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### Final Project Report

My research question from the Fall Semester was “How does the issue of global poverty and the consequences that stem from it affect the United States and its interests, and how can the United States more effectively respond to the crisis of global poverty given these consequences?” I discovered many problems with both the efficacy and the scope of U.S. international assistance programs. In order to most effectively respond to the problems identified through my research, I decided to partner with The Borgen Project, a nonprofit political advocacy campaign that works to make global poverty a focus of U.S. foreign policy. I executed a social media and personal outreach campaign in order to convince U.S. citizens to email their elected representatives on behalf of the Global Health Security Act, which would create a comprehensive, strategic approach to foreign assistance targeted towards the addressing and prevention of global health crises, particularly in developing countries. Even though I cannot precisely determine the results of my social media and personal outreach campaign, given that The Borgen Project “Email Congress” Tool does not allow for personal tracking, I personally connected with over 100 people about the campaign, as well as reaching 300+ through my social media outreach. Regardless of exact numbers, I consider my project successful because I was able to spread information about the Global Health Security Act and encourage civic engagement through communication with elected officials. Though any form of social action project is difficult to execute during a global pandemic, I believe I was able to acclimate well to the virtual format of this year and complete a strong project. I do wish I was able to conduct some form of an

in-person event but I am pleased with the adjustments I made and where my final project ended up.

**Research Question:** *How does the issue of global poverty and the consequences that stem from it affect the United States and its interests, and how can the United States more effectively respond to the crisis of global poverty given these consequences?*

**Executive Summary:** The United States, as of 2013, commits 0.19% of its GNI to international development aid, which equates to about \$30 billion, a significantly smaller figure than the world's other wealthy countries, all of whom committed to providing at least 0.7% of their GNI in 1970. Global poverty is not only widespread, but it is also urgent, and an increased commitment to international aid must be made by developed countries to combat this crisis (Kim). The United States' government and past presidential administrations view global poverty reduction as an insignificant element to foreign policy and national security (Vasudha and Hulme). Policymakers have a fundamental misunderstanding of international poverty and that foreign assistance programs must be oriented toward the general welfare of the citizenry, rather than large-scale economic trends, which generally contributes to larger rates of inequity (Banerjee and Duflo).

**Background:** Global poverty is an international crisis that afflicts countless people and countries around the world, and it is important to recognize that it affects far more than just those currently experiencing poverty. The United States faces many consequences as a result of poverty around the world, including in regard to the economy, national security, the military, and the environment. Even though the wealthiest countries in the world have made a commitment to combating this crisis, the United States commits significantly less than many other countries despite the U.S. being the wealthiest country in the world. Its foreign assistance programs are

also in need of significant reform in order to increase their efficacy. While there are countless humanitarian justifications for the U.S. committing increased resources to the fight against global poverty, there are also many pragmatic reasons to increase and reform foreign assistance to countries in poverty, and I hope to consider these in my research and project.

**Key Stakeholders:** In addition to the millions of people around the world that live in poverty, the United States itself has a strong stake in the fight against poverty, due to a variety of factors and interests that would benefit from decreased global poverty. These individuals also have an interest and are highly educated on the issue of global poverty: 1) Lauren Caruth, Professor in the School of International Service at American University, specializing in humanitarian assistance, global health, food security, refugees; 2) Lynsey Alexander and Justin Romer, Chief of Staff and Regional Director The Borgen Project, a political advocacy organization that works to make combating global poverty a focus of U.S. foreign policy; and 3) Jordan Tama, Professor in the School of International Service at American University specializing in the politics, institutions, and tools of U.S. foreign and national security policymaking. Prof. Caruth and Prof. Tama can provide valuable insight into the various issues of global poverty and the shortcomings of U.S. humanitarian assistance programs, as well as information on global poverty from the perspective of U.S. foreign policy and national security. The Borgen Project is the foremost organization that works directly with policymakers in order to bring issues of global poverty to the forefront, and Ms. Alexander and Mr. Romer have full knowledge of the issues and the current efforts and challenges in influencing U.S. policy to reflect an increased commitment to fighting global poverty.

**Appraisal of Past Solutions:** Eradicating global poverty is certainly a lofty goal, but taking steps to address it and lessen it worldwide is both possible, necessary, and increasingly urgent.

The pledge by the wealthiest countries to commit 0.7% of their GNI in 1970 was a strong step in the right direction to address global poverty as a whole, but countries did not fulfill their pledge, particularly the United States. Legislation to address global poverty, including emergency supplemental resources to the International Affairs Budget to help to address the consequences of the pandemic in impoverished countries, has been passed in the House of Representatives. However, most of these pieces of legislation have been tabled on the Senate floor, as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has not allowed these bills to be debated. Even though these pieces of legislation are not a complete solution to the issues of global poverty, they are a great starting point for the United States to increase their commitment to the fight against global poverty. More pressure needs to be put on elected officials to debate these issues and get this legislation passed.

**Project Plan:** For my project, I am going to partner with the Borgen Project in order to get as many people as possible to email their elected representatives in favor of legislation that is intended to combat poverty around the world. The Borgen Project has an excellent tool on its website where you input your name and address, and it auto-fills an email that urges your representatives and your senators to support legislation that commits U.S. foreign aid to combating poverty. Many of the bills target specific groups, like young women seeking equitable access to education in impoverished countries, and all of them would be steps in the right direction in the fight against global poverty. Corresponding with your elected officials has proven to be successful, and hearing from constituents en masse as a result of my campaign would certainly put these pieces of legislation at the forefront of these leaders' minds.

**Conclusion:** Global poverty reduction is indeed a lofty goal, and it is a difficult and complex problem to explore in my research and social action project. However, as American citizens, I

believe it is important to recognize that this country can do more in order to more effectively respond to a crisis that afflicts billions of people around the world. If U.S. foreign assistance programs are expanded, reformed, and put at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy, this country can stand at the forefront of an incredibly important issue in the world, and the entire world will be better for it. My email campaign would hopefully at the very least raise awareness of this very pertinent issue, and at best, it could convince some representatives and senators to support legislation that works against this issue worldwide.

