

Flying Blind: Administration Actions Eliminate Accountability Tools Mandated by Congress

In one month, the U.S. government eliminated tracking for \$39 billion in taxpayer funds, vanishing 40 years of global health data and breaking the law by failing to meet Congressional reporting requirements. The January 2025 program cuts and dismantling of USAID eliminated critical data systems and tools used to track and report on U.S. foreign assistance results. Consequently, Congress and the American public have lost access to data showing the impact of billions in spending. Key statutory mandates are unmet, threatening bipartisan priorities like global health, food security, and taxpayer accountability. At best, it is now impossible to assess effectiveness and ensure accountability. At worst, we can no longer prioritize programs that advance American interests, and our adversaries may take credit for progress that American taxpayers funded.

USAID's Evidence Legacy

USAID was recognized by organizations such as [Results for America](#) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) for setting a high standard among federal agencies in using evidence to ensure the effective and accountable use of U.S. taxpayer funds. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of State does not have the same program implementation and evaluation capabilities. A [2025 Inspector General report](#) found repeated issues with State's "ability to track foreign assistance funds, establish measurable goals for foreign assistance funding and perform risk assessments, and monitor foreign assistance funds." As State absorbs what remains of USAID programs, it lacks the staff capacity, data systems, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) infrastructure to manage foreign assistance data and measure program effectiveness to the same standards. Since assuming control of foreign assistance programming, State has failed to update key data systems; platforms such as the State-managed PEPFAR Spotlight today remain outdated and without current data.

What's Been Lost: Global Health Data

USAID's [Demographic and Health Surveys](#) were the gold standard for tracking health trends in over 90 countries [for four decades](#). More than 400 surveys captured essential data on maternal and child health, HIV, nutrition, sanitation, and disease prevalence. USAID championed new methods to measure impact on health outcomes and health system performance. These catalytic models were tested through engagements with the private sector to help demonstrate the combined impact of blending public- and private-sector contributions. While the DHS program has been supported by multiple funding sources and some functionalities have turned back on in the wake of USAID's collapse, the full scope of the DHS project remains in question with the US funding withdrawal.

Food Security Monitoring

Data from the US Government's bipartisan Feed the Future (FTF) initiative show that between 2010–2019, FTF focus areas saw a 19% drop in extreme poverty. In FY 2024, implementing partners collected and reported their results. In 2025, FTF data systems were taken offline, implementing partners blocked from reporting data, and USAID staff providing robust management oversight terminated. While tools like [FEWS Net](#), which tracks early famine indicators, are back online and some piecemeal snapshots of Feed the Future programming from FY24 have been [released](#), the U.S. Government is still falling short of its legal obligations: under the Global Food Security Act (GFSA), results must be reported to Congress annually by September 30th. Due to the January 2025 Stop Work Orders, an aggregated analysis for the FTF initiative was not produced and Congress will not receive results from \$1.1 billion in appropriated funds.

Other Unaccounted Programming Areas

- READ Act of 2017: Congress and the American public have lost annual reporting on 34 million learners, 2.9 million teachers, and education system strengthening efforts. Without this data, the U.S. government and taxpayer will no longer know the effectiveness of \$800 million total investment in education programming.
- Water for the World Act of 2014: There is currently no updated data on 10 million people having improved water access and 6 million people with improved sanitation, with zero accountability for the \$451 million annual WASH congressional directive.
- Democracy and Human Rights Programming: State has stopped tracking the results of over \$1 billion in annual DRG assistance to over 100 countries.
- Climate Resilience Programming: USAID provided at least [\\$810 million for climate adaptation from fiscal years 2014-2018](#). With no future plans for data collection, Congress has no visibility into climate programming effectiveness across USAID's portfolio, including renewable energy technologies that could power economic growth.

Mandated Reporting Unfilled

USAID and State are subject to the [Government Performance and Results Modernization Act \(2010\)](#), the [Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act of 2018](#), and the Open Data Act of 2019. These require agencies to create strategic plans, measure and report progress towards those plans, and invest in data, evaluation, and research to continuously improve and transparently share results with the American public. Agencies that manage foreign assistance programs are also subject to the [Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016](#), which requires robust M&E systems, and transparent publication of evaluation findings. Despite these legal requirements, former USAID programs are no longer publicly reporting results and adequate performance measurement systems are not active.

What can Congress do?

- ★ **Restore Critical Data Systems:** Nearly all USAID projects stored performance monitoring data in an online repository called the Development Information Solution (DIS). All USAID projects were required to submit progress reports and independent evaluations on the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC), visible to the public. Together, with the public Dollars to Results [site](#), these platforms were shut down in January 2025. ***This is a loss of at least 3 million data points and 168,000 documents.***
 - **ASK:** Reinstate USAID's DIS and DEC - or similar platforms to house the data - so that the public continues to have access and State can use the data in these systems to manage programs. The restoration of this critical data will ensure that program funds are not wasted and accountability to taxpayers is maintained.
 - **ASK:** Pass emergency legislation requiring State to maintain USAID's monitoring standards or return program management to a restored USAID (including staff).
- ★ **Insist on Data Transparency:** Limitations in State's capacity to meaningfully track foreign assistance outcomes are widely known, and may lead to inaccurate reporting. Congress must use its oversight capacity to insist on transparent M&E.
- ★ **Protect Technical Expertise:** Ensure agencies managing foreign assistance retain skilled staff to design, collect, and analyze program data and conduct rigorous, independent evaluations. USAID's M&E capacity was built under Congressional oversight and is now severely diminished.
- ★ **Enforce Existing Law:** Hold the Administration accountable to the statutory reporting requirements. The Constitution requires Congressional oversight of appropriated funds. Congress has not received results from FY2024 due to halted operations. Legislative oversight is critical to restoring compliance.
 - **ASK:** The USAID Administrator's annual testimony to Congress requires performance data. USAID's annual Agency Performance Report to OMB is also required by GPRA.

Bottom Line: Without urgent Congressional action, the U.S. loses its ability to measure development impact, learn from investments, and demonstrate value to taxpayers. The dismantling of USAID's data systems and staff technical capacity threatens decades of bipartisan progress. Every day Congress delays action, more taxpayer dollars disappear into a black hole with zero accountability. If Congress fails to act, the U.S. will lose its ability to show foreign assistance results. The U.S. is flying blind on billions in annual foreign assistance while our global competitors gain ground.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the purpose of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)?

A: An M&E system outlines the process for collecting, analyzing, and using data and evidence to inform strategy- and project-level decision-making, such as resource allocation and priority setting, to ensure effectiveness, accountability, and transparency in the use of public resources.

M&E systems are not optional: They are required by law in statutes including the Global Food Security Act, Foreign Aid Transparency Act, Evidence Act, etc. State is currently in violation of these mandates. At USAID, technical specialists in Washington Headquarters and in-country offices worked with partners, contractors, and grantees to implement M&E policies and leading practices that helped define U.S. government-wide M&E standards for foreign assistance programs.

Q: What was the impact of DHS data globally?

A: DHS data shaped global health programming and research. One study found that economic research publications rose by 7 percentage points after DHS data became available in a country.¹

Q: What was the impact of cutting Feed the Future's population-based surveys?

A. Population-Based Surveys (PBS) were conducted every 3-4 years to assess impact in Feed the Future zones. These surveys captured data on poverty, resilience, nutrition, and climate adaptation. For example, Nepal conducted PBSs in 2019 and 2022, but was unable to complete a final endline survey due to program cuts in 2025. Numerous aid programs in Nepal, and other countries with dedicated food security funds, were designed utilizing findings from these periodic surveys.

Q: How long has Feed the Future (FTF) been mandated by Congress?

A: Although the work of Feed the Future has been ongoing since the L'Aquila announcement in 2009, Congress passed legislation to formally mandate it by the [Global Food Security Act \(GFSA\) in 2016](#). The GFSA was [reauthorized in 2022 \(Sec. 5588\)](#), through the Global Food Security Act (GFSA).

Q: How much of the Feed the Future Initiative is able to continue?

A: As of 2025, 81% of a \$1.4 billion budget was cut for global agriculture assistance. Of the 20 countries where Feed the Future targeted its funding, only one country, Guatemala, continues to receive support.²

Q: In which years did FTF report to Congress and the public?

A: Annual reports were submitted from FY2011 through FY2023.

Q: Are the Congressionally-mandated FTF data reports still available?

A: All reports were previously available at www.feedthefuture.gov/results. The site was taken offline in 2025. The most recent report, submitted to Congress in November 2023, remains available [here](#).

¹ <https://bmcmecine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12916-025-04062-6>

² <https://www.agri-pulse.com/articles/23044-opinion-america-benefits-from-fighting-global-hunger-but-progress-is-in-peril>

Q: What were FTF's requirements for performance tracking, and can State manage them?

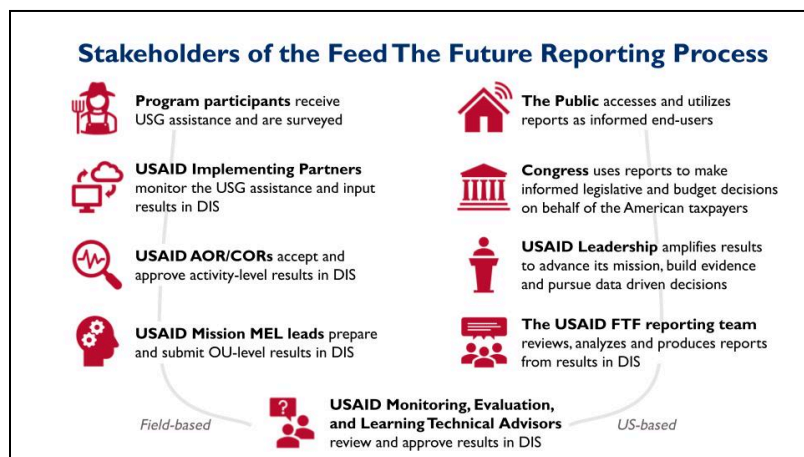
A: The GFSA requires annual performance reporting. In 2025, Stop Work Orders, contract terminations, and staff reductions disrupted the review, aggregation, and submission of all FY2024 data. While the law remains intact and reporting continues to be a legal requirement, the State Department currently lacks the systems and functions in place to meet the legislative requirement.

Q: On average, how much data does FTF collect and report?

A: Annually, FTF funds and tracks reporting for 400-600 active projects. Each activity is required to report against applicable indicators from a list of 38 standard indicators. In FY2024, 543 FTF-funded activities reported their initial performance monitoring data to USAID prior to the January Stop Work Orders.

Q: What happened to the FTF reporting and review process as a result of the program cuts?

A: The indiscriminate cancellation of contracts and termination of staff prevented USAID from conducting a full review under a standard process of data quality assurance and a reporting chain engaging stakeholders both in the field and Washington HQ (see the below diagram). The diagram displays a process that was abruptly interrupted mid-stream in February 2025, halting the production of the annual Congressional report for \$1.1 billion in allocated funds.



Q: Isn't the State Department capable of managing foreign assistance data?

A. USAID had decades of specialized expertise and systems that State currently lacks. A 2025 special Inspector General report found that between State, the Department of Defense (DOD), and USAID, "USAID ha[d] the most rigorous M&E systems," attributing this to "Congressional scrutiny of USAID's budget."³ State has much less flexible spending authorities and leaner staffing and funding than DOD, which "constrains their abilities to adjust programming to new information and realities." Further reduction-in-force efforts implemented at State will have an impact on their already lean staffing.

³ <https://www.sigar.mil/Portals/147/Files/Reports/Lessons-Learned/SIGAR-21-46-LL.pdf>