

Main Stage

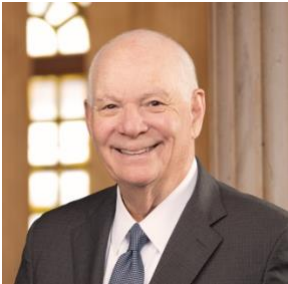
October 1 | 9:30 a.m.

What is Next in Foreign Aid?

The Forum

As spanning geopolitical shifts, humanitarian crises, and the demand for sustainable development become more complex—the intersection of U.S. foreign policy and international aid has never been more critical. The session opens with an exclusive interview featuring Former Senator Ben Cardin sharing his seasoned perspective on the current state of U.S. foreign relations, democratic governance and the consolidation of foreign assistance into the State Department —addressing the critical question of whether this consolidation is here to stay and how to make it work.

In part two of the session, Lisa Bos will moderate a panel discussion with Senator Cardin, Carrie Hessler-Radelet and Dennis Vega to explore the next era of international aid, the role of Congress and bipartisan engagement, and the new operational framework that is required to succeed. The drivers of hunger and food insecurity are complex and interconnected; crises, displacement, extreme weather, inflation, poverty - all play a part. Despite decades of effort, global hunger and food insecurity remain challenges that require both tried and tested approaches as well as new innovations. Panelists will discuss how NGOs and implementing partners can adapt to a changing donor landscape, and what a more resilient, coordinated approach to global food security could look like going forward.



Senator Ben Cardin, D-MD

A third-generation Marylander, Senator Ben Cardin has built a distinguished career centered on public service, principled leadership, and bipartisan problem-solving. After serving 20 years in the Maryland House of Delegates, including eight years as Speaker, he went on to serve two decades in the U.S. House of Representatives and recently concluded three terms in the United States Senate. Throughout his career, he has been widely recognized for his civility, integrity, and commitment to effective governance.

Senator Cardin's long-standing dedication to strengthening democratic engagement is further reflected in his role as Co-Founder of the Ben and Myrna Cardin Center for Civic Engagement and Civil Discourse at Towson University. Senator Cardin served as the Chair of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, playing a pivotal role in shaping American engagement abroad by emphasizing the importance of values-based foreign policy. He promoted the centrality of democracy, anti-corruption, and human rights protections in U.S. relations with foreign countries. In this capacity, he strengthened oversight of international human rights abuses, promoted good governance initiatives, and advanced global anti-corruption frameworks. His leadership consistently underscored the principle that sustainable security and prosperity depend on respect for human dignity and the rule of law. Senator Cardin is internationally known as the principal architect of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights and Accountability Act, a landmark legislation that transformed the United States' ability to respond to gross human

rights violations and significant corruption worldwide. The Magnitsky Act empowers the U.S. government to impose targeted sanctions on individuals responsible for abuses, making it one of the most consequential human rights tools of the 21st century. After its adoption in the United States, the Magnitsky Act inspired similar legislation among U.S. allies and elevated human rights enforcement as a central pillar of international diplomacy. During his Senate tenure, Cardin also advanced critical civil rights and equity initiatives through his work on the Judiciary Committee, championing efforts to prohibit racial and religious profiling, restore voting rights, and support gender equality. As a senior member of the Finance Committee and former chair of the Small Business Committee, he helped drive major bipartisan legislation, including retirement security reforms, expansion of affordable health coverage, and the Paycheck Protection Program, which provided vital support to American small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Across all levels of government, Senator Cardin has remained deeply committed to strengthening communities, defending democratic values, and promoting justice at home and abroad.



Carrie Hessler-Radelet

President & CEO, Global Communities

Carrie Hessler-Radelet is the President & CEO of Global Communities. She previously served as President & CEO of Project Concern International (PCI), a global development organization that drives innovation from the ground up to enhance health, end hunger, overcome hardship and advance women & girls—resulting in a meaningful and measurable change in people’s lives. Carrie led a bold effort to bring together PCI and Global Communities to expand the scale and impact of proven programs. The merger became effective on September 1, 2021. Prior to PCI, Carrie served as Director of the Peace Corps (2012-2017) and Deputy Director (2012-2015), leading America’s iconic international volunteer service organization with programs in over 65 countries. At Peace Corps, she led historic reforms to modernize and strengthen the agency to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Before being appointed to the Peace Corps by President Obama, Carrie worked as the Vice President and Director of the Washington D.C. office of John Snow, Inc. (JSI), overseeing the management of public health programs in 85 countries around the world. Her decades of global health work also included serving as the lead consultant on the first Five-Year Global HIV/AIDS Strategy for President George W. Bush’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), working with USAID in Indonesia on maternal and child health and HIV programming, founding the Special Olympics in The Gambia, and serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer with her husband in Western Samoa. Carrie is passionate about empowering communities to discover their own sustainable, innovative solutions to poverty. She holds a Master of Science in Health Policy and Management from Harvard University and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Economics from Boston University.



Dennis Vega

President & CEO, Pact

Dennis Vega is President & CEO of Pact. He has nearly two decades of experience in international development and nonprofit management. Most recently, Dennis served as the Acting Deputy Administrator for Management and Resources at USAID, overseeing operations for its 13,000-person workforce across more than 100 countries. Prior to that, he was Chief of Staff of USAID. Previously, Dennis served as Interim President and CEO as well as Chief Operating Officer of America's Promise Alliance, a youth development coalition founded by General Colin Powell, leading the organization's engagement with America's young people, particularly through the Covid-19 crisis. Throughout his career, Dennis also held a number of positions at the U.S. Department of State and USAID during the Administrations of Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump. He is a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis School of Law and the University of Texas at Austin. Dennis joined Pact in 2024.



Lisa Bos [Moderator]

Vice President, Policy and Government Relations, InterAction

Lisa Bos is the Vice President for Policy and Government Relations at InterAction, the largest U.S.-based alliance of international NGOs and partners. She leads InterAction's advocacy and education efforts with Congress and the Administration and serves on the Executive Team. In addition, she oversees a government relations and policy team focused on supporting InterAction's members and their priorities in Washington, DC. Lisa has testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee and been featured in media outlets including CNN International, Devex, NOTUS, NPR, the Religion News Service, and Time Magazine. Prior to joining InterAction, Lisa was the Senior Director of Government Relations at World Vision, where she spent 13 years. Lisa spent nearly 9 years as a legislative staff person in the U.S. House of Representatives, including 3 years as Policy Director for the Republican Study Committee, the largest caucus in Congress. In this role, Ms. Bos analyzed legislation and worked closely with committees and House Leadership. Ms. Bos has worked in the private sector as well, serving as a Vice President at Cassidy & Associates and as an Account Director at Russ Reid. Ms. Bos is a native of Michigan and a graduate of Hope College in Holland, Michigan. She currently resides in Falls Church, VA.