September 7, 2011

Dear Senator/Representative,

As organizations working to end poverty and respond to emergencies around the world, we write to strongly urge you to avoid deep and disproportionate cuts to the fiscal year 2012 International Affairs Budget as you consider the funding provisions laid forth in the Budget Control Act of 2011. Under the Act, there must be roughly $5.5 billion in cuts to security-designated accounts in comparison to fiscal year 2011 enacted funding levels.

Inequitable cuts to the International Affairs Budget would limit the United States' ability to assist the world's poorest and most vulnerable, put us on the sidelines in influencing rapidly transforming regions of the world and signal a dramatic decline of U.S. leadership in promoting a more stable world.

This year has witnessed historic events—from the Arab Spring that swept across the Middle East and North Africa to the unfolding of a famine of epic proportions in the Horn of Africa—which demonstrate in stark terms the dynamic nature of the world around us. In an increasingly complex and integrated global landscape, the United States must be prepared to address these challenges with the diplomatic and development tools of the International Affairs Budget. These challenges cannot be addressed by military means.

The International Affairs Budget represents only 1.4% of federal spending, yet reaps significant dividends: it ensures global development and stability; promotes our values through humanitarian action; and expands markets for American businesses. This funding is essential for U.S. global engagement and supports activities ranging from food assistance for malnourished children to facilitating the export of American goods and services to foreign markets. The International Affairs Budget accomplishes all of this with a small fraction of what we spend on military funding —roughly $1 on international affairs per every $12 on defense.

Yet, despite its vital role and valuable contributions, the International Affairs Budget shouldered nearly 20% of all discretionary spending cuts in fiscal year 2011. If further cuts are added in fiscal year 2012, the cost will come in lives lost, hard-won gains reversed and missed economic and strategic opportunities for the United States.

The United States cannot afford to discontinue critical programs that expand markets for U.S. products and help create American jobs as our country continues to recover from economic crisis. We cannot betray our nation's morals by scaling back humanitarian assistance as the Horn of Africa famine claims thousands of lives. We cannot turn our backs on the millions seeking to democratically choose their own leaders and governing institutions after the Arab Spring. And we simply cannot risk the expensive prospect of future military action by ignoring problems that can be addressed today. As former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated, "development is far cheaper than sending in soldiers."

Addressing our nation's deficit requires smart choices and we must ensure that we fully weigh the consequences before cutting programs that proactively save lives, expand opportunities for American businesses and deter future costs of military engagement. Therefore, as you look for savings in fiscal year 2012 security programs, we strongly urge you to ensure that additional deep and disproportionate cuts are not imposed on the International Affairs Budget. We simply cannot afford to put these strategic interests at risk and deny the American people the benefits that International Affairs programs reap.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

3P Human Security
ActionAid USA
Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)
African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF)
African Wildlife Foundation
Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
Air Serv International
Alliance to End Hunger
American Jewish World Service
American Refugee Committee
Americans for Informed Democracy
Americans for UNFPA
AmeriCares
America's Development Foundation
Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development
Basic Education Coalition
The Borgen Project
Bread for the World
CARE
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
The Center for Victims of Torture
The Centre for Development and Population Activities
Chaldean Federation of America
CHF International
ChildFund International
Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Church of the Brethren
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Concern America
Concern Worldwide US
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Congressional Hunger Center
Consortium of Universities for Global Health
Counterpart International
Creative Associates International
Creative Learning, Inc.
Destiny Resource Center
Eastern Mennonite University, Center for Justice and Peacebuilding
Education Development Center
Environmental and Rural Mediation Centre (ENVIRUMEDIC)
Episcopal Church
Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
FHI360
Food for the Hungry
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of the Global Fight
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
Global Alliance To Prevent Prematurity and Stillbirth
Global Health Council
Global Links
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ
Global Washington
Habitat for Humanity
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
Heifer International
Helen Keller International
HelpAge USA
The Hunger Project
IMA World Health
Initiative for Global Development
INMED Partnerships for Children
Institute for Sustainable Communities
International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
International Foundation for Electoral Systems
International Medical Corps
International Relief and Development, Dr. Arthur Keys, President & CEO
International Rescue Committee
International Youth Foundation
Intrahealth International
Islamic Relief USA
Juarez & Associates, Inc. (J&A)
Kurdish Human Rights Watch
Land O'Lakes

Lutheran World Relief
Management Sciences for Health
Medical Emergency Relief International (MERLIN) USA, Inc
Medical Teams International
Medicines for Malaria Venture
Mercy Corps
Millennium Water Alliance
Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network
National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Jewish Women
National Organization for Women
National Peace Corps Association
ONE
Oxfam America
PATH
Perkins School for the Blind
Plan International USA
Plant With Purpose
Population Action International
Population Institute
Positive Community Impact
The Public Health Institute
Refugees International
RESULTS
ReSurge International
Save the Children
Self Help Africa
St. Francis Health Care Services
TB Alliance
Trickle Up
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
U.S. Fund for UNICEF
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Committee on Relief
VCU Institute for Women's Health
WASH Advocacy Initiative
Washington Office on Latin America
WaterAid
WellShare International
Werner Consulting
White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood
Winrock International
Women Thrive Worldwide
Women's Refugee Commission

World Concern
World Food Program USA
World Learning
World Vision
World Wildlife Fund