



MINDS Act (H.R.1570/ S.767)

The Issue: 1 billion people suffer from mental health conditions or substance use disorders worldwide and 75% of people living in low-and middle-income countries with mental health conditions do not receive any mental health treatment whatsoever. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the risk factors for mental health conditions globally, especially affecting children.

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 well-being of children, can help break the cycle of poverty abroad. Childhood poverty results in lower school achievement, poor cognitive outcomes and higher rates of delinquency, anxiety and depression. These factors lead to higher rates of psychiatric disorders later in adulthood. Addressing these issues 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 by enhancing U.S. global health policy in the following ways:

- Codifying the position of USAID Coordinator for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS);
- Tasking said Coordinator with creating 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: American Academy of Pediatrics, The Borgen Project, Catholic Relief Services, ChildFund International, Childhood Education International, Columbia University's Global Mental Health Lab, Global Campaign for Education - U.S., InterAction, International Rescue Committee, Jesuit Refugee Service – U.S., Mennonite Central Committee - U.S., Project HOPE, Save the Children, Sesame Workshop, The Two Lilies Fund, UNICEF USA and World Vision.

Supporters: Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) introduced the bill on March 9, 2023. Representatives Susan Wild (D-PA-7) and Joe Wilson (R-SC-2) along with five original cosponsors introduced the bill on March 10, 2023. A previous version of the bill was introduced in the 117th Congress and had bipartisan support.

“The effects of mental illness can be devastating, particularly on children growing up in areas of conflict and poverty. It is critical to take a proactive approach to ensure that U.S. foreign assistance is utilized effectively to help those who are most vulnerable. I am grateful to join my bicameral colleagues Sen. Casey and Rep. Wild in co-leading this legislation promoting positive mental health, stability, and responsible use of taxpayer-funded foreign assistance.” – Congressman Wilson