



AMERICA'S FOREIGN AID THE BITTER TRUTH

The economic decline of our nation over the last few years has left many here in the United States, the greatest nation on earth, impoverished, hungry, downtrodden, and lost to many. None of us have been left unimpacted by the unprecedented economic situation in which we find ourselves now. Even the most fortunate have felt its impact, and in some cases those who were once flying high on the fruits of this nation are now suffering the loss of everything. Ordinary, hard working Americans who want to do nothing more than have a good life, raise a good family, and give a better life to their children than they may have had are finding themselves amongst the unemployed or the working poor. Some have been turned out of their homes by greedy banks who preyed upon mortgagees at the height of the real estate bubble and now find themselves and their families in slums or, worse, homeless and hungry.

We all know someone who has lost their job or is unemployed by this massive economic recession. We all know someone who is less fortunate and in need of our help. And though many of us turn a blind eye to the poverty and suffering in our own country, it is growing more and more each day.

Each year our nation gives billions of dollars in foreign aid to over one hundred fifty countries. In 2008, the U.S. gave nearly \$43 billion in total foreign aid. In 2009, we have budgeted \$49.5 billion, and in 2010 we are expected to give nearly \$54 billion in foreign aid. Here are some of the highlights of the U.S.'s foreign aid:

- We give nearly \$600 million to support Malaria programmes annually.
- We give \$70 million for neglected tropical diseases.
- We give \$635 million to international partnerships and contributions to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria and a contribution to UNAIDS.
- We give \$648 million for programmes in Africa, namely \$296 million to Sudan, \$149 million to Liberia, among others.
- We gave \$98 million to North Korea last year. No doubt

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that money went to their nuclear programme.

- We give \$1.7 billion to Middle Eastern countries--\$363 million to Jordan, \$250 million to Egypt, \$109 million to Lebanon, \$400 million to the Palestinians.
- We gave \$125 million to Haiti before the earthquake and they still complained that we didn't do enough.
- We spend \$1.3 billion on migration and refugee assistance in other countries.

What we spend on these programmes alone could eradicate hunger here in America. But Americans have always been known for generosity. Some of the wealthiest people in America have contributed billions of dollars to charitable causes. The Global Aid Initiative and the Millennium Challenge Corporate represent some of the more recent private fund raising initiatives to help alleviate horrendous conditions in other parts of the world. Each year we find it in ourselves to rally to a new cause that finds people of the world in pain and suffering.

We have eradicated smallpox from our generous giving. We combated river blindness in Africa.

We came to the aid of those suffering in the aftermath of the tsunami in Indonesia in 2006.

We have given even more to the relief efforts in Haiti.

These are good and noble causes and have helped alleviate the suffering of those less fortunate, many of whom have lived for generations in terrible poverty. But by the same token, while we give generously to peoples throughout the world, we allow our very own fellow American citizens to work and toil just for subsistence. We allow millions of children in America to go hungry. We allow millions of our elderly, who have given so much to this great land so that they have become known as the greatest generation, to go to bed hungry at night. Here in America, the most prosperous and most generous nation on the face of the earth and in the history of the world, these terrible facts are a way of life for some.

Without doubt, there is pain and suffering beyond our

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wildest beliefs in other parts of the world. Even our very poorest citizens have a life that is far better than the lost souls who have no hope in villages in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia—in villages where they may not be running water and where children are born into poverty only to lead a short and tormented life. These conditions exist. But the histories of these peoples have been the same. Instead of solving the problem, we are throwing money at it hoping that it goes away. There is a Chinese proverb: Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. We should remember this in our approach to foreign aid.

But while all of this is a reality in the world, so too is the reality that here in America 38.9 million of our citizens live in poverty, 8.1 million families live in poverty, 14 million children live in poverty, and 3.6 million elderly live in poverty.

Further, 16.7 million children live in food insecure households, nearly 3 million rural households are food insecure, while nearly 2 million seniors live in food insecure homes.

These statistics are mind boggling and repulsive. We live here in the land of plenty and our own people are going to bed hungry at night. This is wrong and morally reprehensible. Our hearts go out to those less fortunate in other parts of the world, but we need to take care of our own here—our greatest generation, our downtrodden, our children, our working poor—who have contributed to making this nation the greatest nation in the world and, thus, enabling our nation to help those less fortunate overseas. We need to focus on America first, and when all of ours are free of the risks of hunger and poverty, then let us turn our attention overseas. To give to others in the world, many of whom resent our nation, our prosperity, our way of life, while our own go hungry makes us the laughing stock of other nations. It makes us look like we don't care about our own, when in fact we should be focusing on our own.

Here in America we need to work on America first—to help the hungry, those in need—the children, the seniors—who have lost hope and faith, who watch as we send billions of dollars overseas while the fire of hunger burns in their stomachs, while

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they fret as to where the next meal to feed their family will come from, while they must choose between their life sustaining medications and their next meal.

Let us bring about a better life for those in need here at home, in our local communities. Here we are in the most prosperous nation on earth and we have our own citizens in dire need of support. We tend to turn a blind eye as if failing to acknowledge the existence of this plight in America will make it cease to exist. It is time we wake up and take action. We need to reach out to our fellow American citizens, the weak, the needy, the homeless, the hungry, the family who is about to lose their home, the elderly, those who face insecure food supplies, and the impoverished. Let us join together for the betterment of America.

This work is now more pressing than ever before. Millions more are facing an uncertain future. Let us stand up and say that we need to help our fellow Americans. Stand up and say we are tired of sending billions of dollars overseas while Americans are going to bed hungry at night. Together we can make a difference. Together, by reaching out to America, we will make a difference in the lives of our fellow Americans.

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