

Written Testimony to the Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
FY18 International Affairs Budget

April 3, 2017

Respectfully submitted by:  
Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance

We are national faith-based organizations committed to saving lives and advancing the dignity of vulnerable and marginalized persons and communities across the world. We support U.S. poverty-focused investments in international humanitarian and development assistance and peacebuilding programs that alleviate suffering from hunger, extreme poverty, debilitating illness, natural disasters and violent conflict. We exist because of a commitment from our U.S. faith constituencies.

We write to you at a time of unprecedented need in which U.S. leadership is especially required. Over 60 million persons have been displaced from their homes – the highest number in decades. Famine has been declared in South Sudan, and near famine conditions are in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, and Yemen-threatening starvation for over 20 million people within the next six months. Added to the continuing Syrian crisis, we confront a situation crying out for a robust international response. Recognizing both this urgency to respond and the budget constraints of the current environment, we stand ready to work with you as you determine the nation's priorities for 2018. We have a seat on the front lines of foreign assistance and we know –that if the U.S. government pulls back, it will roll back the great gains that have been made over the last two decades to end global poverty and risk abdicating the strategic and moral leadership traditionally provided by the US' robust response to humanitarian tragedy.

Thus, as you begin the appropriations process for fiscal year 2018, we urge you to support no less than current funding of **\$57.1 billion for the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill**. This is consistent with the current FY17 Continuing Resolution appropriations levels - \$37.9 billion in base funding, and \$19.2 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). Critical humanitarian and poverty-focused programs provide strong return on investment to the U.S. taxpayer, helping create a healthier world, and generating goodwill toward the United States. Specifically we request:

- **No less than \$3.2 billion for USAID's Global Health Programs**
- **No less than \$3.06 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance**
- **No less than \$2.7 billion for International Disaster Assistance**
- **No less than \$50 million for Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance**
- **No less than \$2.9 billion for Development Assistance Programs as adopted by the Senate**
- **No less than \$30 million for the Complex Crisis Fund**

At less than one percent of the federal budget, foreign assistance is some of the most impactful money we spend. It remains one of America's untold success stories. The U.S. government has provided indispensable funding, influence and leadership to launch initiatives, strengthen local capacity, and coordinate humanitarian strategies across national boundaries. America's public contributions overseas deliver results the private sector cannot achieve alone. Allowing success to roll backwards creates untenable risks abroad and at home, and rolls back significant, documented progress made over the last two decades.

### **The Faith Partnership**

We speak from a place of heart and head. For decades, faith-based organizations have been instrumental partners of the U.S. government, helping poor and vulnerable individuals and communities in some of the hardest-to-reach places of the world. Our organizations have not just been instrumental in delivering assistance but in leveraging government dollars to maximize public support for initiatives and programs that both save lives and promote American interests. Working with local institutions in many areas where local governments and even infrastructures are bare or lacking, faith-based organizations (FBOs) play a key role in helping meet the needs of people in poverty as well as bringing about sustained change.

Though FBOs are a constant presence in developing communities, the work we do would not be possible without the leadership of the U.S. government. Agencies such as USAID, USDA and the State Department offers technical assistance, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation while promoting higher standards to ensure that tax payers' dollars are used more efficiently. The U.S. government opens doors that often are closed to the faith communities in which the USG negotiates on behalf of FBOs to access communities and resources to deliver lifesaving programs and services.

**FBOs effectively leverage public money against private sources.** In fact, the majority of U.S. faith-based NGOs (62%) do not accept or receive any public funds. Of those that do receive public funding, an average of 81% of revenue is from private sources, amounting to \$3.6 billion, raising nearly \$5 for every \$1 invested by the government. The faith community has proven to be effective partners in development by leveraging public funds resulting in high returns on investment and attracting other crucial partners to increase funding and resources for development.

### **Proposed Budget Cuts will increase hunger and poverty**

Cuts to lifesaving poverty focused development assistance are more than just numbers, there are real life or death consequences. Fewer farmers will have access to programs that help them grow their way out of poverty. Mothers and their children (particularly in the critical thousand-day window) will lose access to nutrition interventions and treatments, leaving them vulnerable to stunting. As we face potentially the largest humanitarian crisis since WWII, almost 13 million people could be cut off from lifesaving food aid; and over 1 million people could lose access to safe and sustainable water sources, and/or sanitation services that prevent the spread of disease.

### **Need for Robust US Foreign Assistance**

We believe that humanitarian and development assistance is the right thing to do. We see it in the faces of women and children, newborn babies, girls in school, and so much more. We see it as

our moral call. But we also know that international assistance is the smart thing to do. International assistance has transformed entire communities, in many cases entire countries, turning them into peaceful allies and trade partners, providing the cornerstones of a strengthened economy. Foreign Assistance has laid the groundwork for mutually beneficial trading relationships; 11 out of America's top 15 trading partners were once recipients of foreign assistance.

**We see the U.S. government as a critical partner in fulfilling the moral call so many of us and you believe in – our collective call to respond to our most vulnerable brothers and sisters.** We are doing our part, but we cannot do it alone. The continued leadership of the U.S. government is crucial. We urge you to maintain -- not pull back from -- the many gains made in recent years. In so doing, Congress will make possible continued U.S. global leadership to save lives and build a world of peace and prosperity for the future of all God's children, including our own.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

1. Adventist Development and Relief Agency
2. American Hindu World Service
3. American Jewish World Service
4. Bread for the World
5. Catholic Medical Mission Board
6. Children's Medical Ministries
7. Church World Service
8. Conference of Major Superiors of Men
9. Disabled Children's Fund
10. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
11. Food for the Hungry
12. Faiths for Safe Water
13. IMA World Health
14. Islamic Relief USA
15. Jewish Council for Public Affairs
16. Leadership Conference of Women Religious
17. Lutheran World Relief
18. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
19. Mennonite Central Committee, U.S. Washington Office
20. Presbyterian Church (USA)
21. Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church in North America
22. The Episcopal Church
23. United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
24. Union for Reform Judaism
25. United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
26. World Vision