



Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development
Office of International Justice and Peace

**Background on Poverty-Focused International Assistance
February 2013**

The [global economic and financial] crisis has not only affected families and businesses in the more economically advanced countries where it originated, creating a situation in which many people, especially the young, have felt disoriented and frustrated in their aspirations for a serene future, but it has also had a profound impact on the life of developing countries. We must not lose heart, but instead resolutely rediscover our way through new forms of commitment.

--Pope Benedict XVI, January 9, 2012

BACKGROUND:

The U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services strongly support international assistance for poverty-focused programs. This amounts to \$19.1 billion in Fiscal Year 2013, just over one-half percent (0.6%) of federal spending. These poverty-focused programs serve the poorest communities in the developing world. They support a wide range of life-saving and dignity-protecting activities, including: agricultural assistance so poor farmers can feed their families; drugs to extend the lives of people with HIV/AIDS; cost-effective vaccines to prevent diseases; and mosquito nets to avert malaria. These programs assist orphans and vulnerable children, feed people starving from famines like in Africa, and provide aid in places like Haiti devastated by disasters. International assistance provides peacekeepers to protect innocent civilians in places like Sudan and the Congo, and assistance to vulnerable migrants and refugees fleeing conflict or persecution in countries such as Syria and Iraq. Other funds provide debt relief to poor nations, freeing up local resources for education and poverty reduction. [See chart for programs supported by USCCB and CRS.]

In recent years, there has been a push in Congress to make deep, disproportionate spending cuts in “foreign aid” to reduce the deficit. Working with others, USCCB and CRS successfully resisted a House proposal to cut 13% from poverty-focused international assistance in the FY 2012 budget. Congress extended these higher FY 2012 assistance levels through March 2013. USCCB and CRS support reducing unsustainable future deficits, but reject making morally unacceptable cuts in programs that serve poor and vulnerable people in our nation and around the world.

USCCB and CRS POSITION:

The Church views international assistance as an essential tool to protect human life and dignity, advance solidarity with poorer nations, and enhance security throughout the world. Foreign aid is not simply an optional commitment; it is a moral responsibility to assist “the least of these” (Matthew 25).

In these difficult times of high budget deficits, the Church recognizes the need to reduce future unsustainable deficits. The federal budget is more than just numbers; it is also a moral document. It is a reflection of our national priorities. Our national budget must not be balanced by hurting the least fortunate of our brothers and sisters: the poorest of the poor overseas and the victims of disaster and conflict. Catholic Social Teaching offers clear moral guidance for setting our nation’s budgetary priorities. We support a “Circle of Protection” for the poorest and most vulnerable people.

Option for the Poor: This biblical mandate requires us to protect poor and vulnerable people. Poor people have the first claim on limited resources. The federal budget’s current modest allocation to poverty-focused international development and humanitarian assistance programs is a minimum if the United States is to respect its moral commitment to the “least among us.” Though generous in absolute terms, the United States ranks near

the bottom among donor nations as a percentage of our national wealth. And poverty-focused international assistance is just over **one-half percent (0.6%)** of the federal budget.

Solidarity: International assistance programs are an effective demonstration that we are “our brothers’ keeper.” They are also a vital recognition that our security and future are closely tied to the human dignity and life of all, especially those living in poverty. Reducing poverty and desperation contribute to global security and prosperity that benefit all of us. Developing countries especially need assistance at times of violent conflict and devastating natural disasters, such as famines, earthquakes, droughts, or floods. They need help building more resilient societies that are less vulnerable to climate change and conflict. The violence in Syria and the hunger and conflict in Mali and in other areas of Africa are compelling cases.

Stewardship: The U.S. Government should make these programs more effective, accountable, and transparent and is working to do that. It is particularly important to partner more with local civil society and faith-based groups that assist the poor directly and are often led by trusted leaders in their societies. In many parts of the developing world, faith-based development institutions offer health care, education, and community development, complementing government services. In some places they serve as the sole provider in emergencies and in areas where governments are weak. Civil society and faith-based groups help hold government leaders accountable for results and reduce corruption. In partnership with U.S. faith-based institutions, like Catholic Relief Services, local faith-based and civil society groups have produced effective, low-cost, and sustainable development successes throughout the developing world. Effective conscience protections are essential so that the religious community can make its substantial contributions to the common good.

Peace and the Common Good: The poorest countries of the world are often the most vulnerable to civil violence and war. U.S. international assistance must support peacekeeping missions designed to stop violence where it occurs. The independence of South Sudan, in which the U.S. played a key role, demonstrates the importance of proactive conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. Such programs can save lives and avoid the need to fund large emergency response programs. Long-term human security demands building the capacity of civil society and faith-based institutions to promote human development, protect human rights, and help build stable, vibrant societies. For example, aid to the Palestinian people addresses acute humanitarian needs at the same time that it builds Palestinian capacity for a state of their own; this aid enhances both Israeli security and the possibility of a just two-state solution that is in the best interests of both peoples.

ACTION REQUESTED:

In a time of fiscal restraints, Congress needs to give moral priority to programs that help the poor, both at home and abroad. Urge Congress to draw a “Circle of Protection” around “the least of these.” **At this critical time, the Catholic community makes two urgent requests of Congress:**

- (1) **Preserve and strengthen funding for poverty-focused development and humanitarian accounts that save lives and reduce crushing poverty in the FY 2013 and 2014 budgets.** [See accompanying chart.] These accounts must be protected from sequestration cuts or reductions that could arise during the deliberations on future budgets. Outside of these priority poverty-focused accounts, cuts to other parts of the broader International Assistance budget must not harm the poorest persons and communities. The plight of refugees fleeing Syria and Iraq and the continuing food insecurity and conflict in Mali and drought stricken areas of Africa are grim reminders of the lives at stake and of the need to adequately fund International Disaster Assistance and Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance.
- (2) Urge the House Foreign Affairs Committee leadership to **release the hold on FY 2012 assistance to the Palestinian people** so they can address humanitarian needs, reduce economic desperation, and strengthen their capacity to build institutions for a future state. The \$500 million in assistance is in the best interests of both Israelis and Palestinians who need a two-state solution to the longstanding conflict, a secure and recognized Israel living in peace alongside a viable and independent Palestinian state.

RESOURCES: Visit: www.usccb.org/about/international-justice-and-peace/ or www.usccb.org/globalpoverty/
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**POVERTY-FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT
and HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTS
SUPPORTED BY USCCB and CRS**



Funding Account Title (\$ in thousands) (Overseas Contingency Ops (OCO) funding included)	House Approps Cmte '13	Senate Approps Cmte '13	2013 CR*	Sequester cuts projection^
<i>State, Foreign Operations Appropriations (SFOPs)</i>				
Maternal Health and Child Survival (incl. vaccines)	605,550	678,968	605,550	-30,883
Nutrition	95,000	122,000	95,000	-4,845
Vulnerable Children (orphans and displaced children)	17,500	23,000	17,500	-893
HIV/AIDS (USAID Programs)	350,000	350,000	350,000	-17,850
Malaria and Other Infectious Diseases		1,155,000	1,033,000	-52,683
HIV/AIDS (State Funding/PEPFAR)	5,542,860	5,550,000	5,542,860	-282,686
Development Assistance (e.g., education, clean water)	2,519,950	3,050,000	2,519,950	-128,517
International Disaster Assistance	922,602	1,250,000	975,000	-49,725
Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)	1,690,400	2,300,000	1,875,100	-153,758
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA)	47,000	50,000	27,200	-1,387
Millennium Challenge Account (development projects)	898,200	898,200	898,200	-45,808
Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities	1,828,182	2,006,500	1,828,182	-93,237
Peacekeeping Operations	345,000	391,100	383,818	-19,575
International Development Association (incl. debt relief)	1,325,000	1,408,500	1,325,000	-67,575
SFOPs TOTAL	17,278,539	19,292,168	17,476,360	-949,422
<i>Agricultural Appropriations (Ag)</i>				
Food for Peace (Title II)	1,149,680	1,466,000	1,466,000	-74,766
McGovern-Dole	184,000	184,000	184,000	-9,384
AG TOTAL	1,329,000	1,650,000	1,650,000	-84,150
COMBINED TOTAL (~0.5% of budget)	18,607,539	20,942,168	19,126,360	-1,033,572

*These are FY 2012 figures which fund the government through March 27, 2013.

^This represents the 5.1% cut projected by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Summary of Message to Congress and Account Descriptions

In a time of austerity and fiscal restraints, we need to give moral priority to programs that help the poor, both at home and abroad. We urge Congress to **preserve and strengthen funding for international poverty-focused development and humanitarian programs** that save lives and reduce poverty in the FY 2013 and FY 2014 budget and appropriations. The current refugee crises in Syria and Mali illustrate the urgency of this funding, especially for humanitarian programs.

Maternal and Child Health programs provide proven life-saving help, such as newborn care, immunization, community treatment of pneumonia and nutrition programs that address the major killers of mothers and children in the developing world.

Nutrition programs help to improve overall nutrition during the most crucial periods of life such as pregnancy and the first years of a child's life.

Vulnerable Children programs address the special needs of displaced children and orphans.

HIV/AIDS PEPFAR (USAID Funding) funding focuses on prevention, care and treatment efforts, and the support of children affected by AIDS in over 90 countries.

Malaria and Other Infectious Diseases funding prepares for avian flu response and helps to prevent and treat HIV, malaria, TB, and other neglected tropical diseases. This fund is critical to prevent major health outbreaks.

HIV/AIDS (State Funding) funds PEPFAR, which saves millions of lives by providing HIV prevention efforts, care for families and children affected by family members with HIV/AIDS, and anti-retroviral treatment efforts. These programs also treat malaria, immunize people, and invest in research and development.

Development Assistance programs support an array of critical development activities, including education; agriculture; water and sanitation; microfinance, including women's savings' groups; climate change; feed the future; democracy promotion and good governance. These programs help promote human development, reduce vulnerabilities, and create stability in poor countries.

International Disaster Assistance funds emergency health, water, shelter and nutrition efforts through the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. It also funds disaster risk reduction, rehabilitation, transitions to development, and emergency food security.

Migration and Refugee Assistance protects refugees and internally displaced persons, helps them to repatriate when conflict ends or natural disaster responses permit, and to resettle to safe countries like the U.S.

Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance programs respond to humanitarian crises in places like Mali and Syria.

Millennium Challenge Account provides U.S. funding to countries with a commitment to good governance; in particular, it funds infrastructure projects.

Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities deploy peacekeeping troops to protect civilians in places like Sudan and Somalia.

Peacekeeping Operations finances the training and equipping of peacekeeping troops before they deploy to conflict countries and the professionalization of militia groups into formal military forces committed to protecting their people.

International Development Association in the World Bank provides debt relief for some of the poorest countries in the world.

Food for Peace (Title II) provides international food assistance to address emergency needs following a drought, flood, or other shock. It also strengthens the long-term capacity of rural communities and small farmers to withstand shocks and become more self-sufficient.

McGovern-Dole provides school lunches and take-home food rations to encourage students, especially girls, to attend school.

Accounts in italics are subaccounts of Global Health Programs (USAID).