



MINDS Act (H.R.3988/ S.2105)

The Issue: According to the 2016 Global Burden Disease Study, 1 billion people suffered from mental health conditions or substance use disorders worldwide and 75% of people living in low-and middle-income countries with mental health conditions did not receive any mental health treatment whatsoever. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the risk factors for mental health conditions globally, especially affecting children, as pandemic-related school closures have increased exposure to higher risks of trauma such as abuse, neglect and food insecurity.

Factors that increase susceptibility to mental health and substance abuse disorders include poverty, hunger, chronic and untreated health conditions, trauma and maltreatment, social exclusion and discrimination, and exposure to and displacement by war or conflict. Further, depression and anxiety disorders alone cost the global economy \$1 trillion per year in lost productivity.

The Solution: Investments in mental health programs, including those focused on the wellbeing of children, can help break the cycle of poverty abroad. Childhood poverty causes lower school achievement; worse cognitive and related acuteness; and higher rates of delinquency, anxiety and depression, leading to higher rates of psychiatric disorders later in adulthood. Addressing these disorders as they arise can help spur economic achievement later in life, and break the relationship between poverty and poor mental health.

The Mental Health in International Development and Humanitarian Settings (MINDS) Act is the first bill to address mental health and psychosocial support in U.S. global development assistance. It will do so through enhancing U.S. global health policy by:

- Codifying the position of USAID Coordinator for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS);
- Tasking said Coordinator with the establishment and chairing of a MHPSS Working Group that includes Deputy Assistant Administrators from each USAID Bureau and State Department representatives. Such representatives will coordinate among bureaus and between departments on the integration of MHPSS evidence-based and culturally competent programming across all media of U.S. foreign assistance programs including regional bureaus and missions;
- Specifying a focus within the MHPSS Working Group for vulnerable populations, such as children, adult caretakers and families and those experiencing gender-based violence and displacement.

Endorsing Organizations: The MINDS Act is endorsed by -- American Academy of Pediatrics, UNICEF USA, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children, International Rescue Committee, The Borgen Project, the Institute for Reconstruction and International Security through Education, Heartland Alliance International, the Mennonite Central Committee, the Amal Alliance, Global Campaign for Education US, Bethany Christian Services, The Two Lilies Fund, and Whole Child International.

Supporters: Representatives Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Joe Wilson (R-SC) introduced the bill on June 17, 2021 with nine additional original cosponsors. A Senate companion bill was also introduced by Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA).