



TALKING POINTS - February 2013

PRESERVE POVERTY-FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



What is the Church's position on U.S. international assistance programs?

The Church views international assistance as an essential tool to promote human life and dignity, advance solidarity with poorer nations, and enhance human security in our world. International assistance is not simply an optional commitment; it is a moral responsibility to assist “the least of these.” Especially in a time of austerity and fiscal restraints, we should give priority to programs for the poorest people in the poorest places on earth.

What does the Church bring to the issue of international assistance?

First, the Church in the United States has broad **experience** reaching out to our brothers and sisters in need through Catholic institutions, including Catholic Relief Services, our official relief and development agency that works in about 100 countries. Second, the Catholic Church in our nation has strong **relationships** with the Church in many developing countries and is guided by their everyday experience. Third, our Church has a rich body of **teaching** that offers principles that can help our nation prioritize limited resources.

Why is foreign assistance important to the United States?

Generous and effective foreign assistance is a moral imperative. It expresses our values as a nation and is a requirement of United States leadership in the world. Poverty-focused assistance improves global security and stability, thus contributing to the security of our own nation. As Pope Benedict XVI taught in his 2009 World Day of Peace Message, “to fight poverty is to build peace.”

What are current levels of funding for poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance?

The FY2012 budget, extended through March 2013, allocates **\$19.1 billion** for poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance programs that USCCB and CRS support. These funds support life-saving programs, including: development, humanitarian, and emergency assistance; child survival and maternal health; HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment; agriculture and food security; water and sanitation; health; peacekeeping; migration and refugee services; and infectious disease control. Contrary to popular misperceptions of such aid being 20% or more of the budget, the \$19 billion in poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance represents just over **one-half percent (0.6%) of the federal budget**.

What does the future look like for poverty-focused international assistance funding?

In February and March, Congress will deliberate on sequestration, a long-term budget agreement, and the FY 2013 and 2014 budgets. Large federal budget deficits have led some in Congress to consider deep cuts to poverty-focused international assistance. Sequestration alone would cut our priority accounts by around 5%. These cuts to life-saving international assistance will cost lives. The Church supports fiscal stewardship and reducing future unsustainable deficits, but insists on preserving programs that save lives and reduce crushing poverty as essential moral priorities.

What guidance does Catholic Social Teaching offer about budget priorities?

The federal budget is more than just numbers; it is a moral document, reflecting our moral priorities. Catholic Social Teaching insists people living in poverty or suffering from diseases or disasters have compelling moral claims. Although U.S. international assistance is the largest among donor countries in absolute terms, our nation consistently ranks at or near the bottom of donor nations as a percentage of U.S. gross national product (about 0.2%). International assistance delivered by USAID and the State Department only amounts to 1% of the federal budget while the core poverty-focused development and humanitarian accounts supported by the USCCB and CRS represent about one-half of that. Budget cuts that target the poorest people on earth will deepen global inequalities that can threaten stability and security and will produce great pain with little gain. Our nation must not unfairly balance its budget on the backs of the poor overseas. Careless cuts cost lives.

Can U.S. poverty-focused development assistance be improved?

The U.S. Government can and should make its programs more efficient, accountable, and transparent; it is working to do that. Cuts to poverty-focused foreign assistance would undermine international assistance reform. It is particularly important to partner more with local civil society and faith-based groups who assist the poor directly. These groups help the poor take charge of their own development and are often led by trusted

leaders in their societies. In the developing world, faith-based development institutions offer health care, education and community development in areas where government often has no effective presence. They also help hold government leaders accountable for results and reduce corruption. In partnership with American 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. It is important to preserve consciences clauses in assistance programs so faith-based groups can serve the common good.

How does poverty-focused assistance relate to conflict prevention?

Poor countries such as Mali are often the most vulnerable to civil violence and war. U.S. international assistance is an investment in peace and stability. In addition, the United States must support peacekeeping missions designed to stop the violence. The successful transition to independence for South Sudan, in which the U.S. played a key role, demonstrates the importance of proactive conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. These programs can save lives and avoid the need to fund large emergency response programs.

The United States must maintain its commitment to conflict prevention programs that promote peacebuilding, civil society participation, and strong democratic government institutions that are accountable to their people. Long-term progress and human security demand building the capacity of civil society and faith-based institutions that promote human development, protect human rights, and help build stable, vibrant societies.

Aren't other priorities more urgent?

The current famine in Africa and the conflicts in the Mali and Syria are grim reminders of the lives at stake. Developing countries need assistance at times of devastating natural and human-caused disasters, such as earthquakes, droughts, or wars, and over time with building more resilient societies less vulnerable to disaster or violent conflict. Millions are migrating to find food; millions are fleeing violence. Ironically, the emergency accounts that address these needs have in recent years been targeted for major reductions.

Can't we save money by cutting assistance to the Palestinians?

To "punish" the Palestinians for winning UN recognition, some in Congress have put a hold on funding for the Palestinian people. This action damages U.S. efforts to seek a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land through a two-state solution by undermining assistance that is essential for humanitarian purposes and for building capacity for a future Palestinian state. This is not in the long-term interests of either Israelis or Palestinians. About \$500 million of FY 2012 funds for Palestinian assistance remains on hold including funds for CRS programs that train youth in nonviolence, employ impoverished parents, and help traumatized children.

What is our message to Congress?

In a time of fiscal restraints, we need to give moral priority to programs that help the poor, both at home and abroad. We need to draw a "Circle of Protection" around efforts to serve the "least of these." **At this critical time, the Catholic community makes two urgent international requests of Congress:**

- (1) To 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.] 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 their 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.

Where can I find more information on foreign assistance?

Visit www.usccb.org/globalpoverty/ and www.usccb.org/about/international-justice-and-peace/ or contact: Steve Hilbert, Office of International Justice and Peace, USCCB, 202-541-3149, shilbert@usccb.org.



**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).