

Foreign Aid Backgrounder

On January 20, the new administration issued an executive order pausing foreign aid programs for 90 days while they underwent a review to align all programs with the new administration's foreign policy goals. The Administration wants to ensure that all programs support making the U.S. safer, stronger, and more prosperous. On January 24, the Administration released a memo halting all ongoing foreign assistance, except military support to Israel and Egypt and emergency food aid. Soon after, almost all humanitarian and development programs received stop work orders, essentially shutting down almost all programs, including food aid. On January 28, the administration issued a waiver exempting lifesaving humanitarian assistance from the freeze. In the two weeks following the general waiver, some lifesaving programs have received official approval to continue working, but not all. Moreover, organizations have not been able to access the money necessary to implement programs.

During the annual budget and appropriations process, Congress negotiates how to spend U.S. taxpayer dollars. Foreign assistance is an investment in our inter-connected world to protect life, uphold human dignity, and pursue sustainable solutions to the world's toughest challenges. Making up less than 1% of the annual federal budget, foreign assistance is a small yet smart investment to support the most vulnerable to care for their families and advance U.S. interests: to foster economic opportunity, promote peace and security, and project our core values abroad. Just half of that 1% is directed toward poverty-reducing humanitarian and development aid. Catholic Relief Services and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops advocate on [priority accounts](#) to ensure the U.S. government provides robust assistance to alleviate suffering and eliminate hunger and poverty around the world.

Through the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, organizations such as CRS partner with the U.S. government to implement programming funded by the U.S. Congress. CRS is proud to continue our partnership alongside Congress and the Administration to enact timely legislation to address global poverty and hunger and support the implementation of U.S.-funded emergency and development programming around the world.

Protecting funding for these international poverty-reducing accounts is not possible without the diligent work of constituents who call on Congress to prioritize this funding.

HOW THE STOP WORK ORDERS THREATEN HUMAN LIVES AND NATIONAL INTEREST

CRS recognizes the prerogative of the new Administration to align foreign assistance with its foreign policy agenda, and we look forward to working with them and Congress to thoughtfully review and demonstrate the impact of our work. But foreign aid is not about charity; it's about building sustainable systems and putting people on a path to self-reliance. While the U.S. steps in to provide immediate help when people are hungry or sick—because America is built on generosity and values—the true goal is to foster long-term solutions in areas like agriculture, education, and healthcare towards the betterment of us all. Empowering societies to become self-sufficient strengthens global stability and, in turn, bolsters U.S. security and prosperity. This is how we all thrive.

The Stop Work Order has interrupted projects that provide basic education for children, lifesaving medications to people with HIV, and projects that provided farmers with seeds and tools to plant their crops. Families are fleeing war with uncertain prospects for how to find shelter, and entire communities don't have access to clean water.

As these programs stop, we are not only putting vulnerable lives at risk but also weakening our global influence and threatening U.S. security. Millions of people will be impacted, including us.

For example, a food security program in Haiti supports more than 65,000 Haitians with food—partly U.S.-grown commodities like grain and oil and partly fresh local foods. This assistance is critical in ensuring that people who cannot feed themselves are not forced to migrate in search of opportunities or pulled into gang activity. Alongside the impact on Haitians, U.S. farmers and shippers also benefit by supplying food aid programs with their goods and services. Aid like this is a win-win that stimulates both the U.S. economy and global markets.

CRS' APPROACH TO FOREIGN AID

CRS works in more than 100 countries, responding to immediate humanitarian needs as well as implementing long-term development programs that provide opportunities for people to build a pathway to prosperity for themselves and their families.

U.S. international assistance supports communities to build their skills for the long-term: growing food, eating nutritiously, saving money, supporting school meal programs, restoring degraded lands, and improving access to clean drinking water. These activities and investments make the U.S. and world a safer, stronger, and more prosperous place.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING

For more information on appropriations or about the accounts that CRS and the USCCB prioritize, view:

- [CRS/USCCB Chart of Accounts](#)

For examples of the importance CRS' programs funded by U.S. international assistance, read these stories, or find more at crs.org/act:

- [The Impact of U.S. International Assistance: Nery's Story](#)
- [Improving Nutrition and Resilience in Rwanda](#)
- [Improving Nutrition in Laos](#)
- [Feeding Those Most in Need in Ethiopia](#)