

**Testimony on FY 2009 Foreign Assistance by
The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services to the
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
House Committee on Appropriations
March 20, 2008**

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the relief and development agency of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, thank the Subcommittee for the opportunity to present testimony on the FY 2009 International Affairs appropriations. During this election year, our nation's global role and commitment to foreign assistance are under intense scrutiny. In this testimony we share the values of the Church's social teaching that underline what we believe to be our nation's moral responsibility to those in need around the world. Our reflections are informed by the daily on-the-ground work of CRS in 99 countries.

I. Specific Priorities

Based on our experience, we offer the following guidance on specific priorities:

- \$10 billion for programs under the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008;
- \$2.25 billion for the Millennium Challenge Corporation;
- \$4.7 billion for Development and Humanitarian Assistance;
- \$1.3 billion for Debt Relief through the World Bank's International Development Association;
- \$875 million for UN/Africa Union Hybrid peacekeeping mission to Darfur, Sudan and an increase in funding for the UNMIS mission in Sudan to the FY 08 level of \$241.6 million;
- Full funding for peacekeeping in other volatile countries, i.e. Lebanon, the DRC and Haiti;
- \$295 million for building Palestinian institutions for a future state and addressing urgent humanitarian needs with appropriate accountability that does not hamper or delay the delivery of aid;
- At least \$2.1 billion for reconstruction and long term development needs in Iraq;
- \$915 million for development and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan (including the FY 08 supplemental) with a priority on long term poverty reduction and monitoring of infrastructure projects to assure they stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty;
- \$345 million as per the President's request for humanitarian and development efforts in Darfur and Southern Sudan;
- \$1.7 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) and replenishment of Emergency Refugee Migration Assistance (ERMA) to its authorized level of \$100 million;
- Preserve the FY 08 changes in the Andean Counter Drug Initiative to Colombia to increase humanitarian and development aid, strengthen human rights, and reduce military aid;
- Ensure that the Merida Initiative to combat lawlessness and drug trafficking in Mexico (\$1.5 billion over 3 years) focuses on human rights, civil society and humanitarian assistance as well as law enforcement activities; and
- Retain the Mexico City policy to prevent subsidizing organizations that perform or promote abortion in developing countries and the Kemp-Kasten provision preventing support of those involved in coercive population programs.

(Additional explanations regarding the above priorities appear in section III below.)

II. Foreign Assistance: A Moral Imperative

Our acts of solidarity with those in need improve the lives of those at the margins of the global community and help build a more stable and peaceful world. Our nation has the opportunity to use its wealth and resources to uplift human life and dignity around the world, to work for the common good and to foster peace in a troubled world.

In this year's address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, Pope Benedict XVI focused on the crucial linkage between peace and the development of the human person. "Peace cannot be a mere word or a vague aspiration. Peace is a commitment and a manner of life which demands that the legitimate demands of all should be satisfied.... ...Pope Paul VI stressed forty years ago in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio* that 'development is the new name for peace'. Hence, in order to consolidate peace, the positive macroeconomic results achieved by developing countries during 2007 must be supported by effective social policies and by the implementation of aid commitments by rich countries."¹

Achieving authentic human development requires that the basic human needs of all are met; that social, cultural, economic and political rights are protected; and that all people participate in shaping their own future. Development is a right common to all people and corresponds to a duty imposed upon all of us, as peoples and nations. It is the responsibility of those who are stronger and richer to seek out, assist and empower those who are less so.

The teachings of the Church on social development and justice inform the work of two agencies of the United States bishops: Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). MRS works to address the needs of those who flee terror in their homeland and seek international protection and helps settle one-quarter of the refugees who enter our nation each year. CRS works in 99 countries throughout the world, including more than 30 in Africa. CRS provides programs that address HIV/AIDS, health, education, building civil society, food security, agriculture, emergency relief and peace building. With over 60 years of development experience, CRS knows firsthand both the tremendous needs and also the great potential of millions who live in poverty. CRS also knows from experience how effective development programs can bring very real hope for prosperity and peace built on justice.

With a greater awareness that our well-being as Americans is intrinsically linked to the well-being of those who live far from our shores, foreign assistance is increasingly seen as capable of lifting up the weak and empowering people to realize their own dignity and destiny. At the same time, integral human development improves human security and a more peaceful world for all.

III. Additional Explanation of Specific Priorities

- USCCB and CRS welcome the proposed substantial increase to \$50 billion over five years in the PEPFAR reauthorization now under consideration in Congress. At the same time, we support strong funding for the other core development accounts, including: education, safe water, agriculture, child survival and health that are essential to complement and safeguard the programs in HIV/AIDS.

¹ Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See for the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings, January 7, 2008

- We support full funding of the Administration’s request of \$2.25 billion for the MCC. Any reduction in funding could undermine the MCC as a vehicle of support for well-governed countries through multi-year funding. Disruptions in this program due to insufficient funding would pose serious setbacks for countries that have worked hard to prepare eligibility, in many cases by enacting difficult policy reforms and building important capacity. At the same time, as promised by the President, the MCC should not be funded at the expense of the large number of non-MCC low income countries with critical needs.
- Congress should allocate at least \$4.7 billion, or \$1 billion over the President’s request, to the Development and Humanitarian Assistance accounts. This funding would provide skills and basic services in the areas of education, health care, agriculture, rural development, micro-enterprise and emergency assistance to the poor, especially vulnerable women and children.
- The North-South CPA in Sudan is at a crucial period in its implementation and needs continued robust support as does the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. The ongoing conflict in Darfur is doubly important as it is linked to civil conflict in Chad that has created thousands of refugees and displaced. In southern Sudan, we strongly support continued funding for the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) as a necessary element of support for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.
- Funding for economic and social development in post-conflict countries transitioning towards better governance should be a priority, including: Lebanon, Haiti, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone. Substantial portions of the funding should be channeled through proven local and national partners working in collaboration with American humanitarian Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) like Catholic Relief Services.
- This recommended MRA level would permit the resettlement of 100,000 refugees in FY 2009 and 5,000 Iraqi refugees under Special Immigrant Visas. It also would help meet overseas assistance needs and avert critical shortfalls in food, medicine, and other vital supplies in Africa and elsewhere. A replenished ERMA account would allow the U.S. to respond to the emergency needs of refugees from Iraqi and other trouble spots around the world.
- We reiterate our strong support for retaining the Mexico City policy, which prevents our foreign aid program from being misused to subsidize organizations that perform or promote abortions in developing nations. The Kemp-Kasten provision, preventing the support of organizations involved in coercive population programs, should also be retained. Under this provision, funding is denied to any organization determined by the President to be supporting or participating in the management of a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization. To ensure that the President is free to make this determination the subcommittee should not earmark funds to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), whose support for the coercive program in the People’s Republic of China rendered it ineligible for U.S. funds in recent years.

IV. Foreign Aid Reform and Concentration of Bilateral Assistance in Too Few Countries

In the past few years USCCB and CRS have highlighted the importance of the effectiveness of foreign aid in reducing poverty with the subcommittee. We support foreign assistance that is aligned with country needs based on the principle of country ownership, involving a collaborative partnership between host country government, U.S. development field staff and

civil society to promote sustainable development that moves countries towards self-sufficiency. We welcome the Administration's recent recognition that it was underutilizing country-based development staff. The Committee should monitor developments and ensure that funding allows the hiring of more development professionals by USAID.

The Bishop's Conference commends the House and the Senate for their effort to respond to needs of "the least among us" (Mt. 25) through the introduction of the Global Poverty Act (H.R. 1302 / S. 2433). The Conference has been pleased to support its passage in the House. This legislation would enshrine in law the Millennium Development Goal of reducing extreme poverty by half by 2015. While USCCB and CRS appreciate recent major increases in foreign assistance, particularly as a result of investments in PEPFAR and the MCC, overall U.S. foreign assistance still has a long way to go to fulfill the U.S. commitment to move towards the international goal of foreign assistance being 0.7% of GDP.

The Global Poverty Act would also commit our nation to a comprehensive approach to reducing global poverty that involves aid, trade and debt relief. Among other steps, this comprehensive approach may require substantial reform of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

We note that over the last few years, 40% to 50% of bilateral aid is concentrated in 6 countries largely in connection with the "War on Terror" or the "War on Drugs." Only two of the six, Afghanistan and Pakistan, are classified by the World Bank as low income. While this concentration of aid may respond to important national security interests of the United States, in the long run it will neither respond adequately to the needs of the poor nor enhance the security of our nation and the stability of our world. USCCB and CRS believe that this concentration of resources leaves too little for poor countries, especially weak and fragile states. It is unacceptable that those countries in greatest need will fail to receive adequate U.S. assistance because their situation may be of little current strategic interest to the security of the United States. We believe that a greater share of foreign assistance should be allocated to assist the very poor in the more than 150 other developing countries. This caution applies particularly to the continent of Africa. Africa is a continent in crisis, but also one of enormous opportunity, and needs this increased level of U.S. aid.

V. The Important Role for Foreign and U.S. Civil Society

USCCB and CRS reiterate our concern over the absence of a clear role for civil society particularly in representing the poor in countries where governments lack capacity and have uneven records on governance and human rights. The U.S. Government should work in partnership with American PVOs that have demonstrated the ability and capacity to work with national civil society organizations and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in foreign countries. In these countries civil society and local NGOs need help from the U.S. to strengthen their capacity to protect the interests and the rights of poor persons and to promote integral human development. While the host government has a central role in designing and implementing a country's development programs, civil society must be able to play its role. The U.S. Government should continue to support the valuable work of local civil society by encouraging recipient countries to involve civil society and NGOs in the development of national poverty reduction strategies.