



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

**Background on International Poverty-Reducing
Humanitarian and Development Assistance - January 2022**

“Despite numerous efforts aimed at constructive dialogue between nations, the deafening noise of war and conflict is intensifying. While diseases of pandemic proportions are spreading, the effects of climate change and environmental degradation are worsening, the tragedy of hunger and thirst is increasing, and an economic model based on individualism rather than on solidary sharing continues to prevail... the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth constantly make themselves heard, pleading for justice and peace.” - Pope Francis, World Day of Peace, 2022

BACKGROUND:

U.S. sponsored international poverty-reducing humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding assistance has provided opportunities for countless millions around the world to move out of poverty. Of the more than \$4 trillion U.S. federal budget, Congress allocates half of 1% towards poverty-reducing international aid with strong bipartisan support. This small fraction of the federal budget supports the poorest and most vulnerable communities around the world through agricultural assistance to help farmers feed their families; medicines to ensure people living with HIV remain healthy; cost-effective vaccines to prevent diseases; and mosquito nets to avert malaria. Moreover, these funds assist orphans and vulnerable children; early childhood development; people facing the risk of famine and populations devastated by conflicts; communities at risk of increasing floods, droughts, and other climate change impacts, and peacekeepers to protect innocent civilians.

While U.S. sponsored international poverty-reducing humanitarian and development aid has saved millions of lives, incredible challenges remain. COVID-19 has severely undermined development progress. 5.5 million children have lost their primary or secondary caregiver while the number of children in child labor has risen to 160 million worldwide. At its peak, more than 1.5 billion students were out of school due to shutdowns. Conflict as well as political and economic crises are also disrupting progress, driving more than 84 million people from their homes, more than ever before. Lastly, climate change and environmental degradation continue to threaten and impact the poor and marginalized disproportionately. Together, COVID-19, conflict, and climate change have pushed 45 million people to the brink of famine while more than 800 million people, over 10 percent of the world’s population, go to bed hungry each night.

USCCB and CRS POSITION:

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) strongly support international poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance. USCCB and CRS support international assistance because it is effective in upholding the sacredness and dignity of all human life and nurturing peaceful and just societies. In Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis reminds us all that, “What we need in fact are states and civil institutions that are present and active, that look beyond the free and efficient working of certain economic, political or ideological systems, and are primarily concerned with individuals and the common good.” The Church views international aid as an essential tool for

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promoting human life and dignity, reducing poverty, advancing global solidarity, and enhancing peace and security throughout the world. International assistance is a moral responsibility to assist “the least of these” (Matthew 25). Therefore, assistance must be an expression of our solidarity with all people living in poverty, not an exercise in short-term self-interest, or self-promotion.

CRS operates in over 110 countries and is a key implementing partner of the U.S. government. Among numerous programs around the world, CRS provides food assistance to conflict affected people in South Sudan and Ethiopia; supports education in Honduras; delivers emergency assistance to vulnerable families in Iraq and Afghanistan; provides support to children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS in Kenya; works to improve maternal and newborn health in Ghana; and helps Rohingya refugees transition to sturdier shelters in Bangladesh.

USCCB and CRS’ experience affirms the idea that the U.S. can play a constructive role in advancing peace, justice, and wellbeing. The numerous global challenges we face today demand a strong U.S. response. U.S. leadership will be critical to end the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for future health crises; care for our common home and address climate change; mitigate human suffering and address the root causes of conflict and instability; and strengthen local capacity to bring about transformational change.

STATE OF PLAY:

Fiscal Year 2022 started on October 1, 2021, but Congress has yet to pass final appropriations to fund the government. Instead, Congress has passed two Continuing Resolutions to fund the government at Fiscal Year 2021 levels. The current Continuing Resolution expires on February 18, 2022. It is unclear whether Congress will be able to reach an agreement on final Fiscal Year 2022 funding before this deadline. If Congress cannot reach an agreement, they will have to pass another short term Continuing Resolution or a year-long Continuing Resolution. Further delaying final appropriations impacts effective delivery of critical humanitarian and development assistance and a year-long Continuing Resolution would not include \$4 billion in additional humanitarian and development assistance included in the proposed House and Senate bills. Congress has a number of legislative priorities, but it is critical that they pass the final Fiscal Year 2022 funding in February so as to not lose these additional funds. We must stay engaged in the Fiscal Year 2022 process until the end to ensure the U.S. government continues to support assistance that saves lives, reduces poverty, addresses the root causes of conflicts and migration, and promotes peace.

ACTION REQUESTED:

Ask your member of Congress to urge Congressional leadership to pass Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations now and to ensure the highest funding levels possible for international poverty-reducing development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding assistance (See chart of accounts supported by USCCB and CRS).

RESOURCES:

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