely malnourished children than initially estimated were taking longer to recuperate, we also ensured that the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) had enough ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF) to help children recover. In addition to providing food, DCHA/FFP also funds logistics operations, coordination, and capacity-building for the Government of Bangladesh and NGO providers of nutrition services.

Recognizing the economic and social impact that a million refugees has on local Bangladeshi communities, we have also used IDA to fund income-generating activities for vulnerable host communities in the area to prevent and mitigate potential resentment and tension.

## **Coordinating U.S. Food Assistance**

### Inter- and Intra-Agency Coordination

DCHA/FFP is the lead for U.S. food assistance, but we do not do this work alone. We coordinate with several other USAID offices and Departments and Agencies within the U.S. Government.

Most frequently, we work alongside the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) within DCHA to respond to humanitarian emergencies. We provide food, while DCHA/OFDA funds shelter, medical care, and hygiene. We work together to save lives, reduce suffering, and help communities recover as quickly as possible.

The forthcoming BHA will bring together the two USAID humanitarian offices, unifying and elevating our humanitarian assistance capabilities and expertise, eliminating the artificial distinction between emergency food and non-food response, and preventing unnecessary duplication in the field. The new Bureau will advance USAID's goal of creating a more strategic and seamless approach to delivering food and non-food international disaster aid in humanitarian crises.



At both the policy and programmatic levels, DCHA/FFP also works with PRM at the State Department, which has the primary responsibility for formulating policies on refugees and administering U.S. refugee assistance. Together, we respond to assist refugees in need: DCHA/FFP addresses food needs and PRM tackles non-food needs.

DCHA/FFP's development food-security activities are included in the Feed the Future initiative, led by USAID's Bureau for Food Security (BFS). Feed the Future brings together a broad array of partners, including other U.S. Government Departments and Agencies, to create a cohesive effort to end global hunger. We are also direct partners with BFS, by co-investing Community Development Funds in Food for Peace's development programs in places like Burkina Faso, Haïti, Guatemala, Niger, and Uganda. However, there is no one-size-fits-all model of integration for our separate programming. Different Missions are applying different models or approaches to achieve complementarity or integration depending on the current demands or needs on the ground.

We also work closely with USDA. In addition to USDA's role in purchasing Title II commodities in coordination with USAID, USDA and USAID staff at times participate in the selection committees for each other's development food-security activities to increase coordination and alignment between our programs.

#### Coordination with Other Donors

We might be the largest-single donor of humanitarian assistance, but we cannot meet the growing needs sustainably. While we welcome the increased contributions many have already made to humanitarian-assistance efforts in the last few years - including the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the European Commission, the U.S. Government is putting more emphasis on working persistently and effectively to get these and other donors to do their fair share.

DCHA/FFP also coordinates through the Food Assistance Convention, a 16-member alliance that brings together the world's leading public-sector donors, including the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Japan, and others committed to global food assistance. Last year we welcomed the Republic of Korea as a member, a huge milestone for a country that received U.S. food assistance in the 1950s.

**Conclusion**

In our 65-year history, we have helped to end hunger for more than four billion people. This legacy would not have been possible without Congressional support, including from this Subcommittee.

DCHA/FFP has continued to evolve and improve, most recently because of the small, but important, technical changes in the 2018 Farm Bill that will prepare us for the forthcoming BHA. We have spent the last decade collaborating with DCHA/OFDA to invest food and non-food responses to the same crisis, and the new Bureau will bring us together fully. It will enable us to deliver life-saving assistance even more efficiently and effectively.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today, and I look forward to your questions.