

TRADE: Shaping trade policies so that poverty reduction and development are priorities

When the Honduran government entered a trade agreement that opened its markets to U.S. imports in the early 1990's, Maria Angeles Amaya of Santa Cruz de Yojoa lost her rice farm. Honduran rice farming could not compete with the low prices of the U.S.-subsidized rice that was flooding their country. Growers such as Maria and her husband lost their livelihoods and had to leave their communities to find work elsewhere. What was once a source of reliable income that allowed farmers to afford education and healthcare and meet other family needs had become a source of poverty.

The Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty calls for the U.S. to make overcoming poverty central to trade policy, starting with agriculture.

Policy Goals:

- Reform current U.S. farm programs to reduce payments, target support to small and medium-sized farms, and eliminate farm supports that make it difficult for farmers in poor countries to compete.
- Include environmental and labor provisions in U.S. bilateral and regional trade agreements to protect vulnerable workers and God's creation.
- Promote income and employment opportunities for small farmers, farm-workers and rural communities by supporting the initiative in the World Trade Organization to preserve and strengthen "special and differential treatment" for poor countries.
- Encourage broad public debate about the human dimensions of trade and open negotiations to representatives of the poor and other affected groups.
- Make sure there is coordination and consistency among trade, aid and debt policies to help overcome poverty and combat hunger.



AID: Providing adequate funding for development programs and improving their effectiveness

For generations, Mulalem Belachew's family and village have struggled with drought in Ethiopia. Through Catholic Relief Services and the U.S. government's Food for Peace program, he and his village have transformed their once-eroded hillside by terracing the land to capture water, cultivating drought resistant seeds, and building wells that make it easier to care for their homes and animals. This long-term development assistance has helped the families of Mulalem's village turn their lives around. They are less dependent on emergency food and are able to live in dignity with hope for the future.

U.S. foreign assistance is most visible when tragic emergencies happen, such as the brutal tsunami in Asia. However, even when there is no crisis, U.S. aid is essential to help fund long-term strategies to combat poverty and tackle more systemic problems—providing education for children, establishing agricultural practices that help family farmers resist drought and disasters, supporting banking programs that help marginalized women support themselves and their children. U.S. aid to help poor communities both weather emergencies and become self sufficient for the long term is key to reducing global poverty.

The Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty calls for our nation to increase and reform development aid to poor countries to improve the lives and dignity of all God's children.

Policy Goals:

- Target assistance to the poorest countries and maximize the share of new development assistance to the poorest countries that is provided as grants, rather than loans.
- Increase and reform assistance to developing countries to help meet the Millennium Development Goals, international targets for reducing by half the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.
- Support initiatives that combat corruption and improve transparency in aid programs.
- Make sure there is coordination and consistency among trade, aid and debt policies to help overcome poverty and combat hunger.

DEBT: Eliminating the debt of the poorest countries

The mothers who have lined up outside of the Consolata Sisters Dispensary in Tanzania are waiting. They are waiting to find out if the babies in their arms are HIV-positive like themselves. They are waiting for medical care. And along with the rest of the 25 million people living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa, they are waiting for policies and programs that will help stop the pandemic that is sweeping the continent.



But because they live in one of the world's poorest and most indebted countries, these women and their children will wait a long time.

Despite initiatives advocated by our Church and others to reduce the foreign debt of the world's poorest countries over the last several years, many countries still have heavy debt burdens. The 34 poorest African nations – a majority of the world's least developed countries - had a combined foreign debt of \$106 billion in 2002¹. Because they must make payments on this debt, it is nearly impossible for many poor countries to invest adequately in HIV/AIDS care and prevention, to feed their people in times of natural disaster and conflict, and at the same time to foster development that is essential for people to rise out of poverty.

The Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty calls for the U.S. to promote greater debt relief and reforms that pave the way for development.

Policy Goals:

- Eliminate the existing foreign debt of the poorest countries without reducing future assistance to poor countries. Money that would have gone to debt payment must be redirected to health, education and other poverty reduction programs.
- Promote transparency and participation by civil society in debt cancellation programs to help ensure the benefits actually reach poor families and children.
- Make sure there is coordination and consistency among trade, aid and debt policies to help overcome poverty and combat hunger.

ACTION: Four ways you can act on the Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty

As followers of Jesus, we want our brothers and sisters throughout the world to "live in peace" and to have at least the basic necessities to live in dignity. Recognizing the gift of God's Spirit at work in the world, we must do our part by putting our faith to work for effective measures to end the suffering and poverty of our sisters and brothers. As part of the Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty you can:



- **Pray** for people throughout the world seeking to rise from the indignities of poverty...for U.S. policies that can help make it happen...for all who stand in solidarity with the world's poor.
- **Learn** about Catholic Social Teaching, U.S. economic policies, and the world's poor. Go to the websites on the back page for a wide range of background materials.
- **Educate** people in your parish and community about Catholic Social Teaching, U.S. economic policies and the world's poor. Visit the websites on the back page for an ever-expanding supply of resources and informational material on the campaign, its issues and how to respond.
- **Advocate** by contacting your elected officials to make the case for trade, aid and debt policies that overcome poverty and promote development for impoverished people. To receive regular action alerts on specific policies, visit the websites listed on the back page.
- **Ask the question:** how will the decisions of U.S. policy makers impact the poor, both in the United States and overseas?



1. Source: UN Conference on Trade and Development, 2004.

Next Step:

Go to: www.usccb.org/globalpoverty or
www.catholicrelief.org/globalpoverty

When you visit the Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty website you will find free, down-loadable resources including:

- Resources for prayer, worship and preaching
- Educational materials on Catholic teaching, global poverty, and economic policy issues for adults and small faith communities, students and religious education classes, youth groups, young adults, campus ministry programs, and others
- Stories that illustrate the human face of global poverty
- Action Alerts to help you advocate on specific policies

For more information on the Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty contact:

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A Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty:

Trade • Aid • Debt



Why a Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty?

If a brother or a sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them "go in peace, keep warm and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James 2:15-16

In a world where nearly half of our sisters and brothers live in poverty, how can we say "go in peace" to a Sudanese child who has lost her parents in war? How can we say "keep warm" to an Indonesian brother and sister left homeless in the wake of a tsunami? How can we say "eat well" to a Haitian family struggling to survive in one of the poorest nations on earth?

As believers, we cannot. And because disasters and emergencies hit the poor hardest, people of faith are quick to respond generously with food for the hungry, shelter and clothing for the displaced, medical care for the suffering.

But even our generous responses to such disasters are not sufficient to address the pervasive poverty experienced by our brothers and sisters around the world. We must also work against the causes of global poverty and deprivation so that those who are currently poor can live in dignity.

This ultimately requires U.S. policies to promote development for impoverished people and to overcome poverty and its devastating effects.

And it requires people of faith to call upon our elected officials and policy makers to make genuine human development for the poorest people and nations a top U.S. policy priority.



Acting on Our Faith

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) invite Catholics throughout the U.S. to join us in our *Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty* as we advocate for U.S. policies that foster economic and social development for people living in poverty throughout the world.

The campaign focuses on three areas of U.S. economic policy:

- **Trade:** Shaping U.S. trade policies so that overcoming poverty and promoting human development are central priorities;
- **Aid:** Supporting effective programs that foster long-term development and empowerment of the poor;
- **Debt:** Eliminating the debt of the poorest countries in ways that reduce poverty and promote human dignity.

This campaign begins with an essential theme of Catholic social teaching: the preferential option for the poor. This teaching is rooted in Jesus' special concern for the "least" among us. It compels Catholics to ask basic questions of U.S. policy makers: How do our foreign policies affect the world's poor? Do they alleviate poverty or exacerbate it? Do they foster development or impede it?

As citizens in a powerful democracy and affluent nation we have the right to raise these questions. As people of faith we have the responsibility to work for answers that protect the lives and dignity of all God's children.



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