

## Congress must protect USAID's integrity

### USAID leads efforts to reduce poverty and strengthen democracy.

In 1961, Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act and established the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as an independent agency. Today, USAID is the world's premier partner for international development and works with hundreds of organizations to improve global health and prosperity. Dismantling the agency and removing its independence will not support USAID to be more effective or efficient with U.S. taxpayer dollars. It will only lead to irreparable harm to communities globally, and to the U.S.' standing in the world.

Over the past 64 years, the American people, through USAID, have partnered with communities around the world to improve health, education, and economic opportunity. This work champions values that many Americans hold dear: **strengthening democracy, protecting freedom and human rights, safeguarding health of vulnerable populations, and fostering economic growth.**

USAID's work to protect and promote health is especially important. Without the generosity of the American people, the world would look very different. Millions of people would have died from HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria; millions of additional women would have died while bringing new life into the world; tens of millions of babies would have died from vaccine-preventable diseases like measles and pneumonia. We have delivered these impressive results with less than one percent of the U.S. federal budget.

### USAID makes us stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

USAID is a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy and national security. USAID and the State Department play very different, but complementary, roles in the world. A strong and independent USAID is essential. The issues that the agency works on are meant to be beyond politics — humanitarian relief, global health goals like eradicating HIV, TB, and malaria, and promoting democracy.

USAID needs to be able to operate as an independent technical expert so that they can be trusted around the world. Merging or subsuming USAID within the State Department is not just an overreach by the administration — it would fundamentally alter the nature of the agency by inserting politics into lifesaving health and humanitarian aid programs and jeopardizing trusted partnerships that have taken years, even decades, to build.

A foreign assistance review conducted in good faith is a valid exercise. It can help strengthen programs and increase the enormous positive benefits of these programs even further. Most incoming administrations review programs to set strategies that support their priorities over the next four years. But the lifesaving work of USAID should not stop in the meantime. **What's happening to U.S. foreign assistance programs right now is a destruction, not a pause.**

Many of the early actions the Trump Administration has taken — including a “Stop-Work Order” for all existing foreign aid programs — are catastrophic for communities around the world and will cause thousands of avoidable deaths. These actions violate previous contractual obligations and make the U.S. look like a fickle partner.

No international development agency or government entity is perfect. We believe we should work together in good faith to continuously strengthen and reform USAID so it can deliver on its critical mandate. Meaningful reform to USAID should come from Congress and be informed by their constituents, whose tax dollars fund these programs.

## **Congress has an essential role in oversight and direction of USAID.**

Congress has a key role to play as the body that established and authorized USAID through the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Congress also has one of the most important powers granted under the U.S. constitution — **“the power of the purse.”** Each year, Congress has continued to fund USAID in a bipartisan way — with specific direction on how those funds are spent — setting aside resources for key priorities like child health, nutrition, clean water, and basic education.

As part of this responsibility, Congress has played an essential role in building bipartisan consensus on USAID’s priorities, by setting aside funds for the most cost-effective, high impact programs, increasing oversight and accountability, and sharpening the impact of USAID’s programming over many years. This includes legislation RESULTS supported, like the bill to sharpen the U.S. government strategy on basic education and better focus investments on the highest impact nutrition interventions.

**Congress must continue to play a key role in any reforms to USAID.** Congress has driven USAID’s transformational impact over many decades and can push the agency to do even more now to improve localization, strengthen its measurable outcomes, build on the latest evidence base, and use the latest data to target the highest-impact tools to the highest-need communities.