

American leadership Abroad Keeps Us Safe, Prosperous At Home

Goudin Yameogo used to wake up every morning worried about whether his large extended family would be able to find enough fresh water to get through the day. In the West African country of Burkina Faso, where Yameogo lives, safe drinking water is scarce — and until recently the women and girls walked two miles to collect enough to get through a single day. That is, until a well was built just steps from his home.

Yameogo's life-changing well was made possible by a public-private partnership between our own Florida International University and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Together, FIU and USAID are working to expand access to clean drinking water and safe sanitation practices.

This program could not come at a more critical time. Like Yameogo, nearly 800 million people worldwide are living without access to clean drinking water. But our nation's international affairs programs do more than project the best of America's values. As the president of FIU, I've seen firsthand how our civilian-led tools promote economic growth and keep our country safe.

The administration recently released a budget blueprint that proposes slashing the international affairs budget by 31 percent — but strong and robust funding for the State Department and USAID is more necessary now than ever before. When our diplomats and development professionals empower people with the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty — through access to clean water, vaccines or sustainable farming techniques — they are not only changing lives, they are advancing Florida's economic and America's security interests.

Since the well was built in 2014, Yameogo reports that no one in his 35-person family has fallen ill with dysentery. And without the daily burden of collecting water, six of his daughters are able to attend school while many of the women in his family are earning incomes of their own. Ripple effects like the ones in Yameogo's village allow poverty to decline, local economies to grow, and countries to stabilize — creating new opportunities for U.S. businesses in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

With 95 percent of the world's consumers living outside of our borders and one in five American jobs tied to trade, investing in these efforts is not only the right

thing to do, it's the smart thing to do. China has recognized the enormous economic potential of the developing world and is actually outpacing the United States in investments in Africa.

Ensuring that our businesses remain competitive and have access to the world's fastest growing markets is especially critical for Florida, where 2.5 million jobs are tied to international trade. Our state has 14 deepwater ports — including PortMiami in our own back yard — and exports from Florida total more than \$50 billion every year. We simply can't afford to overlook the value of American leadership abroad for our economic prosperity here at home.

In addition to boosting our economy, our nonmilitary tools help keep us safe in an increasingly complex world — from combating ISIS to stopping the spread of Zika. As more than 120 retired three and four star generals recently wrote to Congress, the military alone cannot keep us safe. Our soldiers need strong civilian partners in order to keep pace with growing global threats. By leveraging our nation's civilian tools alongside the unmatched strength of our military we can save lives and dollars by preventing conflict and avoiding the need for boots on the ground. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis said it best himself in a 2013 Senate hearing: "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition."

Given the inextricable link between Florida's economic strength, our country's security, and American engagement overseas, we must make sure our diplomats, relief workers, and development professionals are armed with the resources they need to be effective.

The international affairs budget comprises just 1 percent of the federal budget, but the return on investment for Florida is unmatched. And support for our overseas programs runs deep — as evidenced by the 150 Florida leaders who joined U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart in Miami last month for a forum on the value of American leadership abroad. As Washington grapples with an uncertain and highly political budget environment, the Florida delegation in Congress should support a strong and effective international affairs budget. As Floridians, it's critical that our country's diplomatic and development programs can keep pace with growing and complex global challenges. Because as I've seen firsthand, leading globally really does matter locally here in the Sunshine State.

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