

A Budget of Neglect: U.S. Assault on Humanitarian Aid

The U.S. International Affairs Budget is a critical allocation of humanitarian aid toward combatting global poverty, public health, and mitigating any ensuing conflict. Yet the Trump Administration's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Fiscal Year 2026 proposal is seeking to cut the budget by a stark 85%, equating to over \$30B scratched from foreign aid ("Draconian Cuts to Diplomacy" 2025). This proposal follows a Fiscal Year 2025 that already assigned a deplorably meagre portion – less than 1% of the overall federal budget – to the International Affairs Budget ("International Affairs Budget" 2025). The Administration's continued failure to adequately fund humanitarian aid is not only detrimental for global health, but is a strategic blunder for domestic interest.

It has been historically demonstrated that U.S. humanitarian aid is vital for directly improving global health. Take the near global eradication of smallpox and polio since 2000. This improvement was only instigated with the support of U.S. humanitarian aid (Dieleman et. al 2024, 2258). But just as pivotally, U.S. humanitarian aid indirectly improves global health by inspiring the states receiving such aid to increase their own health spending. Data suggests that for every \$1 increase in U.S. humanitarian aid per capita, receiving states increase domestic health spending by more than \$1.50 per capita (Mishra and Newhouse 2009, 870). The Administration diluting the International Affairs Budget then exhibits a willingness to be complicit in eroding global health; and to pioneer such complicity abroad.

Looking inward, the U.S. OMB's cut on the International Affairs Budget is also a strategic blunder for domestic interest. Unbeknownst to many, foreign humanitarian aid is critical for sustaining U.S. national security because it stabilizes environments abroad facing poverty and conflict devastation; two catalyst conditions for terrorism. The OMB slashing humanitarian aid

then invites terrorist factions to develop abroad, target locations within U.S. borders, and ultimately threaten public safety. For an administration centering its campaign around being “focused on protecting public safety,” negating national security to this degree is especially perverse (“Ending Crime and Disorder” 2025).

In addition to national security, the U.S. economy is also stifled when humanitarian aid is cut. Humanitarian funding increases the spending power of developing nations by alleviating poverty to incite economic recovery. Such recovery makes these nations new, previously untapped, markets for U.S. export. This increase in export capacity is critical for domestic employment rates, as nearly a third of job positions in high-income countries like the U.S. rely on exports (Maliszewska and Winkler 2024, 8). Furthermore, cultivation of new markets for U.S. exports through humanitarian aid has historically instigated U.S. alliances; including 13 states that became NATO members upon receiving humanitarian aid (O’Hare 2017). Thus, eroding humanitarian aid in foreign policy not only makes developing nations unviable markets for domestic export and job prosperity, it isolates our current alliances while simultaneously deterring prospective democratic kinships.

The administration’s proposal to cut 85% from the International Affairs Budget is ultimately a fiscal oversight that erodes both global health and domestic sustenance. But this \$30 billion reduction is still only a proposal, meaning there is time to advocate for change. I urge readers to use [The Borgen Project’s Action Center](#) to send automated emails to Congress demanding protection of the International Affairs Budget. Congressional offices keep a tally of constituent emails by issue, making this form of advocacy an effective starting point for combatting an administration keen on neglecting both global and domestic interest.

References

Dieleman, J. L., Apegyei A. E., Hay, S. I., Mokdad, A. H., Murray, C. J. L. “The USA's role in global development assistance for health, 2000–30.” *The Lancet*. 404(10469), 2258-2260. [10.1016/S0140-6736\(24\)02266-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(24)02266-9).

Maliszewska, Maryla and Deborah Winkler. “Leveraging Trade For More and Better Jobs.” World Bank Group | Property Insight Series. 2024. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099082824074054627/pdf/P178538-2dd37832-14b4-4822-b31d-5f2c6c4768ea.pdf>.

Mishra, Prachi and David Newhouse. “Does health aid matter?” *Journal of Health Economics*. 28(4), 855-872. [10.1016/j.jhealeco.2009.05.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhealeco.2009.05.004).

O’Hare, James. “The History of US Foreign Aid And Why It’s As Important As Ever.” *Global Citizen*. June 13, 2017. <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/united-states-foreign-aid-history-trump/>.

The Borgen Project. “International Affairs Budget Fiscal Year 2025.” Accessed January 13, 2026. <https://borgenproject.org/wp-content/uploads/International-Affairs-Budget-Fiscal-Year-2025.pdf>.

The White House. “Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets.” July 24, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/07/ending-crime-and-disorder-on-americas-streets/>.

U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. “Draconian Cuts to Diplomacy and International Assistance Are Not How America Wins In the World.” June 3, 2025. <https://www.usglc.org/the-budget/draconian-cuts-to-diplomacy-and-international-assistance-are-not-how-america-wins-in-the-world/>.