



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Justice and Peace in all the Earth **FOREIGN ASSISTANCE:**

We affirm that our nation has responsibility to contribute a portion of its wealth to people in poorer nations through effective economic assistance.

(ELCA Social Statement: "For Peace in God's World," 1995)

U.S. FOREIGN AID: FOUR TOP MYTHS DEBUNKED

MYTH: Foreign aid goes to corrupt governments.

Over the years, Congress has instituted strict oversight on foreign aid. Examples of this include measures that USAID has taken, like the [Public Financial Management Risk Assessment Framework \(PFMRAF\)](#) which has an anti-corruption commission. Countries that would like government-to-government funding first must complete the risk assessment created by the PFMRAF. Foreign assistance and accountability measures help build stable governments.

MYTH: We must choose between those in need domestically or abroad.

The U.S. has always put domestic issues at the forefront, which is shown in our budget allocations every year. Foreign aid accounts [for less than 1 percent of our budget](#), and that money could surely be used here at home, but it would be insignificant compared to what the U.S. spends on domestic programs. Unfortunately, there is a long road ahead in fighting poverty on all fronts, and the amount of assistance we send overseas would not fix our problems at home, so it is not necessary to choose a side by taking away much needed resources from countries that are facing extreme poverty.

MYTH: Aid is ineffective and wasteful.

International assistance addresses the largest areas of concerns in developing countries, including health care, food security, water and sanitation, agriculture development and other development needs. Improvements in these areas have been shown to increase the quality and span of life in various countries. For example, [there has been 80 percent drop in deaths from malaria in Cambodia since 2003](#) and an overall decline in death rates in much of the world. Foreign aid is effective because it saves lives and assists the most vulnerable countries in becoming self-reliant. Making up less than 1 percent of our budget, this investment is far from wasteful.

MYTH: International aid makes developing countries more dependent on our support.

The best way countries can graduate from developing status is by strengthening local institutions and economies. Aid makes this possible. Countries in Asia and Latin America were regarded as being hopeless for decades, but many countries dependent on assistance in the past now have strong economies – [10 of the 15 largest importers of American goods and services relied on U.S. aid at one point](#). U.S. government programs, such as the Millennium Challenge Corp., work with partner countries to provide government-to-government support, while holding the countries accountable to the progress they are making.