

**TESTIMONY ON FY 2012 STATE DEPARTMENT FOREIGN OPERATIONS
APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE HOUSE STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND RELATED
PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

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On behalf of Save the Children, I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on addressing the needs of children in the FY 2012 State-Foreign Operations Appropriations bill.

Save the Children has entered its 79th year as a nonprofit, child-focused organization working to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives. Today we work in 16 states across the nation as well as in more than 120 countries in the developing world, serving more than 64 million children to ensure they are safe, healthy, educated and live in economically and food secure households. We also mobilize rapid life-saving assistance for families caught in humanitarian emergencies such as Haiti and Pakistan.

Save the Children supports President Obama's overall request for the 150 account, \$61.4 billion, which represents less than 1% of US discretionary spending. Our nation certainly faces economic challenges, but those economic and other challenges pose even more dire choices for poor families around the world. It is thus important that we prioritize our foreign assistance funding to promote sustainable poverty reduction and to help the most vulnerable, usually children and mothers.

Moreover, as our nation works to address a tight budget environment, we welcome action by the Subcommittee to ensure our foreign assistance programs are more effective, results-driven and accountable and stretch taxpayer dollars farther for children around the world. We urge Congress to support recent Administration initiatives, including the groundbreaking USAID Forward agenda, to provide the resources and personnel USAID needs to become the world's premier development agency. But without sufficient funding in the 2012 budget for USAID operations and USAID Forward,

key reform elements such as procurement reform, building USAID's capacity to work effectively with local organizations, and strengthening monitoring and evaluating, will fail to move forward. These reforms are critical to our nation's "smart power" tools that make our foreign aid stronger, more capable of responding to context-specific needs within countries, and better able to address global poverty and build stability.

Save the Children's recommendations address a range of needs because we have learned from experience that the well-being of children is best approached in an integrated, holistic fashion. Strong American investment in these areas will not only benefit children in need, it will also project our fundamental values as a nation and bolster American international leadership.

Newborn, Child, and Maternal Health

We urge you to make the survival and well-being of newborns, children and mothers a priority and urge the Subcommittee to support the United States Government Global Health initiative, including the request for child and maternal health interventions. These are some of the most cost-effective, efficient and results-driven programs. In fact, significant commitments from the United States and our partners have contributed greatly to reducing under-5 mortality in the developing world from 20 million in 1960 to 8.1 million in 2009. In 15 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that received assistance from USAID, under-5 mortality declined by an average of 33 percent between 1996 and 2006 alone, with some countries achieving a reduction as high as 50 percent. And substantial progress in maternal health has been made in many countries including Egypt, Honduras, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Peru and parts of Bangladesh.

Unfortunately, despite this success, millions of children and their mothers continue to die from treatable and preventable causes. Funding for maternal and child health (MCH) programs over the years has barely kept pace with inflation and without significant investment in this critical area, the U.S. Government will not be able to exercise leadership in efforts to achieve the health-related

Millennium Development Goals, which aim for significant reductions in maternal and child mortality. Support for the Administration's request would accelerate efforts to save mothers and children. Moreover, such American leadership also protects our security by ameliorating conditions that breed extremism: many countries with high child mortality rates or magnitude are also fragile states, recently emerging from conflict.

Child Hunger

We urge you to support the President's request for international food security programs. Humanitarian and development assistance programs like Food for Peace and the President Feed the Future initiative support our values, promote our national security strategy and help fuel long-term US economic prosperity.

Global food prices are once again climbing to record levels, sparking unrest and instability around the world. At the same time it is important to realize that foreign assistance also benefits the US economy. Of our 15 largest trading partners, 11 were at one time recipients of US assistance. It is imperative that we invest in a comprehensive approach to fighting hunger and poverty that includes sustainable agricultural development, child and maternal nutrition, sustainable safety nets, improved emergency response and management, disaster risk reduction, and early warning systems. With nearly a billion people in the world suffering from chronic hunger, now is not the time to cut back on these programs. Malnutrition is the underlying cause of death for 1 in 5 children who die before the age of 5, totaling some 3.5 million children each year. U.S. leadership is vital to the effort to fight the scourge of global hunger, and it helps mobilize commitments by other nations as we have seen at G8 and G20 summits.

Education and Early Childhood Development

Save the Children has worked with tens of millions of children, and these children tell us that education is a key to peace, security and their future prosperity. On behalf of these children, we thank

the Congress for its support of international basic education programs in FY 2010. We appreciate that Congress is now grappling with hard spending choices, yet any cuts below the FY 2010 level would significantly and adversely impact children, their communities and global stability.

We have seen firsthand – in countries such as Egypt, Haiti and Afghanistan – the difference education makes to children and the world around them. Approximately 70 million children are currently out-of-school, over half of whom live in conflict-affected and fragile states. Investing in quality basic education, beginning in early childhood, is essential for economic growth and stability.

Early childhood education and development programming is one of the key ways to improve school retention, and should be included in the U.S. government's global education assistance. Research shows that experiences in the earliest years of life play a critical role in a child's ability to grow up healthy and ready to learn.

Getting children into school is not enough. Too many schools around the world are failing at providing children with a quality basic education. Once children are in school we need to ensure that they acquire the foundational skills of literacy and math. Save the Children's innovative Literacy Boost program is demonstrating that we can partner with struggling schools to improve children's reading skills. In Pakistan, for example, children in test schools who lagged 6% points behind their counterparts at the start of the year finished the school year 54% points better at reading for comprehension.

We are grateful for your strong and consistent leadership in providing hope and opportunity to the world's children. We believe it is now more important than ever that the United States maintain its strong commitment to, and investment in, quality basic education and early childhood programs.

Children in Emergency and Conflict Situations

Children are always the most vulnerable in any conflict or emergency. With increasingly frequent and increasingly larger humanitarian crises, robust investment in the Migration and Refugee

Assistance, Food for Peace, and International Disaster Assistance accounts is important for enabling the US, together with other international partners, to address such needs.

Major cuts to humanitarian budgets would have drastic consequences, including: the inability for the U.S. to fully respond to emerging crises like Libya without cutting life saving assistance in other places; the undermining of U.S. foreign policy goals at critical moments because the U.S. loses its positioning to provide support for people displaced by conflict or natural disasters in places like Afghanistan or Haiti; and the crippling of programs aimed at supporting vulnerable women and children in conflict.

The United States has been the global leader in responding to the needs of vulnerable communities. Retaining this leadership and ensuring effective humanitarian response require up-front funds for life-saving activities at the start of an emergency. They also require investment to support recovery and longer term solutions. Continued US commitment to adequate levels of humanitarian funding is needed to both uphold American values and build bridges with foreign governments and citizens

Conclusion

We thank the Subcommittee for its leadership over U.S. development programs. Your support for child-focused foreign assistance priorities is very much appreciated as Save the Children works to serve some of the most vulnerable.