Transparency in foreign aid is necessary so that both taxpayers in the donor country and nongovernmental organizations (ngos) and citizens in the partner country are able to hold their governments accountable for how it's used. Taxpayers deserve to know how their tax dollars are spent and what results they are achieving. And residents of the countries that receive aid should be able to tell what the aid is for and where it's going.

Taking all opportunities to improve transparency and coordination is therefore important to ensure that scarce foreign assistance resources are used efficiently to make as much progress as possible against hunger and poverty.

In recent years, the U.S. government has started several new initiatives to improve the transparency and accountability of development assistance. In December 2010, the Obama administration launched the Foreign Assistance Dashboard as a “one-stop shop” to find data on all U.S. foreign aid spending.

The Foreign Assistance Dashboard (google - foreignassistance.gov) was created to put into practice the principles of both the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and President Obama’s Open Government Initiative. The administration issued guidance on when and how agencies should report information on the website. These are steps in the right direction, but more can be done.

Another initiative, on program evaluation, is off to a good start since both the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) have new evaluation policies. There are no standards on monitoring and evaluation for more than 20 other agencies that deliver U.S. foreign assistance. But help is on the way.

The Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act, H.R. 2638, was introduced in the House with broad bipartisan support. The bill seeks to establish interagency monitoring and evaluation guidelines for U.S. development assistance programs and to centralize public access to subsequent data and reports.

H.R. 2638 directs the president to establish goals and performance and evaluation guidelines for U.S. foreign assistance programs, country assistance plans, and international and multilateral assistance programs. The administration should also establish a website to make publicly available information on U.S. foreign assistance programs.
The introduction of this bill with bipartisan support is a sign that the executive branch and Congress can establish a constructive partnership on aid reform. It would ensure that best practices in monitoring and evaluation for development results are adopted more broadly and that the administration continues to add new information to the Foreign Assistance Dashboard website, which has already provided an unprecedented level of transparency on U.S. foreign assistance.

**Feed the Future Initiative**

Feed the Future (FTF) is the President’s Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative to renew the U.S. Government commitment to sustainably reduce hunger and poverty and to accelerate progress toward the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG 1). The U.S. Government's commitment to catalyze agricultural-led growth will raise the incomes of the poor, increase the availability of food, and reduce undernutrition through sustained, long-term development progress. FTF is a comprehensive approach, coupling both agriculture and nutrition interventions that stands alongside the ongoing commitment to humanitarian assistance that alleviates the immediate impacts of hunger and undernutrition.

At the G-8 Summit in July 2009, President Obama pledged to provide at least $3.5 billion over three years (FY 2010 to FY 2012) to attack the root causes of global hunger through accelerated agricultural development and improved nutrition. The U.S. Government commitment leveraged more than $18 billion in support from other donors, creating the financial capacity to significantly reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger and undernutrition. Through FTF, the U.S. Government works across a number of agencies that include the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Treasury, Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and the Peace Corps, and in partnership with a set of host countries and other donors, both public and private, to achieve meaningful and sustained impact.

FTF uses management approaches that are effective in low-income countries: developing strategies and interventions in coordination with stakeholders, committing to sound investments through reliable partners, and adjusting program elements based on analyses of performance reports. Experience has shown that in order to meet FTF objectives, host governments must be committed to the effort. Therefore, FTF will focus on countries that have placed high priority on poverty and hunger reduction and have adopted Country Investment Plans to combat those problems. To this end, FTF is grounded in five key principles:

1. **Invest in country-owned plans** that support results-based programs and partnerships, so that assistance is tailored to the needs of individual countries through consultative processes and plans that are developed and led by country governments.
2. **Strengthen strategic coordination** to mobilize and align the resources of the diverse partners and stakeholders – including the private sector and civil society – that are needed to achieve our common objectives.

3. **Ensure a comprehensive approach** that accelerates inclusive agricultural-led growth and improves nutrition, while also bridging humanitarian relief and sustainable development efforts.

4. **Leverage the benefits of multilateral institutions** so that priorities and approaches are aligned, investments are coordinated, and financial and technical assistance gaps are filled.

5. **Deliver on sustained and accountable commitments**, phasing-in investments responsibly to ensure returns, using benchmarks and targets to measure progress toward shared goals, and holding ourselves and other stakeholders publicly accountable for achieving results.

The FTF Progress Report is available online at [www.feedthefuture.gov](http://www.feedthefuture.gov).

**FOREIGN ASSISTANCE – GOALS**

*Much of the criticism of foreign assistance as ineffective and wasteful is because political and development goals are intermixed. Such confusion erodes public support for spending tax dollars on international development.*

U.S. poverty-focused development assistance improves the lives of millions of people around the world.

With U.S. funding, nongovernmental organizations— including many faith-based groups—help get millions of children in school, help mothers immunize their babies in new health facilities, and help farmers learn strategies to improve their crops. More children are living to see their fifth birthdays, and deaths from measles and tuberculosis are declining.

The number of people receiving anti-retroviral medicines to treat HIV/AIDS in developing countries increased tenfold to almost 3 million people in the last six years. Since 1990, more than 1 billion people gained access to clean water. When targeted and given the proper resources, aid can work.

However, foreign aid, even poverty-focused development assistance, cannot solve the world’s development problems alone. Countries and communities face crushing debt burdens, unfair trade rules, poor governance, and disruptive conflicts as they try to improve the well-being of their citizens.

Global development and global poverty reduction must be elevated as specific goals in U.S. foreign policy, distinguished from political, military and security goals, with distinct and secure funding.

Poverty reduction should be the primary focus of U.S. development assistance, with substantially more poverty-focused funding provided to meet commitments related to the Millennium Development Goals.
Development assistance should be provided in partnership with recipient countries to meet their long-term development goals.

Civilian leadership in development assistance must be maintained and strengthened, with the Department of Defense limited to its operational strengths in logistics and stabilization.

An effective, streamlined agency is required to direct all U.S. development assistance, consolidating the plethora of development assistance programs currently spread across 12 cabinet departments and numerous agencies.

Other U.S. policies (related to trade, investment, or migration, for example) should be aligned with development assistance goals and objectives to maximize the impact of U.S. development programs.

U.S. development assistance should be more closely coordinated with other international donors to reduce the burdens on recipient governments as well as the costly duplication of programs.

U.S. foreign assistance has three main purposes: humanitarian, political, and development.

Humanitarian assistance responds to natural and man-made disasters; such as, the Indian Ocean tsunami.

U.S. national security interests drive much of the political aid (for example, counter-narcotics in Latin America, peace in the Middle East, the war on terror, military training). Development assistance programs, designed to reduce poverty and encourage economic growth in low-income countries, include programs for agriculture, health, family planning, education, the environment, and democracy and governance.

The development component of U.S. foreign assistance has been largely effective, particularly where there has been a long-term commitment of resources and a partnering relationship with the host government.

South Korea and Taiwan, formerly recipients of large amounts of U.S. development assistance, are now economic powerhouses and partners in global security. India, another recipient of U.S. development assistance, has gone from chronic food deficits in the 1960s to food exports and sustained economic growth in recent decades.

U.S. development assistance was instrumental in the eradication of smallpox. Through PEPFAR—the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief—the United States has placed more than 2 million people on lifesaving anti-retroviral medication.

Despite these and other successes, U.S. development assistance has lacked a coherent strategy. Put simply, the overarching goals of U.S. development assistance are unclear. While United Nations agencies, multilateral agencies like the World Bank, and donor countries such as the United Kingdom have adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the framework for their assistance, the United States has been reluctant to do so.

Yet the MDGs are widely understood and accepted targets of human development—for example, reducing the number of people in poverty, reducing mortality rates for children
under 5, increasing girls’ enrollment in school—and could serve as an unambiguous indicator of aid effectiveness.

By the same standard, non-emergency foreign assistance given primarily for political reasons should have its own measures of effectiveness. Have the billions of dollars in aid given to Egypt since the Camp David accords been effective? Maybe not by developmental standards.

Much of the criticism of foreign assistance as ineffective and wasteful is because political and development goals are intermixed. Such confusion erodes public support for spending tax dollars on international development.

Cuts to these anti-hunger and anti-poverty programs won’t address our deficits, but they will have a devastating impact on vulnerable people. I urge you to support funding for vital poverty-focused foreign assistance programs that address the root causes of poverty.

Sincerely,
Your name/address

C O N T A C T

YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND
URGE THEM TO SUPPORT

Funding for poverty-focused foreign assistance programs comprises just 0.6 percent of our federal budget, but these programs have a tremendous impact. Each year, this small amount of funding saves millions of lives and provides people with the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty. By enabling poor people to get out of poverty, we save lives, ensure future markets for U.S. goods and services, and create a safer world for our children.