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February 14, 2011

House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in the United States, urge you to preserve poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance. Especially in a time of austerity and fiscal restraints, the poor have a special moral claim on limited financial resources.

The proposed Continuing Resolution makes over 26% in cuts for poverty-focused international assistance, but only 2.6% in cuts overall. Shared sacrifice is one thing; it is another to make disproportionate cuts in programs that serve the most vulnerable. It is morally unacceptable for our nation to balance its budget on the backs of the poor at home and abroad.

We need to give particular priority to programs that protect the poor, who are the least able to cope with budget cuts. Priority poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance accounts in the FY 2011 President's request total \$20.25 billion, only 0.6% of the federal budget and only one-third of all U.S. international assistance to the developing world. (See chart for detailed list of poverty-focused accounts supported by USCCB and CRS.)

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 assistance is not simply an optional commitment; it is a moral responsibility to assist "the least of these." For over 50 years, Catholic Relief Services has partnered with the United States Government to implement some of these priority programs. CRS knows from experience how effectively they can save lives and help the poor achieve their human potential.

These priority programs support a wide range of life-saving and dignity-preserving activities, including: agricultural assistance to poor farmers; drugs for people living with HIV and tuberculosis; cost-effective vaccines for preventable diseases; assistance to orphans and vulnerable children; mosquito nets to prevent malaria; food aid for famines, emergencies, and development; emergency health care, shelter, and reconstruction in disaster-devastated places like Haiti; peacekeepers to protect innocent civilians such as in Sudan and the Congo; assistance to migrants and refugees fleeing conflict or persecution; and debt relief for poor nations.

Cuts at the level being considered will result in the loss of innocent lives: persons with HIV no longer able to access life-saving anti-retroviral medications; refugees and victims of natural disaster succumbing to starvation and hunger-related illnesses; and poor families unable to grow

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what they need to survive. These funding reductions will also disrupt existing programs mid-stream, which undermines the impact of the program, the capacity of local partners, and ultimately the moral credibility of United States.

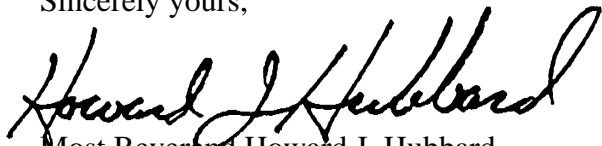
Instead of these proposed cuts, we urge Congress to find resources elsewhere, in programs that do not serve the poorest persons and communities. Even within accounts not on the attached list, however, great care to protect the poor must be taken. For example, in the Economic Support Fund, assistance for Sudan and Haiti and other poverty-focused programs must be retained. In addition, the civilian capacity at the U.S. Agency for International Development requires the full support necessary to effectively carry out these programs.

We do strongly approve of this bill's restoration of the Mexico City Policy against funding groups that perform or promote abortion, and its denial of funding to the U.N. Population Fund which supports a program of coerced abortion and involuntary sterilization in China. Unfortunately, the Continuing Resolution also makes dramatic cuts that are life-threatening.

In times of fiscal restraint, shared sacrifice demands that the entire budget be examined, including defense. As the bishops of the United States said in 2011, "Maintaining a strong military is only one component of our national security. A much broader, long-term understanding of security is needed. In a world where one-fifth of the population survives on less than \$1 per day, where some twenty countries are involved in major armed conflict, and where poverty, corruption, and repressive regimes bring untold suffering to millions of people, we simply cannot remain indifferent. ... Our nation must join with others in addressing policies and problems that provide fertile ground in which terrorism can thrive."

At a minimum, we urge you to restore funding to the poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance accounts on the attached list back to the FY 2011 request level. USCCB and CRS are committed to working with the Congress to meet the U.S. imperative to preserve poverty-focused international assistance to improve the lives of those in greatest need. Our commitment to human life and dignity demands no less.

Sincerely yours,



Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman,
Committee on International Justice and Peace



Ken Hackett
President
Catholic Relief Services

Encl.



POVERTY-FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT
and HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTS
SUPPORTED BY USCCB and CRS



<u>FUNDING ACCOUNT TITLE (\$ in thousands)</u>	<u>FY 2011¹</u>	<u>CR Cuts²</u>	<u>% Cut</u>
Child Survival and Maternal Health (including vaccines)	700,000	unknown*	
Vulnerable Children (orphans and displaced children)	15,000	unknown*	
HIV/AIDS (USAID Programs)	350,000	unknown*	
Other Infectious Diseases (neglected tropical diseases)	1,140,000	unknown*	
Development Assistance (including Feed the Future)	2,980,896	-1,207,100	-40.5%
International Disaster Assistance	860,700	-431,000	-50.1%
Transition Initiatives (post-conflict countries)	48,000	-3,365	-7.0%
Migration and Refugee Assistance	1,605,400	-582,222	-36.3%
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance	45,000	-365	-0.8%
Global Health and Child Survival (includes PEPFAR)	5,500,000	-654,300	-11.9%
Millennium Challenge Account (development projects)	1,279,700	-489,700	-38.3%
P.L. 480 Title II Food for Peace	1,690,000	-687,000	-40.7%
McGovern-Dole International Food for Education	209,500	-109,500	-52.3%
Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities	2,182,300	-283,800	-13.0%
Peacekeeping Operations	285,950	19,050	+6.7%
International Development Association (including debt relief)	1,285,000	-342,695	-26.7%
Debt Restructuring	70,000	-39,900	-57.0%
TOTAL	20,247,446		-26.7%

*Cuts included in larger account;
 impact on these subaccounts unknown.

(about 0.6% of the federal budget)

¹ FY 2011 Administration Request

² Proposed House Continuing Resolution (CR)