

**Testimony of Thomas H. Staal, Acting Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
United States Agency for International Development
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Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Peterson, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me today to testify on the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) international food aid programs. I want to thank you for your longstanding, bipartisan support for our efforts to combat hunger worldwide.

Thanks to your generosity, the United States is the largest provider of food assistance in the world. With Congressional support, USAID’s Office of Food for Peace has reached more than three billion of the world's neediest people in over 150 countries with life-saving food assistance – perhaps the largest and longest-running expression of humanity seen in the world. I want to also thank our partners – American farmers, mariners, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations – for supporting USAID in our work. Our efforts would not be possible without them, and we look forward to continuing our strong partnership to make millions of people around the world more food secure. I am also pleased to testify alongside my colleague, Phil Karsting, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service, and am proud of the ongoing partnership between our two agencies.

Last year, the Office of Food for Peace celebrated 60 years of bringing hope, opportunity, and dignity to those suffering from hunger. These efforts have not only saved millions of lives, but have helped the world’s most vulnerable progress from dependency to self-sufficiency. Today, some of our past recipients, like the Republic of Korea, have become food secure and international donors themselves. As we work towards USAID's mission of ending extreme poverty and promoting resilient, democratic societies, we strive to help many more countries eradicate hunger and get on a path of shared peace and prosperity. These efforts are driven by a moral imperative as well as our national security interest to promote American goodwill and maintain America’s leadership as a beacon of hope for so many around the world.

I am especially proud of these efforts as a former Food for Peace Deputy Director. I began my career at USAID in the 1980s, compelled to action by the devastating famine in Ethiopia. As a son of missionaries, and farmers from the Midwest, much of my career at USAID has been dedicated to promoting programs that alleviate hunger and address the root causes of food insecurity. As Mission Director in Ethiopia, I oversaw several groundbreaking programs to promote agriculture-led growth, supported both by Food for Peace programs and through the U.S. flagship Feed the Future initiative; expand a productive safety net for the poorest communities; and build resilience among the most vulnerable farmers. I’m heartened to see the enormous progress underway in Ethiopia, one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, in large part due to these programs.

Today I would like to share with you an overview of our emergency and development food aid programs and how global trends are shaping the way our programs evolve to remain cutting-edge and reach the most people in need. I also want to highlight best practices we have instituted and how we ensure oversight of our efforts globally.

Overview of Programs

USAID's Office of Food for Peace is driven by its mandate in the Food for Peace Act to combat world hunger and malnutrition and its causes, and is tasked with managing programs under Title II, which consists of providing agricultural goods for emergency relief and development. These programs are administered through grants to U.S. NGOs and intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations (UN) World Food Program (WFP). Title V Farmer to Farmer programs are administered by USAID's Bureau for Food Security.

Title II. Emergency and Development Programs

Responding to Emergencies

In FY 2014, Title II emergency programs, which account for over three-fourths of the Office of Food for Peace's base Title II funding, helped feed over 20 million food-insecure people in 32 countries. Complementing Title II emergency resources – a critical tool in our arsenal to fight hunger – USAID reached an additional 14 million people through International Disaster Assistance (IDA) funds through local and regional purchase, cash transfers, and food vouchers in 39 countries. This combined assistance was life-saving for many around the world in FY 2014, an unprecedented year of crisis in which USAID responded to five Level-3 emergencies – the UN's most severe emergency designation – and other protracted crises.

Following the shattering earthquake in Nepal on April 25, and subsequent aftershocks, U.S. food assistance provided a critical lifeline to those in need. USAID has provided almost \$7 million in emergency food assistance to Nepal. On April 29, we provided an initial contribution of \$2.5 million in IDA funds to help WFP jump start the response and buy 1,390 tons of regionally grown rice from India for 120,000 people for one month. By buying rice locally, we ensured emergency food was available in the crucial early relief stages. U.S. in-kind food was also critical. While shipping U.S. food to Nepal, a landlocked country, would have taken months, we were able to draw down on pre-positioned U.S. food stocks valued at \$4.4 million from our warehouse in Sri Lanka to meet ongoing food needs for 150,000 people for one month. The emergency food assistance complements ongoing Feed the Future and new Food for Peace development programs, which are helping Nepalese farmers get back on their feet and overcome key obstacles to growing and getting their crops to market.

In Yemen – where the recent outbreak of fighting has exacerbated already high levels of acute food insecurity – USAID has provided almost \$40 million in food assistance in FY15. This includes over 41,000 tons of in-kind food that is targeting over six million food-insecure people, including children under five.

However, ongoing conflict has made it increasingly difficult to reach those in need. During an unprecedented five-day humanitarian pause in May, partners were able to distribute food and restock health facilities with medicines and U.S. supplemental and therapeutic foods for children and mothers. On June 2, 5,700 tons of emergency food supplies – including more than 800 tons of food from USAID’s pre-positioning facility in Djibouti – were sent to Al Hudaydah Port to feed another 390,000 Yemenis this month. These shipments provide much-needed relief for the Yemeni people who have been cut off from regular food aid and commercial food imports for months.

Promoting Development

In FY 2014, our U.S. NGO partners implemented development food aid programs in 14 countries to benefit over nine million people. We are focusing our development food assistance programs in the most food insecure countries, where the rates of stunting – when a child’s physical and cognitive development is impaired by lack of proper nutrition – are highest and people live on less than \$1.25 per day. These programs address chronic malnutrition, boost agricultural productivity and incomes, and build resilience in communities that are locked in a cycle of recurring crises.

Before 2014, many development activities were funded by buying food in the United States, shipping it overseas, and selling it so that our partners had local currency on hand to run the projects, a process known as monetization. However, thanks to meaningful reforms in the 2014 Farm Bill, USAID was given new flexibilities that increased the amount of cash available under the Title II program by seven percent to reduce monetization, implement development activities, purchase food locally and regionally, and help disaster victims buy food in their local markets. The \$21 million saved as a result allowed us to reach an additional 600,000 people in 2014.

Our development programs under Title II are complemented by other USAID investments, including through the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative, Feed the Future. Launched in 2010, and targeting 19 countries spanning three continents, Feed the Future has a mission to sustainably reduce hunger and poverty through agriculture-led growth. It strives to increase agricultural production and the incomes of women and men farmers, by scaling up their production, expanding their access to markets, and increasing their resilience in the face of risk. Our Title II development programs complement and reinforce these efforts.

For example, in Bangladesh, the world’s eighth-most populous country with over 160 million people, about a quarter of the population is food insecure and nearly 17 percent is undernourished. Food for Peace partners are helping poor farmers increase their income by training them to manage fish farms, providing a nutritious food source and an entry point into the cash economy. One couple, Harun and Bina Majhay, first received training in nursery management and fingerling (young fish) production from Food for Peace. After the training, their income rose from \$90 to \$129 a month. A year later, they were trained through Feed the Future, on fish hatchery management so that they could produce higher-quality fingerlings at a larger scale and grow their business. Today, the Majhys not only manage a successful fish nursery, but also employ others in their community. As of 2014, more than 34,000 households

and 150 commercial fish farms have benefitted from these programs. Fish accounts for about one fifth of the world's animal protein and this proportion is expected to increase as a result of successful initiatives like these where food and income security are enhanced simultaneously. Other Food for Peace development programs in Bangladesh have brought down child stunting rates by 30 percent and increased pregnancy check-ups from 13 to 84 percent. This work is complemented by USDA's McGovern-Dole program, which for ten years has partnered with the World Food Program to provide daily meals to over 161,000 school children in Bangladesh annually, thereby improving basic nutrition and encouraging parents to keep their children in primary school.

Title V. Farmer to Farmer Program

The John Ogonowski and Doug Bereuter Farmer-to-Farmer Program (Title V of the Food for Peace Act) provides voluntary technical assistance to farmers, farm groups, and agribusinesses in partner countries to promote sustainable improvements in food security and agricultural processing, production, and marketing. The program relies on the expertise of volunteers from U.S. farms, land grant universities, cooperatives, private agribusinesses, and nonprofit farm organizations to respond to the local needs of host-country farmers and organizations. In FY 2014, implementing agencies fielded 296 volunteers from 44 states and the District of Columbia who provided technical support to farmers abroad in the areas of technology transfer, organizational development, business and enterprise development, financial services, and environmental conservation. In FY 2014, we also designed and launched new projects under this program, which will include 700 volunteer assignments a year for the next four years focused on 58 thematic areas in 28 core countries.

Current Trends

As illustrated above, our food assistance programs have saved millions of lives and led to enormous progress in addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity around the world. Despite this progress, we are living in a time of unprecedented need and stretched resources. Tonight, nearly 800 million people will go to bed hungry; one in five children is stunted; and every seven seconds a child dies from hunger-related causes.

Extreme weather events and rapid urbanization are putting more people at risk of natural disasters that disrupt farming and access to food markets. Conflict is driving up displacement, making it harder for people to feed their families. Nearly 60 million people are displaced from their homes right now; the largest global exodus in modern history. That figure is almost equal to the population of the American Midwest, or one in every 122 people worldwide.

The cost of implementing food assistance programs is rising, as we are increasingly operating in environments of high insecurity and protracted conflict. Roughly one-third of our food assistance budget goes towards feeding people caught in the crossfire of conflict. In South Sudan, one of the most food insecure countries in the world, we have had to resort to delivering food aid through air operations, which are approximately eight times as costly as delivering food by trucks.

Over the years, our food assistance programs have evolved to meet these growing demands and challenges more effectively and cost-efficiently. In the food price crisis of 2008, with millions facing hunger and civil unrest spreading following sudden food price spikes, Congress approved the Bush administration's request for supplemental funds for USAID that allowed for local and regionally purchased food aid for the first time.

In 2010, the Obama Administration requested and received funding for emergency food assistance in the base appropriation of the IDA account, authorized through the Foreign Assistance Act. USAID used these funds to establish the Emergency Food Security Program (EFSP) to buy food locally and regionally and to provide targeted cash transfers or food vouchers so that people in food crises could buy food directly in local markets. EFSP has proven indispensable in our response to major crises, such as Syria, where U.S. in-kind food aid is not an appropriate option.

The 2014 Farm Bill gave us additional flexibilities to enhance Title II and other food aid programs. Thanks to this Committee and these reforms, we have several key food assistance tools we use and different ways they are applied to respond swiftly, effectively, and efficiently to combat hunger in a time of complex crises around the world.

Best practices

Our food assistance programs continue to evolve so that we can deliver the best possible results in fulfilling our mission and mandate under the Food for Peace Act to combat world hunger. In both our relief and development efforts, we leverage years of experience, evidence-based learning and a willingness to innovate to bring about positive change in the some of the world's toughest places. I would like to highlight several initiatives USAID has undertaken to ensure our food assistance is timely, responsive to local needs, and impactful.

Improving the quality of food aid

USAID is applying the best of nutrition science to better target the special nutritional needs of vulnerable groups, especially women and children under two, because we know that if a child does not receive certain basic nutritional requirements in the first 1,000 days of life, his or her brain may never fully develop. For older infants and young children at risk for malnutrition or already malnourished, USAID has added several U.S. products to our in-kind food aid basket, including Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF), Ready-to-Use Supplementary Food (RUSF), and Nutributter® through the International Food Relief Partnership (IFRP). These products have been transformative in treating and preventing malnutrition and preventing stunting globally. For example, when Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines in 2013, USAID airlifted 55 tons of nutrient-dense, meal replacement food bars, biscuits and pastes, which were a critical source of food for children and mothers in hard-hit Leyte province. Altogether, nine new or improved products came online in the last four years, including better fortified vegetable oil, blended products, and milled foods. USDA has been a critical partner in this process, lending their expertise to help us improve the U.S. food aid basket.

Early warning leads to early action

Early warning systems have proven critical in ensuring that we are projecting food needs and preparing to meet them before they arise. USAID's Famine Early Warning System (FEWSNET)—the most highly regarded early-warning systems in the world—relies on a unique combination of advanced technologies and field-based data collection. It is increasingly accurate in its ability to predict weather-related anomalies. In the Horn of Africa in 2011, FEWSNET not only predicted the drought many months in advance, but also analyzed markets, crops, livestock production and livelihoods patterns to forecast how it would impact food consumption, malnutrition, and mortality. FEWSNET's new Food Assistance Outlook Briefing now allows us to forecast food assistance needs six months into the future for more targeted programing.

Our forecasting data is coupled with prepositioned resources that can be quickly and accurately deployed to meet emergency needs. USAID has seven sites around the world with prepositioned U.S. food. In the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, we shipped 1,020 tons of rice from our prepositioning warehouse in Colombo, Sri Lanka. That same warehouse proved indispensable in our response to this year's earthquake in Nepal.

Getting the right food to the right people at the right time

In every context, our Office of Food for Peace uses several criteria to determine what type of food assistance is most appropriate, including timeliness of delivery, local market conditions, and cost-effectiveness. We also take into consideration whether one type of assistance can reach more people than others, is preferred by beneficiaries, or will help us target vulnerable populations in need, like women and children. We also assess whether one type of assistance poses less security risks to aid workers or beneficiaries and will help us best meet our objectives.

For instance, in response to both Typhoon Haiyan and this year's earthquake in Nepal, we were able to provide cash grants for WFP to buy regionally grown rice to meet immediate food needs in the first few weeks of these crises, before our prepositioned stocks of food were able to arrive to meet medium-term needs. This flexibility was critical to reaching people with food assistance in the immediate aftermath of a sudden onset crisis.

The President's FY2015 and FY2016 Title II budget proposals build on previous reforms and seek an additional 25 percent of the \$1.4 billion requested in Title II funding to be available for flexible food assistance programming. This will allow USAID to reach an additional two million emergency beneficiaries, due to an average cost-savings of 33 percent by buying food locally and regionally compared to shipping similar food items from the United States. This flexibility is essential as we strive to meet food assistance needs in ever more complex environments.

Even as we seek additional flexibility, the majority of our Title II request continues to be for U.S. in-kind food, which is still necessary and appropriate for many of our responses. Last year, a large-scale in-kind U.S. food response was exactly the right response in South Sudan when conflict cut off millions and markets were not functioning. In FY 2014, USAID provided nearly

120,000 tons of food to pull South Sudan back from the brink of famine. We tapped into the seldom-used Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust to dramatically scale up food assistance during this extraordinary and unforeseen crisis, supporting a massive UN airlift operation to move that food, and shipping U.S. specialized food products to prevent and treat acute malnutrition. Just last week, we announced an additional nearly \$98 million in food assistance to South Sudan, which will include more than 44,000 tons of U.S. food that will be trucked, airlifted, and ferried by boat. We have provided over 138,000 tons of in-kind food to South Sudan in FY 2015. This aid will keep millions of hungry—mostly women and children—alive in South Sudan as the government and warring parties continue to engage in senseless violence that has devastated the country.

Building resilience

As the number and duration of disasters we respond to continues to increase, our programs are focused on building resilience among the most vulnerable to sudden shocks and chronic stresses that drive communities into crisis food insecurity year after year. The devastating drought in the Horn of Africa in 2011, when I was in Ethiopia, was a collective wake-up call that more must be done to build resilience among the world's most vulnerable. Our food aid programs are a cornerstone of USAID's resilience efforts that combine our humanitarian and development investments across a range of sectors to build the capacity of communities to anticipate risks, and mitigate recurring shocks.

In the Sahel—an arid belt that stretches from Senegal through Niger and Burkina Faso to Chad – we are helping farmers, especially women, plant drought-resistant crops, like onions. In Ethiopia, we are working with some of the poorest communities to improve irrigation systems to reduce the time required for irrigation and diversify crops grown, particularly for women farmers. In Kenya, we provide U.S. in-kind food in communities that are cut off from markets. In exchange, we require recipients to take part in trainings where they learn skills to increase yields during dry spells, like creating sunken crop beds that retain water during irrigation.

We teach mothers how to cook healthy foods for their children and improve their access to nutritious foods to prevent malnutrition in the first place. These efforts are especially focused on reaching children in the first 1,000 days of life, when a child's brain and body is still developing. Complementing this work, USDA is active in Kenya with McGovern Dole programs that are feeding school children and teaching nutrition.

These programs empower communities to combat chronic food insecurity and be better prepared to bounce back from crises, so that they are less reliant on humanitarian food assistance.

Oversight

Thanks to additional authorities granted in the 2008 Farm Bill, our efforts to better monitor and evaluate our food aid programs have evolved as well. We are grateful for the generosity of the American people who make these programs possible, and we take very seriously the need to be effective stewards of U.S. taxpayer resources. Today, we have more staff on the ground than

ever before overseeing the delivery of our food assistance and making sure it reaches those who are most in need. In some countries, we use third-party monitoring to ensure effective programs and increasingly, we are leveraging GPS and other technology to track the transportation and arrival of packages of food aid, especially in conflict zones where security concerns may require remote monitoring. We also provide call-in hotlines where people on the ground can provide feedback on the programs and tell our partners what is working well and what needs improvement.

Conclusion

At USAID, we are committed to maintaining our leadership role – to be the best at what we do – as the largest provider of food assistance globally. With your support, our programs have fed billions of the world's neediest people, averted famines, and helped countries lift themselves out of poverty and dependence.

These achievements would not be possible without our critical partnerships with NGOs and WFP. Their teams work tirelessly and fearlessly to feed those in need and to combat malnutrition, often at great personal risk. We recognize their commitment and their sacrifice, including the many humanitarian aid workers who have lost their lives while assisting others. We are also grateful for the work of our agriculture and maritime partners, including farmers, millers, grain elevator operators, truckers, bargemen, freight forwarders, port operators, carriers, and others who represent America's enduring goodwill and generosity.

As part of USAID's mission to end extreme poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies, we are committed to finding ways to most effectively and efficiently combat global hunger. We are proud of being entrusted with the generous resources and honorable mandate afforded to us by Congress and the American people. We look forward to continuing to work together to identify meaningful reforms and innovations to reduce hunger and eradicate extreme poverty in our lifetime.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify on these important programs, and I look forward to your questions.