

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 5, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State

Dear Secretary Blinken:

On March 11, 2024, you announced that our government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), will provide \$33 million to “support the World Food Program, UNICEF, and NGO partners,” in assistance to the Haitian people.¹ The State Department then claimed in a press briefing that there are “guardrails” and “monitoring programs in place to ensure that that money is used effectively.”² However, the State Department didn’t explain what those “guardrails” or “monitoring practices” are and how they will ensure taxpayer money is not subject to waste, fraud, or abuse.

Then, on March 15, 2024, USAID Administrator, Samantha Power, announced an additional “\$25 million in humanitarian assistance for Haiti.”³ In the announcement, she stated, “[w]e require our partners to have robust safeguards and risk-mitigation systems in place, so that humanitarian aid reaches those who need it most.”⁴ However, she didn’t explain what those “safeguards and risk-mitigation systems” are and how they will ensure taxpayer money is not subject to waste, fraud, or abuse.

Knowing what oversight mechanisms will be used to monitor this collective \$58 million is important because of previous mismanagement of taxpayer dollars to Haiti.⁵ For example, the

¹ Press Release, Off. Of Press Relations, U.S. Admin. for Int’l Dev., *United States Providing Additional Humanitarian Assistance to Respond to Dire Humanitarian Needs in Haiti* (Mar. 11, 2024), <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/mar-11-2024-united-states-providing-additional-humanitarian-assistance-respond-dire-humanitarian-needs-haiti>.

² *Department Press Briefing – March 14, 2024*, U.S. DEP’T OF STATE (Mar. 14, 2024), <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-march-14-2024/>.

³ Press Release, Samantha Power, Administrator, U.S. Admin. for Int’l Dev., *United States Will Provide an Additional \$25 Million to Address Humanitarian Crisis in Haiti* (Mar. 15, 2024), <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/mar-15-2024-united-states-will-provide-additional-25-million-address-humanitarian-crisis-haiti>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Jake Johnston, *Where Does the Money Go? Eight Years of USAID Funding in Haiti*, CTR. FOR ECON. AND POL’Y RSCH. (Jan. 11, 2018), <https://cepr.net/where-does-the-money-go-eight-years-of-usaid-funding-in-haiti/> (For example, a 2013 report by the Center of Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) stated that “with few exceptions, Haitians and U.S. taxpayers are unable to verify how U.S. aid funds are being used on the ground in Haiti. USAID and its implementing partners have generally failed to make public the basic data identifying where funds go and how they are spent.” In 2016, this same group collaborated with the Haiti Advocacy Working Group and wrote a

Government Accountability Office (GAO) found in its March 2023 report titled *Haiti: USAID and State Should Improve Management and Assessment of Reconstruction Activities* that “[t]he USAID mission in Haiti does not fully track data on its local partnerships...which limits institutional knowledge about these efforts and understanding of results and lessons to inform future activities.”⁶ This report contains numerous examples of wasted taxpayer dollars in Haiti.⁷ GAO made four recommendations to USAID and one recommendation to State in its report. According to GAO, over a year later, all five recommendations remain open.⁸ Unfortunately, a poor track record of proper oversight and management is not the only cause for concern.

Current civil unrest in Haiti also raises serious concerns that the aid will not reach its intended recipients or be used for its intended purpose. The Associated Press reported that “gangs are blocking distribution routes and paralyzing the main port” while “attacking key institutions, burning police stations, shutting down the main international airport with gunfire and storming two prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.”⁹ On March 16, 2024, UNICEF announced that

report titled *A Critical Review of the US State Department’s 2015 Progress Report on Haiti*, which found reports on U.S. assistance to Haiti contained “omissions and deficiencies, including incomplete data, a failure to link projects and outcomes, and a failure to adequately identify mistakes and lessons learned.”)

⁶ U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., GAO-23-105211 *Haiti: USAID and State Should Improve Management and Assessment of Reconstruction Activities* (Mar. 16, 2023), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-106250.pdf> (see GAO Highlights page).

⁷ *Id.* at 15-29. (The examples of excessive cost and wasted taxpayer dollars spent in Haiti include, but are not limited to the following: First, in constructing the Caracol Industrial Park Power Plant, USAID was partially responsible for “fund[ing] the operation, maintenance, and energy distribution of the power plant for 5 years longer and \$28.6 million...more than planned.” Second, USAID was partially responsible for “fund[ing] the rehabilitation of five electrical substations, which took 8 months longer than planned and exceeded initial cost estimates by about \$2.2 million.” Third, USAID had a role in “spending about 1.5 years and roughly \$1 million” on a “rural roads rehabilitation” program that was “ultimately cancelled.” Fourth, the ongoing “Haiti Health Infrastructure Program” is ten years behind schedule and \$28.7 million over budget. Fifth, USAID spent “\$4.2 million on [a] feasibility study” for the construction of a “new port in the Cap- Haïtien Corridor” that ended up not being built. Sixth, USAID was partially responsible for “the New Settlement Program” which was completed after taking “about 5.5 years longer and cost \$28.1 million...more than initially planned.” Seventh, the United States was partially responsible for a “housing, community infrastructure, and plots construction” project which was “completed...4 years late and \$7.1 million...more than planned.” Finally, for “retaining wall construction” USAID “was not able to locate...the initial contract...final report...[or] the extent to which [the program] achieved intended results.”)

⁸ U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., *Haiti: USAID and State Should Improve Management and Assessment of Reconstruction Activities*, GAO-23-105211, (last accessed Apr. 5, 2023), <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105211> (The four open recommendations to USAID are for the Administrator to ensure: 1) “USAID/Haiti updates or develops strategic infrastructure plans using quality information, such as technical information and expertise”; 2) “that USAID/Haiti develops a process to track and assess consistent and complete results information for infrastructure activities, such as the final outputs, outcomes, costs, time frames, and lessons learned”; 3) “that USAID/Haiti establishes a process to completely and consistently track and analyze data on awards made to local organizations, such as the amount and percent of total funding awarded and the percent of total awards provided to these organizations”; and 4) “that USAID/Haiti systematically tracks information on the activities that the mission funds to strengthen organizational capacity of Haitian organizations, including which activities USAID funds, and basic information about these activities, such as key interventions, entities involved, results achieved, and lessons learned.” The one open recommendation for State is for the Secretary to “ensure that the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs conducts an evaluation of the effectiveness of its activities to develop the Haitian National Police.”)

⁹ Evens Sanon and Danica Coto, *Hunger Soars and Aid Dwindles as Gangs in Haiti Suffocate the Country*, AP NEWS, (Mar. 16, 2024, 3:30 PM) <https://apnews.com/article/haiti-aid-hunger-gangs-violence-famine-57a56fed77662f872d1e0a3e4b494733>.

“[a]rmed groups breached the city's main port a week ago, severing one of the capital's last remaining lifelines for food and supplies as the country edges closer to collapse. Currently, over 260 humanitarian-owned containers are controlled by armed groups at the port.”¹⁰ This includes “early childhood development and education and water equipment” stolen by gangs in Port-au-Prince.¹¹ Reportedly, these gangs are “obstructing access to most humanitarian aid.”¹²

In order for Congress to better understand what oversight mechanisms State intends to employ to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer money, and to ensure all taxpayer money not only reaches its intended recipients but is used for its intended purpose, please answer the following questions no later than April 19, 2024:

1. What are the “guardrails” and “monitoring programs” State allegedly has in place and how do they eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse? Please describe in detail and provide all records.
2. Please describe what components of the State Department are responsible for conducting oversight of taxpayer money in Haiti. In your response, include the title and ranks of government officials responsible for that oversight.
3. What steps has State taken to close out the recommendation GAO made in its March 2023 report? When does State expect to close out this recommendation?
4. Please provide a detailed description of the lessons learned in prior instances of State's failure to oversee taxpayer money provided to foreign recipients. In your description, precisely detail what oversight mechanisms State added in light of lessons learned to ensure taxpayer money reaches its intended recipients and is used for its intended purpose.
5. On March 16, 2024, UNICEF announced that supplies had been stolen by gangs in Port-au-Prince. Were any of those supplies supported by U.S. taxpayer money? If so, please provide both an inventory of the stolen items and the dollar value of the stolen items.¹³

¹⁰ UNICEF, *Critical supplies for children looted at the armed-group-controlled main port of Port-au-Prince: The incident further burdens an already collapsing health system in Haiti*, PRESS RELEASE (Mar. 16, 2024), <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/press-releases/critical-supplies-children-looted-armed-group-port-port-au-prince>. See also Caitlin Hu, et al., *UN Maternity Aid Looted in Port-au-Prince as Haiti Crisis Deepens*, CNN (Mar. 17, 2024, 1:04 AM), <https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/17/americas/haiti-unicef-child-aid-looted-intl-hnk/index.html>.

¹¹ Caitlin Hu, et al., *UN Maternity Aid Looted in Port-au-Prince as Haiti Crisis Deepens*, CNN (Mar. 17, 2024, 1:04 AM), <https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/17/americas/haiti-unicef-child-aid-looted-intl-hnk/index.html>.

¹² Char Adams, *How Humanitarian Aid is Affecting Haiti—and How Locals are Helping One Another*, NBC News (Mar. 15, 2024, 8:50 PM), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/humanitarian-aid-impacting-haiti-locals-are-helping-one-another-rcna143501>.

¹³ “Records” include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (e-mails, email attachments, and any other electronically-created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, recordings or memorialization of phone calls, voicemails, or recordings/records of verbal communications, and any drafts of official documents (regardless whether they resulted in final documents).

Thank you for your cooperation on this important matter. If you have any questions, please contact Jace Pimentel of my Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue highlight effect.

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget