

# Foreign Assistance Recommendations

Foreign assistance has always played a significant role in America's leadership, strength, and influence. It has also served the world's poor and vulnerable, building goodwill for the United States, contributing to thriving and healthy economies with our partners, and fostering global stability. There is always room to improve and better articulate foreign assistance's impact, and more clearly draw lines as to how it contributes to national interests and foreign policy.

An integral part of foreign assistance and America's leadership is the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs implement programs on their own and in partnership with the U.S. all over the world. NGOs bring their own resources, expertise, and experiences. Informed by these experiences, U.S. policymakers can create a way forward that ensures foreign assistance saves lives, catalyzes self-reliance, and continues to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

## Recommendations

Actions taken to date to freeze and terminate foreign assistance and dismantle the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have taken a toll on America's capacity to implement and oversee foreign assistance effectively and efficiently. As we look to the future, we need to recognize that partner and stakeholder trust has been broken, past progress undermined, and the values of the U.S. questioned. Reducing harm and restoring confidence in the U.S. as a reliable partner is central to the future of foreign assistance that is mutually beneficial, achieves results, and upholds America's global leadership.

The Trump administration made clear its intention to drastically narrow the scope and objectives of foreign assistance and, based on their congressional notification, to reorganize USAID within the State Department in a diffused manner. Even in a leaner foreign assistance environment, there is a clear justification—in terms of lives saved, U.S. security, and creating a more stable and prosperous world—to continue global health, development and humanitarian assistance. These three pillars—development, health, and humanitarian—are the core of U.S. foreign assistance and support American values and foreign policy priorities while also delivering strong impact for taxpayers. It is under this common understanding and desire for thoughtful reform that we make the following recommendations.

### Alignment to Administration and Congressional Priorities

- Ensure the Executive Branch conducts a foreign assistance review every four years, including a multilateral assistance review.
- Have Congress reauthorize the Foreign Assistance Act every five years.
- Have a Senate confirmed senior leadership position of foreign assistance within the U.S. government be responsible for ensuring assistance is coherent, impactful, and taken seriously.

### Scalability and Transition

- Better align and increase funding for systems approaches that support sustainability, localization, and country ownership, such as focusing on health systems strengthening rather than vertical, disease-specific approaches, and improving access to and resilience of market systems, enabling private sector growth and independence.

- Drive more resources and decision-making to regional bureaus, missions, and local actors where local needs can be best assessed, with a particular focus on development objectives. Require all heads of regional bureaus and foreign assistance leadership positions to be career foreign service officers.
- Require global health and development projects to include a “graduation” and sustainability strategy with specific benchmarks, including how such projects will transition to community or country ownership.
- Create multiyear, flexible agreements between the U.S. and partner countries modeled on the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) that aim to reduce poverty through a concerted focus on key barriers in that partner country while ensuring these agreements build sustainability, embrace localization, and are system focused and flexible.
- Ensure development assistance—such as education, agriculture, entrepreneurial training, good governance, and more—creates the capabilities and foundation for eventual private sector investments through the Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to be successful. Without development assistance, there is no sustainable path to becoming a trade partner.

### Prevention and Resilience Programming

- Preserve the needs-based and impartial nature of humanitarian assistance to address urgent life-saving interventions.
- Increase humanitarian impact and outcomes, as well as efficiencies, by establishing longer grant terms and more multi-year awards to strengthen capacities and resilience to future shocks.
- Invest in programming that builds communities’ resilience to shocks and stressors and builds systems that address underlying drivers of conflict or vulnerability. For example, ensure smallholder farmers and producers are part of an emergency food security response in addition to commodity-based direct food assistance.
- Support programming—such as education, economic growth, good governance, WASH, agricultural development, youth empowerment, and more— that helps communities thrive and be resilient, reducing future humanitarian needs and the likelihood of political instability and building resilient societies that can prosper.
- Ensure a rapid response leadership capacity is maintained to respond quickly to new crises and emergencies, engage in ways that reduce future harm, and help stabilize vulnerable populations quickly.

### Private Sector Engagement

- Improve private sector engagement with foreign assistance, including enhancing support for local small and medium enterprises and reducing barriers to public-private partnerships.
- Create a Private Sector and Small Business Advisory Council to harness the expertise and innovation of U.S. businesses to inform programs, monitoring and evaluation, and partnerships.

### Improving and Measuring Impact

- Streamline and improve monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of programming so that information from M&E is utilized to improve programs in real time. Require an M&E officer in every contract, grant, or cooperative agreement.

- Require short-term outcomes to be detailed in every award, in addition to longer-term outcomes. Projects that don't substantially achieve outcomes will have projects reviewed prior to renewal.
- Make program impact evaluations and final reports publicly available.
- Require biannual review of cost-effective, high-impact interventions by the administration for inclusion in strategies, policies, and funding opportunities.

## Oversight and Transparency

- Create a public website for all foreign assistance spending with detailed information on recipient, project goals, and funding, as well as posting of the 653(a).
- Review all existing congressional notification (CN) requirements and reduce requirements where appropriate. Publish all CNs after approval.
- Increase authorities for the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Enhance responsiveness to OIG recommendations and recommendations from the U.S. Government Accountability Office.
- Conduct annual reviews of Congressional and legally required reporting requirements to improve and streamline the burden of reports and reporting requirements.
- Ensure technical expertise, staffing, and capacity aligns with goals, laws, and programming priorities.
- Further the work in safeguarding—including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment—to ensure it is embedded in every decision, action, and program.

As the administration reshapes foreign assistance, we urge that an independent agency be considered given the necessary functions, neutrality, expertise, agility, and responsiveness that is required to implement foreign assistance effectively. In addition, we urge that capabilities needed to restore immediate capacity to provide new awards and strategic and life-saving programs are prioritized under the administration's foreign assistance framework. This will mitigate further harm to Americans, allies, and lives.