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March 23, 2012

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee for
State and Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee for
State and Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

As you deliberate on the FY 2013 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs budget, we urge you to protect funding for lifesaving poverty-focused international humanitarian and development programs as listed on the attached table.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) continue to acknowledge the difficult fiscal challenges that Congress faces. We support fiscal responsibility and urge you to pursue this goal in morally responsible ways. We must draw a “circle of protection” around the most vulnerable at home and abroad and the programs that serve them.

The President’s budget request would increase the overall International Affairs Budget by 2.4% in fiscal year 2013 relative to fiscal year 2012, but would cut poverty-focused programs. The poverty-focused programs advance solidarity with poorer nations and enhance global security. They save lives by curing and preventing diseases, making farmers’ fields more productive, caring for orphans whose lives hang in the balance, feeding people victimized by natural and man-made disasters, and housing and caring for refugees. Your leadership to protect these accounts is more important than ever given the current debate in the House.

We urge you to increase funding to these programs because careless cuts cost lives. We are particularly concerned about the President’s proposed cuts to the following accounts: Migration and Refugee Assistance, HIV/AIDS, other health and nutrition programs, and International Disaster Assistance. While we appreciate our nation’s fiscal challenges, the current economic crisis disproportionately impacts the world’s poorest people. Given inflation and high food prices, neither they nor we can afford cuts to these life-saving accounts.

USCCB and CRS bring three assets to this issue. First, the rich body of Catholic Social Teaching gives priority to our poorest brothers and sisters in allocating scarce resources. Second, our two institutions have deep and abiding relationships and partnerships with the Church in developing countries. The Church is a trusted institutional presence that enjoys

Letter to Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Graham
March 23, 2012
Page 2

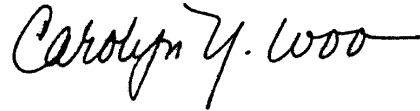
extensive reach, including in remote communities. Third, for 68 years CRS has successfully implemented humanitarian and development programs in one hundred countries across the world, often in partnership with the U.S. government. This experience provides insight into State and Foreign Operations assistance programs.

USCCB and CRS are committed to working with Congress and the Administration to meet the U.S. imperative to increase poverty-focused international assistance and to reform these programs to improve the lives of those in greatest need.

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo
President
Catholic Relief Services