



**World Food
Program USA**

Impacts of Cutting Title II Emergency Funding

Reductions in US contributions to emergency programs funded through Title II will lead to underinvestment in programs to prevent and reduce the negative consequences of future shocks on vulnerable populations. This underinvestment will lead to increased levels of global need and to increased reliance on costly emergency interventions. Cutting Title II funding is penny-wise, pound-foolish.

The Need for Emergency Food Assistance is Rising

Emergency food assistance reaches the world's most vulnerable people in times of natural disaster, conflict, or acute economic difficulties (such as those arising from volatile food prices). With the prevalence of natural disasters increasing by 400 percent over the past two decades and the number of people displaced by conflict and violence rising from 17.4 to 27.5 million since 1997, these emergency programs are more important than ever. In addition, rising and volatile food prices have left millions without the means to feed their families, especially poor people in the developing world who spend up to 80 percent of their income on food. Based on current trends, it is estimated that roughly 100 million people will continue to need emergency food assistance each year.

However, despite steadily increasing needs, appropriations for Title II have decreased from \$1.84 billion in FY 2010 to \$1.466 billion in FY 2012. While emergency funding through International Disaster Assistance has partially offset this decrease, Title II funding cuts have had significant negative impact on vulnerable people facing crisis.

The Consequences of Cutting Title II Funding

Historically, the U.S. Government has relied on supplemental appropriations to respond to emergencies. The effectiveness of USG emergency response is now challenged by the reality of shrinking budgets and the unlikelihood of supplemental funding requests. When faced with funding shortfalls, humanitarian organizations like the UN World Food Program (WFP) must prioritize life-saving interventions and reduce investments in preventative programs. Over time, this can lead to significant reductions in people's resilience, making each recurring crisis deeper and more costly to address.

In addition, people suffering moderate food insecurity may face reduced food assistance, forcing them to adopt short-term coping mechanisms to survive. These coping mechanisms, which often include selling productive assets and going into debt, can be detrimental for building stable livelihoods and ultimately reinforce the cycle of dependency, poverty and recurring crisis. Robust funding for Title II resources will help to break this cycle and build the self-sufficiency and resilience of vulnerable populations, reducing the need for future foreign aid.

The Importance of Title II Funding for Emergency Response

For more than 50 years, the US has led the international community in supporting effective humanitarian response through Title II funding, demonstrating a longstanding and bipartisan commitment to assisting those in need.

Programs supported by Title II assist people who are affected by natural disasters, aiding their survival and recovery and building their resilience to future crises.

Title II programs also provide assistance to people affected by conflict, helping to restore and maintain stability in volatile regions, including those that are of key national security concern for the US.

The countries with the highest anticipated needs for food assistance in 2012 include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Yemen, DR Congo, South Sudan, and Somalia.

Shortfalls in Emergency Funding: What Happens When the Need Exceeds the Resources?

When WFP is unable to raise the total amount of funding required to meet the needs of vulnerable people in any given country, there are three main impacts: 1) programs provide less food to less people; 2) programs prioritize life-saving assistance at the cost of more long-term efforts, and 3) vulnerable populations resort to negative coping mechanisms. In combination, these three dynamics tend to reinforce the cycle of poverty and hunger, contributing to reduced resilience that leaves people worse-off after each crisis.

Programs provide less food to less people

Although the number of total beneficiaries served may not change, emergency food assistance programs often cope with inadequate resources by providing people with food assistance for fewer days. For example, in 2011 a planned six-month program in Ethiopia for 955,000 chronically food insecure people was forced to cut assistance to only two months for about half the targeted population.¹

Programs will also reduce the size of the rations they distribute. This was the case in Afghanistan in 2010 where the number of beneficiaries was high compared to the amount of food distributed: although the program reached 72 percent of the target population with general food distribution, only 58 percent of the planned tonnage of food was delivered.² This program was forced to squeeze limited resources by providing those in need with decreased portions of food.

When resource shortfalls are particularly severe, emergency assistance programs are forced to cut planned beneficiaries out of food relief efforts entirely. This has the potential of leaving some populations without access to food at a time when an emergency like a natural disaster or armed conflict has left them unable to provide for themselves and their families, such as the recent drought in Somalia.

Programs prioritize lifesaving assistance, at the cost of other projects

When funding is insufficient to meet need, emergency food assistance programs will focus on immediate lifesaving interventions that allow people to survive to the next day, diverting resources away from other recovery efforts. These other efforts, which include emergency initiatives like food for work programs, agricultural development projects, and safety nets like school feeding programs which are often linked to government capacity building, are vital components of a country's comprehensive food security strategy. They are critical in bringing vulnerable populations out of poverty and chronic food insecurity.

Sudan: Recovery activities halted to fill the gap of funding shortfalls

In Sudan, large-scale humanitarian assistance has been required to address the effects of the on-going conflict in Darfur and the civil war in the South. High food prices and erratic weather patterns have also disrupted vulnerable populations' access to food. In light of the emergency situation, resource shortfalls hit the Sudan particularly hard in 2010, forcing emergency food assistance programs there to re-allocate commodities and prioritize lifesaving activities. WFP had originally planned to distribute food to 2.5 million food insecure people in Sudan but because of a lack of funding had to limit food assistance to the 1.9 million categorized as being "severely food insecure." In addition, WFP halted all food for training programs in Southern Sudan, affecting 57,000 people and support was suspended for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts for 30,000 ex-combatants and their families. Food-for-education efforts in central and eastern Sudan were suspended for 180,000 beneficiaries, along with the WFP Girls' Incentive Project for 81,000 girls in Southern Sudan.⁴

In Afghanistan in 2010, an already existing school feeding program reduced the number of students it reached because of resources being saved for high-energy biscuits (HEBs), an important source of food in the aftermath of an emergency. Funding shortfalls force programs to make a trade-off between immediate emergency interventions like HEBs and safety net programs like school feeding. Despite a relatively high overall school attendance rate of 81% – and 85% among girls – indicating a high interest in the school feeding program, only 46% percent of the planned number of children received school meals through the program.³ School feeding programs are particularly important for girls, as an educated girl is more likely to earn greater income, have healthier children, participate in political processes, and send her own children to school.

These efforts are also important in the aftermath of conflict, as was the case in Liberia where WFP's school feeding program reached 700,000 children and was the largest post-war stabilization program in the country. But these programs are at risk of being reduced, or eliminated entirely, in times of limited resources when immediate lifesaving interventions take priority.

Vulnerable populations resort to negative coping mechanisms

While food assistance programs respond to cuts in funding by providing less food to less people and diverting funds from longer term development efforts, beneficiaries of these programs often adopt their own strategies to cope with emergencies. Many of these strategies undertaken by moderately or severely food insecure populations will ensure their survival in the short term only, leaving them without the opportunity to build their livelihoods for the future and unable to cope with future shocks.

Such negative coping mechanisms include selling productive assets (land, cattle, tools), reducing their expenditure on food (and often sacrificing nutritional quality at the same time), limiting investment in their own and their families' education and health, borrowing money and living on credit, and decreased production (returning to subsistence farming).

Afghanistan: Households sell assets and go into debt to cope with emergencies

Vulnerable populations in Afghanistan adopted several of these strategies in 2011 following a severe drought that struck 14 provinces in the country and affected 2.4 million people. To cope with this emergency, households started selling livestock in order to obtain income to use for food and other basic requirements. In some provinces in Afghanistan, households sold off large portions—in some cases up to 90 %—of their goat and buffalo herds. These are high value assets for poor households and when they are sold at low prices, as they often are in times of emergency, this has a significant impact on a household's ability to escape poverty and food insecurity. A 2011 food security assessment found that Afghani households are highly indebted, with between 65% and 90% of households reporting they had incurred some kind of debt; a major reason reported for incurring debt was to buy food.⁵ Other coping strategies in Afghanistan have included decreased expenditures on health, spending accrued savings, and resorting to child labor.

Women and children are particularly vulnerable during times of crisis and make up the vast majority of WFP beneficiaries. They are 14 times more likely than men to be impacted by a natural disaster and mothers who were undernourished as girls are 40 percent more likely to give birth to children who will not survive to age five.

Resiliency Programs: Cost Effective Measures that Foster Independence

When cuts are made to Title II, resources are focused on immediate life-saving interventions and diverted away from long-term programs that build people's resilience to future emergencies. These resiliency programs have proven to be cost effective by enabling communities to better withstand shocks and promoting long-term food security, ultimately moving people away from dependence on foreign assistance.

For example, the Productive Safety Net Program in Ethiopia has successfully increased food security and assets for vulnerable populations through food and cash transfers. More than seven million Ethiopians have been able to increase their food availability by up to one and half months as well as increase their livestock holdings.⁶ By increasing food security and assets, poor and vulnerable people in Ethiopia have been able to improve their resilience and better prepare themselves to cope with emergencies, such as drought.

Ethiopia: MERET land regeneration program enables people to better cope with shocks

A joint venture between WFP and the Ethiopian government is sustaining the livelihoods of more than 1.5 million people by rehabilitating 2.5 million hectares of degraded land and restoring the ecosystem through a land regeneration program called MERET (Managing Environmental Resources to Enable Transitions to More Sustainable Livelihoods). The program is building the population's resilience to the kind of shocks that struck Ethiopia in 2008, when the country saw a prolonged drought along with high food and fuel prices. Through MERET, food shortages declined by 50% and 85% of participating households were able to boost their capability to cope with drought.

The program has successfully integrated food for work activities with improved farming practices and better use of land and water resources to achieve increased food production. At the UN Summit on Climate Change in 2012, MERET was heralded as a model for climate change adaptation that should be shared and replicated across the environmentally degraded areas of Africa to improve agricultural productivity.

The World Bank and the US Geological Survey estimate that economic losses worldwide from disasters in the 1990s could have been reduced by \$280 billion with a relatively small investment of \$40 billion in preventive measures. FEMA estimates that \$1 invested in prevention saves between \$4 to \$7 in recovery.⁷

While cuts to Title II will bring small, temporary cost-savings, this will ultimately undermine investments that build sustainability and promote long-term global development and food security. We urge Congress to continue to support Title II programs and maintain U.S. humanitarian and economic leadership worldwide.

¹ World Food Program, *Standard Project Report 2011, Ethiopia, Responding to Humanitarian Crisis and Enhancing Resilience to Food Insecurity, Single Country PRRO – 106650*, 2011.

² World Food Program, *Standard Project Report 2010, Afghanistan, Enhancing Resilience and Food Security in Afghanistan, Single Country PRRO – 200063*, 2010.

⁴ World Food Program, *Annual Performance Report for 2010*, 2011.

³ World Food Program, *Standard Project Report 2010, Afghanistan, Enhancing Resilience and Food Security in Afghanistan, Single Country PRRO – 200063*, 2010.

⁵ World Food Program, *Drought Impact, Emergency Food Security Assessment, Afghanistan*, 2011.

⁶ Gilligan, et al. *The Impact of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme and its Linkages*, International Food Policy Research Institute, 2008.

⁷ Leoni B, Radford T, Schulman M, *Disaster Through A Different Lens*, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, 2012.