



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

**Background on Poverty-Focused International Assistance  
February 2012**

*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 2012, just over one-half percent (.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. 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.]

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 poverty focused international assistance in FY 2012 by 13%, on top of an 8% cut made the previous year. USCCB and CRS support reducing unsustainable future deficits, but reject making morally unacceptable disproportionate 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 promote 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 reflects and defines our 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 of one percent** 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 devastating natural disasters, such as famines, earthquakes, droughts, or floods, as well as with building more resilient societies that are less vulnerable to climate change and conflict. The famine in East Africa is a compelling case.

**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 recent successful referendum in Southern 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 austerity and fiscal restraints, Congress needs to give moral priority to programs that help the poor, both at home and abroad. Urge Congress to preserve and strengthen funding for poverty-focused development and humanitarian programs that save lives and reduce crushing poverty. Call on Congress to promote effective conscience protections to assure faith-based organizations can serve the common good. (See chart for a detailed list of poverty-focused accounts supported by USCCB and CRS.)

Also ask Congress to preserve assistance to the Palestinian people in order to address their humanitarian needs, reduce economic desperation, and strengthen their capacity to build institutions for a future state. This 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.

If cuts are mandated in the broader Foreign Assistance budget, we urge Congress to make cuts in programs that do not serve the poorest persons and communities, and instead to give priority to those elements of programs that serve the poorest. For example, in the Economic Support Fund, assistance for Sudan and Haiti must be retained. In addition, the civilian capacity at the U.S. Agency for International Development needs to be maintained to effectively carry out these programs. If cuts are contemplated in other assistance programs, we ask Congress to preserve essential help for the poorest people in the poorest places on earth. Urge Congress to draw a “Circle of Protection” around “the least of these.”

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



<b><u>FUNDING ACCOUNT TITLE (\$ in thousands)</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2010<sup>1</sup></u></b>	<b><u>FY 2011<sup>2</sup></u></b>	<b><u>FY 2012<sup>3</sup></u></b>	<b><u>FY10-12 %Diff</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2013<sup>4</sup></u></b>
<i>State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Budget:</i>					
Child Survival and Maternal Health (including vaccines)	549,000	unknown	unknown	~ 4%	
Vulnerable Children (orphans and displaced children)	15,000	unknown	unknown	~ 4%	
HIV/AIDS (USAID Programs)	350,000	unknown	unknown	~ 4%	
Other Infectious Diseases (neglected tropical diseases)	981,000	unknown	unknown	~ 4%	
Global Health and Child Survival (includes PEPFAR)	5,359,000	5,334,310	5,542,860	3%	
Development Assistance (e.g. Feed the Future, climate change)	2,520,000	2,518,952	2,519,950	0%	
International Disaster Assistance	1,305,000	863,270	975,000	-25%	
Transition Initiatives (post-conflict countries)	55,000	54,890	56,695	3%	
Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)	1,850,000	1,686,620	1,875,100	1%	
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance	45,000	49,000	27,200	-40%	
Millennium Challenge Account (development projects)	1,105,000	898,200	898,200	-19%	
Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities	2,221,500	1,883,931	1,828,182	-18%	
Peacekeeping Operations	331,500	304,390	383,818	15%	
International Development Association (including debt relief)	1,334,500	1,232,530	1,325,000	-1%	
Debt Restructuring	60,000	49,900	12,000	-80%	
<i>Agricultural Appropriations Budget:</i>					
P.L. 480 Title II Food for Peace	1,840,000	1,497,000	1,466,000	-20%	
McGovern-Dole International Food for Education	209,500	199,101	184,000	-12%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 20,131,000</b>	<b>-8%</b>	<b>\$19,071,817</b>	<b>-5%</b>	
	(about 0.6% of budget)				

Unknown as of February 1, 2012

<sup>1</sup> FY 2010 Enacted Budget including Supplemental

<sup>2</sup> FY 2011 Enacted Budget. Unknown sub-accounts flat-funded in FY 2011.

<sup>3</sup> FY 2012 Enacted Budget. Unknown sub-accounts assume same change as overall account.

<sup>4</sup> FY 2013 President's Proposed Budget.

## 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 poverty-focused development and humanitarian programs** that save lives and reduce poverty in the FY 2013 budget. The current famine in the Horn of Africa is a grim reminder of the lives at stake.

*Child Survival and Maternal 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.

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

*HIV/AIDS* funding focuses on prevention, care and treatment efforts, and the support of children affected by AIDS in over 90 countries.

*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.

**Global Health and Child Survival (Department of State)** funds PEPFAR, which save millions of lives by providing HIV prevention efforts (with an emphasis on abstinence and behavior change), care for families and children affected by family members with HIV/AIDS, and anti-retroviral treatment efforts that allow people to live productive lives. These programs also treat malaria, immunize people across the globe, and invest in research and development.

**Development Assistance** programs support an array of activities, including education, agriculture, water and sanitation, small enterprise, climate change, democracy promotion and good governance. These programs help promote human development and 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.

**Transition Initiatives** help countries in or emerging from conflict to rebuild communities and strengthen government structures; it bridges the gap between emergency relief and longer-term development.

**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 Sudan and Iraq.

**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, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**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.

**Debt Restructuring** funds relieve debt burdens for the poorest countries freeing up resources to invest more in education and health care.

**P.L. 480 Title II Food for Peace** provides food to people struck by emergencies and disasters around the world. It also provides development-oriented resources to help improve the long-term food security of needy people.

**McGovern-Dole International Food for Education** funds preschool and school feeding programs; supports maternal, infant, and child nutrition programs for pregnant women, nursing mothers, infants and children.

*Accounts in italics are subaccounts of Global Health & Child Survival (USAID).*