

Monday, June 24, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On behalf of the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN), a bipartisan reform coalition comprised of international development and foreign policy practitioners and experts, we thank you for your commitment to advancing effective U.S. foreign assistance. We write, however, with concern regarding the recent State Department [announcement](#) that U.S. foreign aid to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras will be reprogrammed following a review of more than 700 programs and activities in those countries.

MFAN advocates for accountability in foreign assistance, including evidence-based decision making and evaluation of the effectiveness of assistance programs. [Monitoring and evaluation](#) methods assess program success and guide mid-course corrections and future programming. Any review of U.S. foreign assistance programs should rely on robust [program evaluations](#) to assess their effectiveness.

The U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development both have policies in place calling for independent evaluations of program effectiveness. All 22 agencies administering foreign assistance are required to have evaluation policies in compliance with the [Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016](#) (Public Law No: 114-191) and subsequent [guidelines laid out by the Office of Management and Budget](#). As a result there is evidence, based on evaluations of programs in these Northern Triangle countries, that [USAID activities have been successful](#) in crime and violence prevention.

To most effectively leverage American tax dollars and further American interests abroad, any review of our foreign assistance programs should be evidence-based and transparent. MFAN strongly urges the Department of State to:

- Base any resource allocation decisions on an assessment of the fundamental causes of the instability and fragility that are driving migration from the Northern Triangle countries;
- Ensure the review is informed by the experiences of implementing organizations and intended beneficiaries;
- Review all relevant independent program evaluations;
- Publish the methodology of this review, including all program evaluations used to determine program effectiveness so that the American taxpayers, development community, and partner countries understand how programs are performing and how subsequent funding decisions are being made.

U.S. aid advances [American interests](#) and values by working directly in communities on issues that grow their economy, improve safety and health, and strengthen their infrastructure. Funding decisions should be based on program performance, not short-term political considerations. These actions could [work against](#) shared development objectives and yield sub-optimal outcomes for U.S. interests long-term. Funding decisions that are not evidence-

based also exacerbate funding instability and interruptions, which [limit the effectiveness](#) of programs designed to save lives and further American interests abroad.

We look forward to working with you to advance U.S. values and economic and national security interests by supporting a more just, prosperous, and secure world through effective foreign assistance. MFAN interim Executive Director, Larry Nowels (lnowels@modernizeaid.net) is available to answer any questions you or your staff may have.

Sincerely,



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MFAN Co-Chair  
Senior Fellow, Brookings  
Institution



Lester Munson  
MFAN Co-Chair  
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Tessie San Martin  
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