

April 2015 Action:

Letters to the Editor on Effective Federal Peacebuilding Budget Items – Call for Full Funding!!

Congress is working to pass a 2016 budget. We have identified four currently existing, highly effective international peacebuilding programs and we want to submit letters celebrating them, and **urging Congress to fully fund them!!**

With all the violence around the world, it may be sadly easy to find a news article or essay to respond to. Or you might respond to some exciting positive diplomatic developments! Either way, we can offer practical hope and empowering information to thousands of readers.

Basic Steps

1. Read this entire Action Sheet, to become more familiar with the topic.
2. Identify local daily newspapers. Find list here: http://bit.ly/find_newspapers You will certainly be able to find an article you can respond to, regarding either Federal Budget issues, or international strife.
3. See the paper (online?) letters to the editor or editorial section to find letter criteria.
4. Read a few LTEs they have published to get an idea of how writers begin them.
5. Review the information on the back of this sheet, and feel free to do further research.
6. Write and submit your letter, using their criteria and the E.P.I.C. format below.
7. The more letters sent in by your team, the more likely at least one will be published.

Please be sure to write unique letters. Read them aloud to each other for inspiration!!

The “E.P.I.C.” Format

Engage:

To the Editors:

Reference an article about either current violent conflicts, diplomatic efforts, Federal Budget negotiations, or all the above, and your emotional reaction to it. **Your feelings** make this personal and connecting.

Problem:

What are the thoughts you have connected with those feelings, do we too often seem to lack or ignore the means to resolve disputes peacefully? You might refer to some fact stated in the article you referenced above, or a related element in your awareness, which particularly bothers you about this situation. This is your sense of what is “wrong.”

Inform About Solution(s):

Meanwhile there are powerful programs showing promising success over the brief course of their existence (**see below regarding these programs and their success**). Please describe them and state in your own words, from your heart, why such things are important to recognize.

Call to Action:

Call for Congress (**mention your House Member and both Senators by name**) – in their creation of the 2016 federal budget, to **support full funding** for these promising, practical programs that are building peace on a shoestring. You might also urge all readers to contact their Congress Members too, raising their voices for continuing these effective steps.

Signing Off

Under your signature mention that you are a volunteer with The Peace Alliance locally.

Four Agencies Succeeding at International Peacebuilding – Let’s Maintain and Grow Them!

Conflict and Stabilization Operations Bureau (CSO)¹ - part of the State Department, It was created in 2011, and has had operations in 44 countries. CSO worked with local groups during Kenya’s elections in 2013 - where violence during the previous elections had resulted in over 1,300 deaths and more than 350,000 displaced persons. This time around, Kenyans did lose 20 citizens during election violence, but with CSO’s help in engaging a broad coalition of local stakeholders, the 2013 elections were otherwise largely peaceful.

Complex Crises Fund (CCF)² – also still in its infancy (established in 2010), CCF is co-managed by the State Dept. and US Agency for International Development (USAID). CCF funds civilian solutions rather than military intervention in times when humanitarian and diplomatic assistance are needed to prevent escalating violence. For example, in Tunisia, after economic inequality, corruption, and political repression led to the ousting of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the CCF supported a peaceful transition process. It also helped broaden and increase citizen participation in the new government, thereby reducing the risk of armed conflict.

Conflict Management and Mitigation Office (CMM)³ - founded in 2002, CMM works within USAID’s Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. Their “People-to-People Reconciliation Fund” brings together individuals of different ethnic, religious or political backgrounds from areas of civil conflict and war – creating opportunities for adversaries to resolve conflicts, reconcile differences, promote greater understanding and mutual trust, and work on common goals toward reducing conflict. CMM has supported over 135 peacebuilding projects in 35 countries and awarded over \$115 million in grants for “people-to-people” reconciliation programs. CMM has also trained over 500 U.S. Government and non-government partners in tools that ensure a peacebuilding approach in conflict-affected areas.

US Institute of Peace– created by Congress in 1984, this publicly funded think tank and training resource provides leading edge policy analysis and skills for government actors in international hotspots, as well as rich peacebuilding educational tools for teachers and students nationwide.

Our federal budget totals some \$3.5 trillion dollars each year while these four powerful, budding peacebuilding initiatives cost less than \$160 million combined. At under .005% of our budget they deserve our vocal support and the support of the US Congress.

Have Fun, Write Well, and Build Peace!

¹ <http://www.state.gov/j/cso/>

² <http://fcnl.org/issues/ppdc/development/>

³ <http://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-democracy-conflict-and-humanitarian-assistance/office>