

THE BORGEN PROJECT



RE: IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Supporting the Introduction of the MINDS Act to Congress

TACOMA, Washington — The Borgen Project applauds the introduction of the Mental Health in International Development and Humanitarian Settings Act, or the MINDS Act, in Congress on June 17, 2021. The bipartisan legislation, introduced in the Senate by Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) and in the House of Representatives by Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL-22) and Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC-2), aims to incorporate mental health services into current and future foreign assistance programs.

A World Health Organization (WHO) report found that low-income households are two times more likely to develop mental disorders. Moreover, the WHO explains how mental disorders and poverty have a cyclical relationship as poverty can increase one's likelihood of developing mental disorders and mental illnesses can increase one's risk of falling into poverty. By addressing mental health disorders in low-to-middle-income countries, poverty rates would drop and vulnerable groups would be able to improve their living conditions.

The MINDS Act works to include mental health services into foreign aid programs through the establishment of a USAID Coordinator for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). The coordinator would facilitate the “integration of MHPSS into U.S. foreign assistance programming” and ensure that the services address the cultural and community needs of countries receiving foreign aid — with a particular focus on aiding children in conflict.

Additionally, if passed, the Act would initiate a MHPSS Working Group, which consists of USAID managers and State representatives, to oversee the progress and effectiveness of the programs. Lastly, the established Group would report to Congress with the results and setbacks of the bill's initiatives, so that the incorporation of mental health services in foreign aid programs can continue to improve and address rising needs.

“PTSD and mental illness is a huge issue in every humanitarian crisis I've ever been to,” said Clint Borgen, the Founder and President of The Borgen Project. “Mental health services are essential to combat global poverty. For these reasons, we are looking forward to the progression of the MINDS Act.”

As COVID-19, conflict and unstable socioeconomic conditions continue to impact the mental health of vulnerable and low-income groups, foreign aid initiatives need to address mental health disorders and its influence in global poverty reduction efforts. By supporting the MINDS Act in Congress, the international community takes one more step forward toward eradicating global poverty.

About The Borgen Project

The Borgen Project is a nonprofit working at the political level to advance international development policies and programs to alleviate global poverty. Founded in 2003 by Clint Borgen, The Borgen Project has mobilized people around the world to make anti-poverty efforts a political priority, building awareness of global poverty and its effects on the international community to U.S. Congressional leaders and citizens alike. The Borgen Project currently has campaigns and volunteers in more than 1,952 cities and continues to expand its reach.

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