



**STATEMENT OF MARK VISO  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY**

**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE,  
FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**APRIL 14, 2023**

Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Lee, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to provide written testimony. My name is Mark Viso, and I am the President & CEO of Food for the Hungry, a Christian humanitarian organization providing life-changing relief and development programs since 1971. At Food for the Hungry, we design, develop, and deliver catalytic solutions that transform systems so that communities challenged by poverty, injustice, and marginalization have the agency and resources necessary to be resilient and flourish. **I respectfully ask the Subcommittee to provide robust funding for critical development, humanitarian, and global health programs at USAID and the Department of State, including no less than \$1.2 billion for the Global Food Security Strategy, also known as Feed the Future; \$300 million for Nutrition within Global Health Programs; \$1.01 billion for Maternal and Child Health; and \$1.1 billion for Basic Education. I also request \$5.27 billion for International Disaster Assistance; \$5.43 billion for Development Assistance; and \$5.39 billion for the Economic Support Fund in Fiscal Year 2024.**

Inspired by our Christian faith, Food for the Hungry walks alongside the most vulnerable people in many of the world's hardest places, sustained and encouraged by Micah 6:8 "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Every day, I am honored to meet global brothers and sisters confronting extraordinary challenges and humbled by their remarkable courage and strength. I am inspired by the commitment of our staff and heartened to see the transformative impact of our programs and partnerships.

Through deep relationships within communities, we work alongside the most vulnerable to co-create innovative solutions for sustainable, lasting change. Our diverse partnerships with individuals, churches, corporations, foundations, the U.S. and other donor governments, and various United Nations agencies enable FH to increase our impact and expand our reach, doing more for those we serve. Last year, Food for the Hungry reached nearly 10 million people across more than 3,500 communities in 18 countries experiencing extreme poverty. Through the tireless commitment of our staff, over 99% of whom serve in their country of origin, we are working to rethink global development, transform broken systems, and restore vulnerable communities and families to lives of health and hope.

With conflict both driving and resulting from global food insecurity; climate shocks destroying homes, crops, and livelihoods; and pandemic-era supply chain disruptions continuing to drive up the cost of nutritious food, the global food security crisis of 2022 is sadly not abating. Right now, 828 million people go to bed hungry each night, and a third of the world cannot afford and access a nutritious diet. The World Food Programme projects more than 345 million people will suffer from acute food insecurity this year, more than double pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels. Globally, 43 million people teeter on the brink of famine, and an unprecedented drought in the Horn of Africa has left more than 22 million people at risk of starvation, and more than 5 million children acutely malnourished.

Food for the Hungry works in many of the so-called Hunger Hotspots – vulnerable countries like Ethiopia, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – where fragility, weak institutions, limited or nonexistent social protections, and dependence on significant staple food imports from Russia and Ukraine have combined to produce indescribable suffering. Globally, acute malnutrition in pregnant and breastfeeding women has risen by 25% since 2020. Estimates suggest that 19 million children missed out on routine but life-saving immunizations due to the pandemic. 70% of children in low and middle-income countries experience learning poverty, unable to read and comprehend a simple text by age 10. Over 13 million children under age 5 suffer from severe wasting, the deadliest form of malnutrition, and UNICEF estimates the current global food security crisis is pushing one child into severe malnutrition every minute. Every day, more than 13,000 children and 800 women die from preventable causes.

These figures are heartbreaking, and each one of them represents a real person currently being robbed of the resources and agency needed for a full, flourishing future. But we can change the status quo. With the political will and public courage of lawmakers like you, the U.S. government can increase foreign assistance investments to save lives and livelihoods now while building the long-term resilience necessary to better insulate vulnerable communities and families from future shocks and stresses. The Subcommittee's past support for critical relief and development programs confirms that you, too, are moved by present injustices and motivated to mobilize the full force of the U.S. government to fight poverty and human suffering. Your continued partnership in aiding and empowering the most vulnerable members of our global community is indispensable to the work of Food for the Hungry. Towards that end, we respectfully request the following specific funding amounts in Fiscal Year 2024.

We request \$1.2 billion for the Global Food Security Strategy, also known as Feed the Future. A multiagency effort focused on addressing the root causes of hunger, poverty and malnutrition, Feed the Future works in twenty high-need, low-resource, focus countries to develop and deploy agricultural innovations, unlock financing for food security, and empower people to feed themselves and nourish the next generation. Feed the Future also supports research and technical assistance aimed at reducing communities' vulnerability to food shocks and stresses, thereby building capacity and resilience. In areas where Feed the Future works, 23.4 million more people live above the poverty line, 5.2 million families no longer go hungry, and 3.4 million more children are living free from stunting.

We request \$300 million for the Nutrition subaccount within Global Health Programs. Though nearly half of all deaths in children under five are attributable to malnutrition, less than 0.4% of

U.S. foreign assistance is spent on its prevention and treatment. The Nutrition subaccount plays a central role in turning the tide against malnutrition by targeting action during the important 1,000-day window between pregnancy and a child's second birthday. Focusing on low-cost, high-impact interventions such as nutrition education, breastfeeding support, multiple micronutrient supplementation, and the prevention and treatment of stunting and wasting, this funding supports the long-term physical and cognitive development of some of the world's most vulnerable women and children.

We request \$1.01 billion for Maternal and Child Health within Global Health Programs. This funding supports programs aimed at ending preventable maternal and child deaths through the strengthening of health systems and routine immunizations as well as the treatment of disease and integration of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene practices. Maternal and Child Health funding also provides access to skilled birth attendants and quality obstetric care, as well as training for frontline health workers.

We request \$1.1 billion for Basic Education. Basic education programs increase access to and improve the quality of education in low- and middle-income countries. Through teacher trainings, expanded education delivery, and other supports designed to aid children's acquisition of reading, math, and other foundational learning skills, this funding helps ensure children and young people fulfill their full potential and lead productive, successful lives.

We request \$5.27 billion for International Disaster Assistance (IDA). IDA funds provide critical humanitarian services including food, water, shelter, health care and protection in times of natural disaster, conflict, and insecurity. They also help improve countries' response to crises and reduce underlying risks and vulnerabilities. Food for the Hungry is proud to have partnered with the U.S. government to implement Emergency Food Security Programs as well as non-food security responses such as water, sanitation, and hygiene.

We request \$5.43 billion for Development Assistance (DA). DA funds support long-term poverty reduction programs focused on food security; water, sanitation, and hygiene; livelihoods; education; and climate programs. These funds are critical to the development of resilient, self-reliant, equitable, and democratic societies worldwide.

We request \$5.39 billion for the Economic Support Fund (ESF). ESF funds provide economic assistance to help countries meet urgent political, economic, development, and security needs. This includes programs to combat human trafficking, fight corruption, increase transparent governance, and protect fundamental human rights. Food for the Hungry is proud to have partnered with the U.S. government to implement innovative COVID-19 response programs through ESF.

We find ourselves at a pivotal moment in history, confronting toxic polarization, a seemingly unending wave of climate catastrophes, growing economic and social injustice, and a worsening global food and cost of living crisis. The last 30 years of democratic advances have been eradicated, and current trends seriously jeopardize our ability to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. This new reality has shocked our collective conscience and forced many of us to confront the same uncertainty, scarcity, and sense of helplessness that many of the world's

most vulnerable have known for far too long. But with a bold vision, shared purpose, and continued U.S. leadership, we can meet the moment and overcome these global challenges.

Robust funding for international relief and development programs saves lives and creates a safer and more prosperous future for us all. It serves as an important reflection of our values and critical reminder to both friends and foes of American strength and generosity, while galvanizing increased investment and commitment from partners and allies. Now is the time to continue such leadership. As an organization seeking to transform lives, families, and communities “so the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth” (Job 5:16), Food for the Hungry stands ready to partner with you in this critical work.