

# IMPROVING INTERNATIONAL FOOD ASSISTANCE

*In the face of immense global needs for humanitarian assistance, emergency food response, nutrition, and safety net programs must be better integrated and coordinated with development assistance to create a full spectrum of programs needed to tackle hunger, especially as the delivery of development assistance expands in fragile environments.*

## What is U.S. Humanitarian and Development Food Assistance?

Following World War II, the U.S. launched the Food for Peace Title II food aid program to combat world hunger by shipping surplus U.S. grain overseas. Since then, U.S. food aid has been critical in saving lives and addressing chronic poverty and malnutrition. More recently, the Emergency Food Security Program (EFSP) has allowed the U.S. to compliment humanitarian in-kind food donations with market-based tools, including mobile money, vouchers, etc. Food for Peace also provides funding for nonemergency development programs that utilizes a multisectoral approach — inclusive of key areas resilience, nutrition, and livelihoods — that puts whole communities on a sustainable path toward self-reliance.<sup>257</sup>

Both Title II emergency and development programming and EFSP are implemented through the Office of Food for Peace, and these programs have helped more than 3 billion hungry people in more than 150 countries. In FY2017, Office of Food for Peace programs reached 70 million people in 53 countries with lifesaving food assistance. These efforts are helping to address urgent humanitarian need in places such as Syria and South Sudan. Whereas, development programming bridges the gap between conflict and stability by addressing the root causes of food insecurity.<sup>258</sup>

Now, 60 years after Title II was launched, it's time to update U.S. food assistance to ensure that it is as efficient and effective as possible.

## What Can be Improved Within the Current Food Assistance Program?

Under current law, Title II food aid must be purchased in the U.S. and at least half of it must be transported on U.S. flag vessels. This standard is outdated and can be an inefficient means of getting aid to people in need.

According to the U.S. government's own watchdog agency, GAO, buying and transporting food from the United States can take four to six months to reach its destination. During sudden emergencies, such as

Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, people in need often cannot afford to wait months for assistance to arrive. Moreover, high transportation and shipping costs result in less funding being available to purchase food.

As U.S. programs improve international food assistance using a mix of market-based tools (commodities, vouchers, local food purchases, etc.), Congress can play a role in making sure the right tools are available to respond to each context.

## How Can Food Assistance be Improved to Reach More People?

- Protect the integrity of food assistance programs, ensuring they reach the populations we are trying to serve and have maximum impact on improving lives
- Improve the management and coordination of the food assistance programs, including streamlined reporting requirements, encouragement of shared learning, and greater ease in programming multiple funding streams. Additionally, give USAID authority to harmonize regulations and practices between Emergency Food Security Program and Food for Peace Title II emergency programs, with the goal of being able to use resources from either program in one award and making it easier for these two programs to work together.
- Limit negative impacts from shipping requirements that can slow an emergency response or increase the cost of the transportation, resulting in less food assistance making it to those who are hungry.
- Reduce the need to fund program activities using monetization.
- Continue authorization of LRP, which complements existing U.S. government food assistance programs, especially the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, which supports school feeding and maternal and child nutrition projects around the world.

## Resources for Congressional Staff

- **Food for Peace 2017 Year in Review.** USAID, June 2018. This Year-in-Review Annual Report includes spotlights key responses in both emergency food assistance – driven by conflict, natural disasters and helping refugee populations – and longer-term food security programs.<sup>259</sup>
- **Food for Peace Food Assistance Overview.** USAID, October 2018. A quick brief on the mission, operations, and impact of Food for Peace food assistance programs.<sup>260</sup>
- **U.S. International Food Assistance Funding Fact Sheet.** USAID, November 2017. A quick brief on the funding authority and accounts for international food assistance programs.<sup>261</sup>