

Trump's Plans To Ax Foreign Aid Budget Raises Concern For Humanitarian Groups

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March 1, 2017

Charity and humanitarian organizations across the world are beginning to panic over Trump's plans to cut a huge portion of the U.S. overseas assistance. This includes programs such as the military aid, funds for long-term development programs, debt relief, and emergency aid.

On Monday, the world got a glance of President Donald Trump's first budget proposal. In it, President Trump has hiked the military budget by \$54 billion. And to make up for the hike in military spending, several non-defense programs look set to see a budget cut. Among these programs, the Foreign Aid program, which constitutes about 1 percent of the U.S. federal budget, is expected to take the biggest blow, *CNN* reports.

Several people have raised concerns over the potential budget cut. Gayle Smith, who served as the final United States Agency for International Development (USAid) administrator under President Barack Obama, says this could mean trouble for a lot of people.

"If we were to significantly recede, it would be a matter of life and death for a lot of people."

The Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Jan Egeland, commented on the effect this could have on refugee programs around the world.

"How could this be justified in today's world where over 65 million people are displaced, and we are faced with multiple humanitarian crises? To abandon the vulnerable for armaments would not make America greater but would make her smaller."

John Glaser, who is the Associate Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, took the opportunity to take a jab at the U.S. foreign aid program, pointing out that this decision would have little effect on the actual people in need since most of the U.S. foreign aid is spent as military aid to foreign countries.

"While cutting the foreign aid budget may generate some gaps in resources for people in need, US foreign aid largely does not target the most in need."

President Trump had long made his intentions to cut foreign Aid known to the public. During the speech announcing his candidacy for U.S. President in June 2015, Trump said that he believed the United States needs to "stop sending foreign aid to countries that hate us". Trump further announced his intention to instead spend the money on America's own infrastructures, "our tunnels, roads, bridges, and schools," as he put it.

Trump commented on his budget blueprint, calling it “a public safety and national security budget”.

“With 20 trillion dollars in debt, the government must learn to tighten its belt.”

Of course, Trump’s budget plans need to be approved by Congress before it can move any further. And it is highly unlikely that it will get approved without a few changes. Nevertheless, if Trump wants to allocate \$54 billion more to the military, a lot more than just the foreign aid program will have to suffer. Mick Mulvaney, Director of the Office of Management and Budget commented on the issue.

“Yes, it is a fairly small part of the discretionary budget, but it is still consistent with what the President said. We are taking his words and turning them into polices and dollars.”

The United States is the largest donor to humanitarian crises around the world, in terms of its financial contributions. In 2016, for instance, the U.S donated around \$6.4 billion dollars as emergency aid. This is almost 29% of what it spent globally that year.

More than 100 groups signed a letter to the United States Congress and Senate earlier this week, urging them to keep funding the UN programs and to support the new UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

Also on Monday, 121 retired US generals and admirals signed a letter to Congress, asking for the foreign aid funds to be ring fenced.

“The State Department, USAid, Millennium Challenge Corporation, Peace Corps and other development agencies are critical to preventing conflict and reducing the need to put our men and women in uniform in harm’s way.”