

# URGE YOUR SENATOR TO SUPPORT ENDING PREVENTABLE CHILD DEATHS, MALNUTRITION AND STUNTING IN POOR COUNTRIES



Every Spring, the annual appropriations, or funding, process begins in Congress to keep our government running the following year. One of the smallest funding bills is the State, Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, which includes humanitarian and development resources to address disease and suffering in some of the poorest places on the planet. (Although Americans when polled estimate that foreign aid makes up 25 percent of the federal budget, in reality just 1 percent of the federal budget goes towards **foreign assistance**—and within that, less than half is devoted to poverty-focused development and humanitarian programs.)

## Background:

The United States provides poverty-focused foreign assistance to poor countries to promote global health, security, and democracy, to reduce the worst aspects of poverty and to respond to disasters and crises. This type of foreign assistance is not only the right thing to do, and represents the best of our American values, but it is the smart thing to do. It promotes national security, global stability and international trade while reinforcing our diplomatic and strategic priorities by **boosting goodwill**.

Thanks in part to U.S. investment in poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance over the past three-and-a-half decades, the **deaths of children** under five years old due to preventable disease and malnutrition have fallen from more than 12 million a year in 1990 to roughly 5 million today. Further, over the past 20 years, U.S. investment in global HIV programs through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or **PEPFAR** for short, has enabled 5.5 million babies to be born HIV-free, and for 25 million men, women and children to be saved from HIV.

While these are huge triumphs to be celebrated, recent global setbacks including the **COVID-19 pandemic**, advancing **climate change**, **new** and **ongoing conflicts**, and mounting global **food insecurity** are putting these achievements at risk and heightening the urgency of refining our efforts. It is critical that the U.S. do all it can to ensure maximum impact of the limited pot of money spent on foreign assistance, especially the dollars spent on behalf of the most vulnerable children.

The fact is, like **elsewhere in the U.S. budget**, children have never received the attention or share of foreign assistance resources they deserve. Children have specific developmental needs and investing in them delivers an outsized **return on investment**. Yet our spending on kids is miniscule. **First Focus on Children's 2023 Children's Budget** documents that just 9 cents of every \$1 of U.S. foreign assistance goes to babies and kids worldwide despite the fact that they make up a third to nearly a half of the population globally.

## Children Are in Crisis

The imbalance of our investment in children internationally is unfair and out of alignment with the facts on the ground. According to **UNICEF**, children are more likely to live in poverty than adults

## ACTION SHEET:

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and more vulnerable to its effects. Poverty, and everything that comes with it, has a devastating impact on child development.

In addition to shortening their life spans, absolute poverty inflicts sickness and suffering on children that **stunts** the growth of their bodies and brains — robbing them, their families and their nations of their full potential. According to a report in **The Lancet** “a staggering 43 percent of children under five years of age — an estimated 250 million — living in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of suboptimal development due to poverty and stunting. The burden is currently underestimated because risks to health and wellbeing go beyond these two factors.”

## Take Action

This month, we will write to our **Senators** to urge that they speak or write to two of the most powerful decision-makers when it comes to foreign assistance: **State, Foreign Operations** Chairman **Chris Coons (D-DE)** and if your Senator is a Republican, also to Ranking Senator, **Lindsey Graham (R-SC)**, in support of the prioritization of children's needs in their Fiscal year 2025 foreign aid funding bill.

Pull from the information in the background section above and if you would like more specifics, urge that the foreign aid programs below be protected and expanded in 2025:

- **Vulnerable Children**
- **HIV/AIDS**
- **Maternal and Child Health**
- **Nutrition**
- **Basic Education**
- **Malaria**
- **Clean Water & Sanitation**
- **The U.S. contribution to UNICEF**
- **International Disaster Assistance**
- **Lead Exposure/Toxic Chemicals**

**\*NOTE:** *If you are from Delaware or South Carolina, you would write directly to Senator Coons or Senator Graham instead.*

Find your Senator **here** for how to email them and remind them that the legacy of U.S. poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance is one of real-world impact: saving millions of lives and reducing needless suffering globally.

Urge your Senator to ensure continued leadership in this area and to prioritize children going forward.