Sequestration cuts will cost lives, warns NGO alliance

WASHINGTON (March 1, 2013) – NGO alliance InterAction urged members of Congress and the administration to restore support for life-saving foreign assistance programs in continued budget negotiations, warning that sequestration cuts that take effect today will cost lives.

Under sequestration, programs that provide food aid, support for refugees, HIV/AIDS treatment, primary school education and other poverty-focused and humanitarian assistance will be cut by approximately 5.3 percent – a move that not only risks lives, but turns back the clock on years of investment and progress, said Samuel A. Worthington, president and CEO of InterAction.

“These cuts to foreign assistance programs, which make up less than 1 percent of the budget, are not going to address the federal deficit,” Worthington said. “But they will translate into real human suffering, at a time when crises in Syria, Mali, Sudan and elsewhere desperately need our attention. The U.S. government would be hard-pressed to respond to any unexpected crises that might erupt during the 2013 fiscal year.”

More people are displaced around the world by conflict now than at any other point in the last 15 years. In Syria, one in five people needs food, heat and other humanitarian assistance as the situation continues to deteriorate and the number of refugees in neighboring countries nears one million, according to the United Nations.

The sequestration cuts also mean:

- **2.1 million fewer people** would have access reduced or denied to lifesaving food aid.
- **605,625 fewer children** who will receive nutritional interventions designed to save their lives and help prevent the irreversible damage to their brains and bodies caused by malnutrition.
- **1.2 million fewer insecticide-treated mosquito nets** will be procured, leading to over 3,200 deaths due to malaria; 2 million fewer people will receive treatment.
- **67,200 fewer HIV-positive pregnant women** will receive services to prevent mother-to-child transmission, leading to nearly 12,800 infants being infected with HIV.

“Congress needs to take the responsible path here. People’s lives depend on it, both here and abroad,” Worthington said.

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InterAction is the largest alliance of U.S.-based nongovernmental international organizations, with more than 190 members. Our members operate in every developing country, working with local communities to overcome poverty and suffering by helping to improve their quality of life. Visit www.interaction.org.