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“Why Food Security Matters”**

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Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, and members of the Subcommittee, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

CARE traces its roots back to 1945, when a small group of American citizens galvanized 22 organizations to join forces to rush emergency food rations to the starving survivors of World War II in Europe. They invented the concept of the “CARE Package” – an icon of American generosity. It is hard to imagine both the compassion and farsightedness that called upon the American public to invest not only in our hungry former allies but also our hungry former enemies. It was a part of a multi-pronged effort that ensured a stable, secure, and prosperous Europe as a critical U.S. ally and partner.

From the delivery of those first CARE packages, our work has evolved and now stretches across 94 countries, reaching more than 62 million people in 2017. In addition to humanitarian response, our programs now focus on long-term development and building resilience among populations to permanently lift people out of poverty. We prioritize the empowerment of women and girls in our work because we know they are both disproportionately affected by poverty, and they are the key to overcoming poverty and unlocking transformation within communities.

**Why Women**

In countries throughout the world, when food is in short supply and families experience times of need, women and girls are often the most impacted. They are regularly the last to eat, jeopardizing their health, nutrition, and well-being. Girls' poor access to food is responsible for stunting and other forms of malnourishment that impact their health and ability to participate in other endeavors, such as education or livelihoods. Pregnant women and their babies, when poorly nourished, are at significantly higher risk.



In times of crisis, girls are the first to be pulled out of school to help with household chores, feed the family, or earning income, which impedes them from reaching their full potential. Also, in times of drought, famine, or natural disaster, families may seek to help their daughters avoid hardship by placing them into child marriages with wealthier or more secure men. Additionally, women are often denied the same basic rights as men, such as the right to own land or access inputs as smallholder farmers, which all compounds their vulnerability and diminishes the security of their families. At the same time, we know that if women had access to the same resources as men, there would be 150 million fewer hungry people in the world.

### **The Impact of U.S. Investments**

U.S. Government investments and our work on the ground have given us a firsthand look at how building food security and prioritizing women's empowerment can transform communities and the trajectory of nations. Take Ethiopia – last year, just as some areas of the country began to recover from the most devastating drought in 50 years, another drought hit. Yet famine was never declared. This is not only because of the actions of the Ethiopian government and the U.S.'s ability to leverage emergency assistance, which was delivered in time to prevent the worst consequences, but also in large part due to investments in long-term resilience programs, such as those included in the Feed the Future Initiative.

These resilience programs helped local Ethiopian farmers increase their yields and incomes, created fortified grains to combat malnutrition in children, and expanded agricultural businesses to create job opportunities. A USAID study found that households in communities reached by these resilience programs were able to maintain their levels of food security in the face of drought, whereas households in communities outside the program areas experienced a 30 percent decline in food security.

CARE's GRAD program in Ethiopia worked to improve participants' skills, provide financial literacy training, and diversified livelihoods. Within five years, annual household income increased by 87 percent, and 62 percent of GRAD families had graduated off government assistance. 90 percent of women participating in GRAD reported having an increased role in decision-making, and 61 percent of women reported greater equality in their homes.

From 2012 to 2016, another CARE program in Ethiopia, called LINKAGES, focused on food security, women's empowerment, and access to markets. Farmers earned a \$3.27 return for every dollar invested. At the end of the 4-year program, families increased their annual income by 80 percent, and 66 percent of families in the program were able to graduate off food assistance.



These results show that we have the opportunity to break devastating cycles of extreme food insecurity through long-term investments in building the capacity and resilience of local communities. This is in the best of the spirit of American leadership, and it also generates economic benefits, as we have seen with countries like South Korea – once a war-torn nation and aid recipient, their annual trade with the U.S. now totals more than \$43 billion.

South Sudan offers a different type of example. With a famine declared in February 2017, and the conflict entering its fifth year in 2018, seven million people, or approximately half of the population, are in urgent need of food assistance. This declaration prompted Congress to generously and appropriately provide almost one billion dollars in supplemental funding to South Sudan and similarly affected countries – funding that played a key part in rolling back famine four months after it was declared.

The United States has always been a catalytic leader in responding to crises and helping populations in need. Our actions and responses encourage other countries to act and provide their own support. We were one of the first to respond to Ethiopia's drought two years ago, which mobilized other donors and was instrumental in preventing a famine declaration. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the U.S.'s declaration of a disaster in the Kasai regions spurred the U.N. and other governments to elevate the level of their responses. We see consistently that when the U.S. leads, other countries follow.

### **Proposals from the Administration**

Despite these clear and well-documented results, the President's budgets for FY18 and FY19 proposed eliminating programs that provide emergency food aid, such as Food for Peace, and severe cuts for programs that build resilience, including Feed the Future.

In fiscal year 2016, almost 11 million farmers were reached with improved technologies, management practices, and increased market access. A funding cut of 48 percent to Feed the Future programs, as proposed by the Administration, could translate to approximately 5.28 million farmers being cut from or losing access to programs that help them grow their way out of poverty and decrease dependency.

Also in fiscal year 2016, approximately 56.1 million people were reached with emergency food aid through the Emergency Food Security Program (EFSP) and through emergency Food for Peace programming. Under the Administration's proposal to eliminate Title II food aid and only provide \$1.5 billion for the EFSP, approximately 20 million people in crisis could lose access to lifesaving food assistance as compared to fiscal year 2016.



## **A World Without U.S. Leadership**

It doesn't take much to imagine the local, regional, and global impacts should these cuts become a reality. In 2015, the regional needs emanating from the conflict in Syria rapidly outpaced available resources. The World Food Programme was forced to halt aid to 230,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan living outside of camps. Those who were not wholly cut off from WFP assistance received \$7 per person per month. Without the ability to meet the most basic needs of their families, countless Syrian refugees found their way to Turkey, climbed into rafts, crossed the Mediterranean, and then walked from Greece to Germany and other European destinations. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians arrived that year in Germany and applied for asylum, with the simple hope of finding a way to support their family's most basic needs.

## **A Path Forward**

But it doesn't have to be this way. With last year's passage of the FY17 omnibus, Congress made clear that the U.S. will continue to lead in responding to crises and in the fight to end poverty. And the work being done through Feed the Future and programs like LINKAGES show us that we can end poverty for good.

Congress can continue their commitment by reauthorizing the Global Food Security Act (GFSA), which is set to expire this year. The GFSA assures that the great work being done through Feed the Future and the U.S. government's Global Food Security Strategy continues. At CARE, we stand ready and willing to continue our partnership with the U.S. government to end global hunger and poverty.