



Chairwoman Barbara Lee
Subcommittee on Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Hearing: Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request for the United States Agency for International Development
May 11, 2022

As Prepared

Chairwoman's Opening Statement

Welcome Administrator Samantha Power to the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. Your agency – the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) - is America's lead international development agency, supporting people around the world to build safe, prosperous, equitable, and inclusive societies. The talented, knowledgeable, and passionate professionals at USAID work on the front lines every day to help save lives and advance human rights and dignity. We are so grateful to have your leadership and expertise at the helm of USAID and that you are joining us today.

This morning we will discuss the Administration's Fiscal Year 2023 budget request for USAID. As I said to Secretary of State Blinken during our recent hearing, I believe our international affairs budget should be equal to, if not greater than, our military budget. Our military tools should be used as the last resort, whereas the foreign assistance resources we provide are the best and most effective tools we have to address today's most pressing challenges—as well as build a more just and inclusive world.

I have long argued that our foreign assistance is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in terms of eradicating poverty, protecting the planet, and promoting peace and prosperity. The COVID-19 pandemic – and its many secondary effects – has made achieving these goals by 2030 all the more difficult, while ongoing climate shocks and disasters threatened our development goals even before the pandemic. I'm eager to hear from you, Administrator Power, on how we will achieve the SDGs this decade, and how USAID's programs are both contributing, and measuring progress, toward them.

The FY23 request includes notable increases for humanitarian, global health, climate, and accountable governance programs. It also makes a bold commitment to gender equity and equality, recognizing the ongoing injustice felt by half the population who disproportionately bears the burden of poverty, poor health, violence, and climate change.



The request also includes a modest increase in food security, but I fear it will not be enough to avert a global food crisis, which experts including you, Administrator Power, have warned is “another catastrophic effect” of Russia’s devastating war in Ukraine. I know you have made many trips to the region. I have recently returned from Poland, and like you, heard first-hand about the devastating impact this inexcusable war is having on individuals and communities. Given the scope and scale of the crisis, it’s clear there is no quick fix.

Our NGO partners and the United Nations community are also doing heroic work and scaling up quickly. Most had no presence in Ukraine, outside of the Donbas, and neighboring countries before February. While there is always more to do and improvements to be made, this is a humanitarian response like no other, and it presents both an opportunity and a challenge to think differently and work in full partnership within structures that already exist.

With your background and decades of experience in advocating for human rights, you are uniquely qualified to assess and report on the human cost of this crisis and other conflicts around the world. I would appreciate hearing your perspective on the never-ending demands on our humanitarian assistance and what changes you’ve implemented at USAID that have improved our response. As Congress works through our FY23 bills and considers additional emergency resources such as those passed by the House yesterday for Ukraine, do you have the tools and authorities you need to stretch resources beyond the emergency response? What is the U.S. doing to urge other countries to step up as well?

During your short, but impactful time thus far at USAID, you have also prioritized locally-led development by supporting leaders in partner countries to play the lead role in shaping and implementing assistance. I agree that to be enduring, our development efforts must be defined and led by these local actors. I am eager to discuss the targets you’ve set to put local organizations in the driver’s seat. We will be watching for evidence of significant progress in this effort over the next few months.

Administrator Power, you’ve also instituted an Agency-wide focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in both Washington and USAID’s missions and programs, and you’ve named a new Chief Diversity Officer to oversee policy changes and hold you accountable. I applaud these efforts, and I look forward to hearing an update on the progress you’ve made so far, toward a more diverse and inclusive USAID workforce.



Last, but certainly not least, I also hope you will provide an update on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic around the world, especially vaccine delivery and distribution. Last week, the WHO released its new estimate of coronavirus deaths globally of 15 million – a stunning figure. As a fierce advocate for additional funding for international efforts, like you, I am outraged by the partisan refusal to help the rest of the world recover as we in the United States strive to do so. This is not only morally unacceptable, but also strategically counterproductive. We have ample evidence that new variants do not respect borders or political beliefs. Administrator Power, I hope in your testimony you will remind the Members of this Subcommittee just how dire the situation will become if the United States suddenly stops leading the world in combating COVID-19.

I will turn now to my colleague, Ranking Member Rogers, for his opening statement, and I want to thank you again, Administrator Power, for being here today and for your tireless work to improve lives and human dignity around the world. I look forward your testimony.