

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS ARE IN GRAVE DANGER

The President recently signed an Executive Order directing an immediate stop to all federal loans, grants and assistance for domestic programs like food aid, health insurance and Head Start—potentially endangering over \$300,000 in domestic programs for children. He also signed an “EO” immediately halting international poverty-focused development assistance, putting the lives of hundreds of millions of the world’s most vulnerable children in danger. While the domestic EO has since been temporarily pulled back by the White House due to an outcry of opposition around the country, the international stop work order is still in effect. This means that life-saving funding already approved by Congress for global health, nutrition and infectious disease interventions, will no longer reach its intended recipients.

While poverty-focused foreign assistance is less than 1% of our federal budget, it has great impact for good in the world. Thanks in large part to U.S. foreign assistance, the deaths of children under five years of age from preventable diseases and malnutrition has been slashed from **12.8 million in 1990 to 4.9 million** today and the prevalence of child stunting has dropped by **44%**. And it is thanks to leadership by the U.S. that **7.8 million** babies were born HIV-free over the past 20 years and close to **12 million** pregnant women and children were saved from malaria – one of the biggest killers of young children worldwide.

While the White House's withdrawal from the World Health Organization was generally expected given that this was attempted during the first Trump administration, the complete cessation of poverty-focused international assistance and dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development was not. As of this writing, any new maternal and child health programs that keep babies alive and healthy have been halted. So too are clean water, routine vaccination, malaria and other infectious disease control and nutrition programs. And as mentioned above, previously congressionally appropriated funding for current programs has also been stopped. This means, for example, that projects around the world with HIV drugs already in hand will lack the funding to distribute them out in the field. More babies will be born HIV-positive (an estimated **1,471 per day**) and more children will die of HIV because they do not receive their treatment. Without treatment, a third of all babies who are HIV-positive will succumb to infections and die before their first birthday and half will die before age two. The State Department provided a vague waiver a few days after the Executive Order was signed for some lifesaving humanitarian assistance to still be allowed, but it remains unclear exactly what constitutes “lifesaving” and what doesn’t. As of now, all U.S. HIV funded programs have ground to a halt.

To describe these developments as “catastrophic” for the world’s most vulnerable children would not be an overstatement. As the most powerful country in the world, with offices in over 100 countries, the U.S.’s abrupt halt in operations is devastating to millions and is already harming children. This is because children’s bodies are still developing, and they are unable to withstand bouts of extreme heat, dirty water or exposure to infection the way adults can. Because they are still growing, children are more fragile, and they die faster without the proper interventions.

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Absent treatment, for example, a young child sick with diarrheal disease can pass away within days and an infant with a respiratory infection can die in mere hours. Worldwide, the poorest children are twice as likely to die in childhood than their wealthier peers.

The Executive Order freezing foreign assistance is cruel. Additionally, the move to end previously agreed-upon funding is illegal. The U.S. Constitution designates Congress with the power of the purse and the very modest amount of money that members of Congress, elected by Americans all over the country, decided to provide to poor children around the world, has been illegitimately seized.

Take Action Now:

1. Explore your **Senator's** website and find where you can contact them.
2. Write an email to your **Senator** to urgently call for them to weigh in personally with the White House in opposition to the freeze in poverty-focused development assistance.
3. Tell your Senator that millions of children will suffer and die due to this stop work order.
4. Ask your Senator to immediately press the White House to reverse course.
5. Request a response.