

**STATEMENT OF CARYL M. STERN
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**BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND
RELATED PROGRAMS
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

MARCH 12, 2019

Madam Chair, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of more than 500,000 American supporters of UNICEF USA, I appreciate this opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee regarding the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). **I respectfully ask the Subcommittee to provide, under the Department of State's International Organizations and Program account, \$132.5 million as the U.S. Government's fiscal year 2020 voluntary contribution to UNICEF's core resources.** This maintains the contribution of \$132.5 million to UNICEF core resources at the same level as provided in the fiscal year 2019 Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act.

Since its creation in 1946, UNICEF has helped to save more children's lives than any humanitarian organization in the world. I commend this Subcommittee's bipartisan leadership to champion programs that help children around the world. You are making a difference.

Thanks to strong support from the U.S. Congress for UNICEF and for child survival, the number of children dying before age five has dropped by 62 percent since 1990. We saw progress even in poorer countries: 24 out of 81 low- and lower-middle income countries cut under-five mortality rates by two thirds or more from 1990 to 2015.

Annual government contributions to UNICEF's core resources budget constitute the single most important funding source for UNICEF worldwide. The U.S. Government's voluntary contribution to UNICEF's core resources provides the foundation for UNICEF's work to save children's lives and improve their futures.

Resources provided by this Subcommittee are critical to UNICEF's ability to help the United States in international humanitarian crises, conflict areas, and emerging threats to the well-being of children.

FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE

Let me give you a first-hand perspective on UNICEF's work. Recently I traveled to the Central African Republic (CAR). It is rated as the most dangerous place in the world for children; it has the lowest life expectancy in the world; it is the world's 4th most dangerous country for aid workers (there were 294 attacks on aid workers last year); 3/4 of the country is considered a conflict zone. Over 600,000 people have been internally displaced by the conflict. It is horrifying.

While in CAR, I had the opportunity to talk with six former child soldiers. They were all recruited and forced to join militias – boys given guns and girls equipped with knives.

When asked if they had to use their weapons, they said sadly, “YES.” The most heart-aching moment was hearing that they do not know how to forgive themselves for the acts they committed in order to survive. But what really struck me was their fierce desire to be part of a better world.

They are determined that the world sees that they are children – no different than yours or mine – and that they too deserve a childhood – a home – a life free of discrimination and persecution. I was proud that UNICEF was there and did not give up on them, because we see children for what they are: children first.

UNICEF: PUBLIC PRIVATE FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

All of UNICEF’s funding comes from voluntary contributions from governments, businesses, foundations, and individuals. In fact, almost a third of UNICEF’s total funding comes from non-governmental sources. The U.S. Government’s support of UNICEF leverages private sector funding from corporations, foundations, and other donor governments. This structure is unique among UN agencies.

UNICEF is committed to achieving value for every dollar. UNICEF is one of the largest buyers of supplies for children: in 2017, UNICEF procured \$3.46 billion worth of supplies and services, including \$392.5 million from U.S.-based suppliers. Through innovative procurement, market strategies and partnerships, UNICEF uses its market power to drive down supply prices, resulting in \$1.5 billion in savings over the last five years. In 2017, UNICEF used its market power to save nearly \$400 million on costs for vaccines and supplies.

UNICEF’s efforts around the world implement the compassion of the American people for helping children and families. That is why UNICEF enjoys incredible backing from Americans for its mission of child survival and development, from children participating in “Trick or Treat for UNICEF” and “Kid Power,” to major corporations donating money and products.

That private support is critical to UNICEF’s success in saving children’s lives from vaccine-preventable diseases, providing access to clean water, helping children stay in school, and thwarting child traffickers trying to exploit vulnerable children. UNICEF USA is proud of its partnerships with corporations and nonprofits to save children’s lives. Among many examples:

- Kiwanis International, with its more than 600,000 members, partners with UNICEF for The Eliminate Project, the current Kiwanis global campaign to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT). This project will protect more than 200 million women and their newborn children from the deadly disease. Last year, Kenya was certified as the 45th country since 1999 to eliminate MNT. There are just 14 countries still facing the threat of MNT. UNICEF also continues its work with Kiwanis to eliminate iodine deficiency. This partnership has protected 84 million newborns from brain damage caused by iodine deficiency.

- Rotary International, in partnership with UNICEF and others, has helped nearly eliminate polio worldwide, reducing polio cases by more than 99.9% since 1988. UNICEF and its partners have immunized more than 2.5 billion children by working with more than 200 countries and 20 million volunteers.
- For over 30 years, Johnson & Johnson and UNICEF have worked together to improve the lives of children and their families globally, with a mutual commitment to paving the way to a healthier future for mothers, newborns, children and their community. In November 2018, J&J committed an additional \$10 million to help strengthen health systems through the training and empowerment of frontline health workers, and the development and implementation of innovative tools to help bridge health access and health equity gaps.
- LDS Charities, the humanitarian arm of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has partnered with UNICEF since 2013. In 2018, LDS Charities provided seed funding for Learning for Life, a multi-country program designed to meet the Early Childhood Development (ECD) and education needs of children in South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. Learning for Life provides children with nutrition, stimulation and protection for optimal brain development.
- Microsoft and UNICEF launched a new partnership to tackle the education crisis impacting 75 million children and young people affected by conflict and natural disasters, and to provide them with protection services. Under this partnership, UNICEF in collaboration with Microsoft and the University of Cambridge are developing a ‘learning passport’ – a digital platform that will facilitate learning opportunities for children and young people within and across borders, in countries hosting refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons.
- As a core partner of the Measles and Rubella Initiative with American Red Cross and CDC, UNICEF has helped cut measles deaths by 84% between 2000 and 2016. Unfortunately, UNICEF recently warned that cases of measles are surging to alarmingly high levels, with significant outbreaks in Brazil, Madagascar, the Philippines, Ukraine, and Yemen.

UNICEF’s ability to partner with the U.S. Government, and with important nonprofit partners like Kiwanis, Rotary, the American Red Cross, and Gavi, depends on a strong U.S. contribution to UNICEF, as well as maintaining U.S. support for its bilateral child health programs. In this regard, UNICEF USA supports the fiscal year 2020 funding requested by our partners for Iodine Deficiency Disorders (\$2.5 million), Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus (\$2.0 million), Polio Eradication (\$59 million), and Gavi (\$290.0 million). Because of the importance of U.S. child survival and health programs, our organization also asks the U.S. Congress to provide \$900 million under the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) account, and \$250 million for nutrition in fiscal year 2020.

U.S. SUPPORT FOR UNICEF IS HELPING TO IMPROVE AND SAVE LIVES

The U.S. Government's longstanding and generous support of UNICEF allows it to leverage private sector funding and work with U.S. Government programs to make a real difference in saving children's lives.

UNICEF staff work on the ground in developing and transitional countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. UNICEF supports prenatal care, child health and nutrition, clean water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and protecting children from violence, exploitation, and HIV/AIDS:

- Education, including early childhood development, is essential for children's futures, especially for girls: education helps protect girls from exploitation, child marriage, and abuse. There are still 130 million girls between the age of 6 and 17 out of school globally, and 15 million girls of primary-school age will never enter a classroom. Girls living in conflict contexts are more than twice as likely to be out of primary school as their counterparts in countries not affected by conflict. UNICEF plays a critical role in global efforts to ensure children have access to educations, including in humanitarian crises.
- UNICEF has been a world leader in immunizations and is the world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries. UNICEF purchased 2.4 billion vaccines for children in more than 100 countries, reaching nearly half the world's children under age 5. UNICEF is a major partner with the United States in fighting vaccine-preventable diseases, including polio and measles. UNICEF procures vaccines for Gavi and buys all vaccines and related items for global campaigns not covered by Gavi. UNICEF's market power helped it cut in half the cost of the pentavalent vaccine that will protect tens of millions of children from potentially deadly infections caused by diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B and Haemophilus influenzae type b. In addition, UNICEF works in-country to ensure that vaccines reach even the poorest children and communities.
- Malaria remains a major threat to children. UNICEF is a founding member of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership to support malaria treatment and research and expand prevention measures, such as long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets. UNICEF is one of the largest buyers of mosquito nets in the world, procuring 21 million bed nets in 2017 to protect children and families in 29 countries. UNICEF also provided 18.1 million lifesaving malaria treatments.
- Malnutrition contributes to nearly half of all child deaths and causes stunting that affects a child's physical and cognitive development. We know that therapeutic foods can help to bring a child back from the verge of starvation. Thanks to UNICEF support, more children have been treated for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) than ever before: 4 million in 2017, up from 2.7 million in 2014.
- In 2017, UNICEF reached 45 million people with improved water supplies, and delivered improved sanitation for 22 million people. UNICEF – supported WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) programs were carried out in 44 countries – twice as many countries as in 2014.

- The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, a partnership led by UNICEF, Rotary International, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, and others, has helped reduce polio cases by more than 99 percent since 1988. UNICEF and its partners have immunized more than 2.5 billion children by working with over 200 countries and 20 million volunteers. This is incredible progress and the end of polio is within reach – but we can't stop now. UNICEF and its partners continue to support massive immunization campaigns to eradicate once and for all this terrible disease. In addition, UNICEF engages with manufacturers to maximize availability and manufacturing capacity and keeps polio vaccine prices as low as possible.
- UNICEF's established presence in developing countries supported by the U.S. Government contribution makes it an important partner for the U.S. Government in responses to major crises. With support from the U.S. Government, UNICEF is on the front lines helping children in crisis, in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, and elsewhere. In 2017, UNICEF assisted in 337 humanitarian situations across 102 countries, reaching millions of vulnerable children and their families.
- UNICEF's response to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo included reaching more than 6 million people through community engagement and providing sanitation and hygiene services to over 380 health facilities and 400 schools as part of infection control.

CONCLUSION

Madam Chair, this Subcommittee has long been a champion for the well-being of the world's children, ensuring that children are a priority of U.S. foreign assistance funding. American advocates of UNICEF's work for the world's children salute the bipartisan support this Subcommittee has provided for child survival and for UNICEF.

We believe that UNICEF is an indispensable partner of the United States on initiatives to save lives and protect vulnerable children around the world.

We cannot rest on our past successes. Unfortunately, 5.6 million children under five still die every year, mostly from preventable causes; half of those deaths occur in the first week after birth.

We believe that it is possible to end preventable child deaths globally in a generation, with continued investment in cost-effective, coordinated interventions for children and mothers.

A strong commitment of at least a \$132.5 million fiscal year 2020 U.S. contribution to UNICEF core resources will help us reach that dream.

We thank you for your consideration and for working to put children first.