



**TESTIMONY ON FY2019 STATE DEPARTMENT, FOREIGN OPERATIONS,
AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS BILL PREPARED FOR THE
SENATE STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

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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 critical role United States leadership plays in addressing them, which in turn advances our national interests. Save the Children is a nonprofit, child-focused organization working in 19 states across the nation as well as in more than 120 countries around the world. We build capacity for countries to deliver and provide direct support for health, education, protection, and disaster relief for more than 155 million children.

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 1 percent of the federal budget. At a time of important progress for children around the world, many still face tough challenges. As Save the Children’s recent report notes, for example, one in six children live in conflict zones — an estimated 357 million children, an increase of 75 percent since 1990. This year, an estimated 48,000 babies will be born in the refugee camps for the Rohingya who have fled to Bangladesh. Many of these babies will be born in tents lacking the necessary sanitary facilities for a safe delivery and are at increased risk of disease, malnutrition, and death. While there have been major gains in the last 25 years, poverty, conflict, and discrimination against girls are putting more than 1.2 billion children – over half of children worldwide – at risk for an early end to their childhood.

U.S. leadership in addressing these humanitarian and development challenges has never been more critical. We applaud bipartisan Congressional leadership in rejecting the President’s FY2018 Budget Request cuts through the passage of the FY2018 omnibus. We urge Congress again to reject the Administration’s proposed cuts to the International Affairs Budget in FY2019. Given the global threats facing America, now is not the time to shortchange these accounts. Congress should return to funding these programs at the FY2017 total enacted level of \$57.4 billion for a total International Affairs Budget of \$59.1 billion in FY2019, in order to sustain U.S. leadership in supporting poverty-focused development, global health, and humanitarian assistance programs. Any cuts below the current level would, in our view, threaten that leadership and pose unacceptable risks to American interests. In fact, additional base funding will be required simply to mitigate the impact of declining caps for overseas contingency operations (OCO) funding in FY2019.

At a time of daunting challenges and tight budgets, it is more important than ever to remember that the well-being of our nation is inextricably linked to creating a more stable and prosperous world, an outcome supported by these investments. An estimated 20 million people in places like Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen are threatened by famine-like conditions. Disease outbreaks – including historic cholera and diphtheria outbreaks in Yemen and the reemergence of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo – illustrate the importance of investments in resilient health systems. Catastrophic natural disasters, mass atrocities, gender-based violence, and protracted armed conflict have resulted in an estimated 65.6 million displaced people, including

22.5 million refugees. Rather than enable America to extend a helping hand to those in need, the Administration's budget would have America turn its back on them and reverse our international leadership and engagement supported by a bipartisan majority in Congress.

We welcome USAID Administrator Green's concept of the journey to self-reliance as a pathway for countries to sustain their development outcomes. 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 and best interests of the U.S. If countries are to reach a level at which they no longer need development assistance, funding increases may be necessary in the short term. In addition to robust resources, country partnerships, domestic resource mobilization, and gender-transformative programming are critical to ensuring results for the long-term.

We therefore urge the Committee do its best to protect funding at robust levels for these critical programs that impact children and project the kind of strong U.S. international leadership that remains indispensable to advancing our national interests in a troubled world.

Maternal and Child Health, and Nutrition: 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 produces 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 such American support. Child stunting—a form of severe malnutrition—has also dropped significantly in at least eight countries supported by USAID. Prevalence of stunting dropped by as much as 36 percent in Nepal and 16 percent in Ethiopia.

However, despite this progress, 5.6 million children under-5 still die each year, almost 1 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 the age of five.

Robust resources are needed to tackle stubborn challenges – such as newborn deaths, which account for 44 percent of all child deaths under the age of five worldwide, or to address pneumonia, the largest infectious disease killer among children. USAID – through its focus on maternal health, newborn health, child health, nutrition and water, sanitation, and hygiene – has the tools, expertise, and data to set into motion a framework for implementation that can save the lives of 15 million children and 600,000 women by 2020. Achieving this goal represents a benchmark in the work towards our shared goal of ending preventable maternal and child deaths within a generation.

Hunger and Food Security: Building on the Global Food Security Act passed by Congress, the U.S. government launched a global food security strategy last year in which it laid out its vision that includes a world free from hunger, malnutrition, and extreme poverty, where people consume balanced and nutritious diets, and children grow up healthy and reach their full potential. The President's proposal to cut funding for global food security in half takes us further and further away from realizing this bold vision. Sustained and robust resources are required to support U.S. global food security programs through initiatives such as Feed the Future (FtF). FtF is a dynamic whole-of-government approach aimed at tackling 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. In 2016, thanks to Feed the Future programs, 1.7 million more households globally are not suffering from hunger and 9 million more people around the world live above the poverty line. Feed the Future also reached more than 18 million children. Despite this progress, global hunger is on the rise again, affecting 815 million people in 2016, or 11 percent of the global population; 155 million children suffer from stunting. Without robust resources, all the progress that the U.S. has made to date in USAID priority countries stands at risk to be reversed.

Basic Education (bilateral) and Global Partnership on Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait: U.S. international basic education assistance has a positive impact on children worldwide. Between 2011 and 2015, USAID supported 151 basic education programs in 45 countries, directly benefiting more than 41.6 million children and youth. USAID has also improved or established quality education in safe learning environments for a total of 11.8 million individual children and youth in crisis and conflict environments during the same time-period. Education is a critical driver of a country's economic growth. Studies have shown that each additional year of education can bring with it a 10 percent increase in income: 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 quality basic education around the world. Half of the world's refugee children – about 3.5 million children -- are out of school; the U.S. must work with others to ensure they return to learning as soon as possible, ideally within 30 days of displacement. The U.S. has a responsibility in doing its part to reach the 263 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. This includes funding for bilateral education as well as for the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait.

Children in Emergency and Conflict Situations: Comprising more than half the world's refugees, children are always the most vulnerable in any conflict or emergency. Nearly 6 million Syrian children are in need of humanitarian assistance, for example, both inside Syria and as refugees in neighboring countries. Robust investment in the Migration and Refugee Assistance and International Disaster Assistance accounts will enable the U.S. to continue to play a leadership role 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 and other vital needs that often go overlooked. U.S. leadership, as we saw in the strong leadership Congress showed last year to respond to famine conditions, galvanizes others to act. If enacted, the President's proposed cut of 18 percent to humanitarian assistance and the elimination of Food for Peace Title II 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 women and children in conflict, would undermine U.S. efforts to build stability in critical places. 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 empower

women and girls across development and humanitarian assistance and ensure this priority is considered at every stage of project design and implementation. U.S. investments in women's empowerment programs, such as those that combat child marriage and gender-based violence, save lives and contribute to the effectiveness of programs. Countries are more likely to be prosperous and stable when girls are educated, empowered, healthy, and free from violence and discrimination. Girls with a secondary education and access to healthcare services are more likely to earn more income over their lifetimes and face fewer complications from childbirth. They are also more likely to live in a gender-balanced household, with enhanced bargaining power and a livelihood that supports themselves and ensures investment in their children's health and education. These girls are also more resilient through economic and environmental shock.

The U.S. has become a key player in global efforts to promote gender equality, decrease gender-based violence, eliminate child marriage, end maternal mortality, and promote women's participation. Robust funding for gender programming that is strategic, coordinated, and easy to track, monitor, and evaluate will increase the effectiveness of U.S. assistance dollars and elevate our leadership. Gender data should continue to be gathered using the standard Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources (F) indicators and expanded to other agencies beyond USAID and the State Department. Furthermore, it will be important to ensure the integrity and monitoring of the USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy¹ throughout the agency. Rather than being revised, the agency should invest in taking action on the recommendations laid out in the 2017 evaluation. We commend the amount of gender sensitivity and integration in the Joint Strategic Plan for USAID and the State Department. To maintain strong gender programming it will also be essential to retain 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 towards ever-greater program sustainability, we encourage Congress to continue to engage with USAID. A thoughtful process would include ample time for feedback to be incorporated from Congress, the development community, and key stakeholders in partner countries. The transition process, in order to be successful, must address inequality. The world's poorest people and those disadvantaged because of gender, age, disability or ethnicity largely have been bypassed by development gains over the last 20 years. 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 equality metrics will also be critical to measuring a country's capacity and commitment for transition.

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.

¹ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/GenderEqualityPolicy_0.pdf