



**Testimony on FY 2010 Foreign Assistance by
The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and
Catholic Relief Services to the
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
House Committee on Appropriations
March 23, 2009**



The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in the U.S., thank the Subcommittee for your leadership and the opportunity to present testimony on FY 2010 Foreign Operations appropriations. In this testimony, we share the Church's social teaching that informs our nation's moral responsibility to those in need throughout the world, as well as our priorities for how in morally appropriate ways the United States can promote human development, reduce poverty and improve stability in the world's poorest countries and communities.

USCCB and CRS appreciate the administration's proposed \$4.5 billion increase in its FY 2010 International Affairs budget outline which would put the United States on a path to double U.S. foreign assistance. This increase is especially critical for poor countries which are being hit hard by the global economic crisis, the impact of climate change, and the global food crisis. Experts predict that, this year alone, more than 50 million people in developing countries will be pushed into poverty. We hope that the Administration's budget request will detail sustained support for development assistance focused on poverty reduction.

USCCB and CRS recognize that the Appropriations Committee is operating under constraints in the midst of the economic crisis. However, increased support for development assistance is crucial to assist the poorest people in developing countries. Consequently, USCCB and CRS ask that, within the context of total Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill, at least \$3 billion in additional funds (above FY 2009 levels) be allocated to the following poverty-focused programs:

- a. HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis program (PEPFAR) that was recently reauthorized;
- b. Development and humanitarian assistance and emergency programs with a special attention to the most vulnerable people, such as women and children;
- c. Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA and ERMA);
- d. Peacekeeping programs;
- e. Millennium Challenge Corporation; and
- f. Programs of International Financial Institutions for poverty reduction and debt relief.

I. The Resources of the Catholic Church

The experience, relationships and teaching of the Church can help inform issues of foreign assistance. The Catholic Church has broad and deep **experience** combating poverty. CRS has direct experience as an implementer of U.S. foreign assistance in 100 countries around the world.

CRS programs address HIV and AIDS, health, education, civil society, food security, agriculture, emergency relief and peacebuilding. The Catholic Church in the United States also has abiding **relationships** and regular contact with the Church in developing countries, where our worldwide communion serves the needs of the poorest members of the human family. Finally, our Church has a rich body of **teaching** that offers principles that can help guide decisions on foreign assistance. These principles include:

The Life and Dignity of the Human Person: Based on our belief that each person is created in the image of God, the measure of every social institution, including foreign assistance, is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person. Foreign assistance must ultimately be about people; aid should promote human development and reduce poverty.

The Common Good and Participation: Governments have a special responsibility to foster the common good of all. People have a right to participate fully in the decisions that shape their lives, and governments should establish healthy relationships with civil society. Foreign aid should promote good governance, transparency, accountability and participation.

Option for the Poor: The measure of the justice of a society is how those who are poor or vulnerable are faring. Poverty destroys human potential; it breeds despair and violence to the detriment of human security. Foreign aid should give priority to the poorest countries and communities.

Peace: Peace is more than the absence of war; it is built on a foundation of justice. Lasting peace is not built by force of arms or a balance of forces. Countries coming out of conflict or in danger of falling into it require intensive assistance. Foreign aid should support peacekeeping operations. Development and humanitarian assistance should be under the direction of civilian authorities. Civilian agencies need additional resources and additional experienced staff.

II. Specific Poverty-focused Priority Programs Needing Additional Resources

HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria: USCCB and CRS welcomed the bipartisan consensus reflected in last year's PEPFAR reauthorization, which preserves its focus on saving lives, caring for the infected and the affected, and preventing the spread of this deadly disease, while authorizing a substantial increase in funding. The new legislation also contained important provisions to strengthen food and nutrition programs and the healthcare workforce in the affected countries. It retained a balanced approach in HIV prevention, which has proved highly effective in curbing the spread of infections in many countries, as well as an effective conscience clause. The Holy See estimates that the Catholic Church delivers 25% of all HIV-AIDS services worldwide. CRS has an extensive role as a PEPFAR implementer. We urge full funding of HIV/AIDS, TB, and Malaria programs at the authorized level and preservation of the bipartisan consensus that maintains the life-saving focus of PEPFAR.

Development, Humanitarian and Emergency Assistance funding provides skills training and basic services in education, health care, agriculture, microenterprise and rural development assistance to poor persons, especially vulnerable women and children. Emergency programs provide critical funding that saves lives in situations of conflict, severe poverty or crisis. We support changes adopted in previous years to the Andean Counter Drug Initiative in Colombia

that increase humanitarian and development aid, strengthen human rights, and reduce military assistance. Similarly, we urge that the Merida Initiative to combat lawlessness and drug trafficking in Mexico focus on human rights, civil society and humanitarian assistance, as well as law enforcement activities. In addition, investments in agricultural development are critical and complimentary to work supported through the Title II food aid programs included in agriculture appropriations. Food alone cannot bring food security; sufficient funding must be provided to invest in long-term development programs. Finally, we urge more flexible and consistent long-term funding for civilian-led reconstruction and development assistance in the poorest areas of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) needs additional funding for refugee programs in Africa, the Middle East (especially for Palestinian and Iraqi refugees), Colombia and other regions with large populations of refugees. This assistance enables humanitarian agencies to avert shortfalls in food, medicine and other vital supplies. The current economic crisis may fuel increased displacement of people; therefore, it is important that this account remain robust and that the Emergency Migration and Refugee Assistance Account (ERMA) be fully replenished.

Peacekeeping Operations are critical to the efforts of the international community to put an end to violence, civil war and the extreme suffering that they cause. It is imperative that they receive an increase in funding to stave off the disastrous reverses in development that have occurred in countries locked in conflict, such as Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The **Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)** reduces poverty through investments in long-term development that serve as a catalyst for economic growth. The program targets low-income countries that have achieved progress in democracy, rule of law and anti-corruption efforts and have invested in their people through health, education, and the protection of natural resources. The MCC adheres to strict standards of accountability and emphasizes country ownership with substantial civil society participation. Inadequate funding could undermine the MCC's ability to maintain its high standards of accountability and engagement, and prevent the MCC from developing new compacts with countries that have enacted difficult policy reforms and built capacity in anticipation of applying for MCC funding.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Debt Relief: Full funding of scheduled payments and clearance of arrears to multilateral development institutions are essential for poverty reduction and debt relief for many of the world's poorest countries. Arrears clearance is necessary to finance the U.S. share of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative and to avoid undercutting a program that the U.S. played a lead role in establishing.

Abortion and Coercion: It is important to preserve the Helms Amendment, prohibiting U.S. funding for abortion, and the Kemp-Kasten provision, prohibiting support of organizations involved in programs of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization. The latter provision should apply objectively to all organizations, including the UN Population Fund, as it is based on a longstanding international consensus that such coercive practices are crimes against women and violate human dignity. Addressing these concerns will also help strengthen bipartisan support for foreign aid.