



BACKGROUND

International Poverty-Reducing Humanitarian and Development Assistance

“The Christian message is attractive when experienced and expressed in its totality: not simply as a refuge for pious thoughts or an occasion for impressive ceremonies. What kind of worship would we give to Christ if we were to rest content with an individual relationship with him and show no interest in relieving the sufferings of others or helping them to live a better life?”

-Pope Francis, *Dilexit Nos*, no. 205

Legislative Ask

Support families and children around the world by passing Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations **now** and ensuring the highest funding levels possible for international poverty- and hunger-reducing development and humanitarian assistance in Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026. (See chart of accounts supported by USCCB and CRS.)

Background

International poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance makes up less than 1% of the annual federal budget. This small fraction of the budget supports the poorest and most vulnerable communities around the world. Global health programs improve maternal and child health, reduce malnutrition, prevent malaria, and help orphans and vulnerable children affected and infected by HIV and AIDS. Development projects help farmers be more sustainable, increase access to and improve the quality of children’s education, provide access to clean drinking water, prevent trafficking in persons, and build resilience in the face of climate change. Humanitarian interventions respond to urgent natural and human induced disasters, protect refugees and internally displaced persons, and provide U.S. grown commodities to people in need. Development finance mechanisms provide debt relief to the lowest-income countries and promote private investments that bolster health, agriculture, energy security, infrastructure, and small businesses in low-income countries.

While U.S. sponsored international assistance has saved millions, incredible challenges remain, especially related to global hunger, conflict, and care for our common home. In 2025, more than 300 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection due to conflicts, droughts, natural disasters, and other crises. More than 120 million people remain forcibly displaced from their homes and almost 700 million people live in extreme poverty off less than \$2.15 per day. Furthermore, climate change has proven a threat multiplier—disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable—by destroying agriculture and natural resources, disrupting livelihoods, contributing to mass displacement, and increasing the risk of conflict.

USCCB and CRS Position

Each year, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) implore Congress to assess budget decisions using three criteria: protection of human life and dignity, impact on the most vulnerable, and advancement of the common good. The Church views international assistance as an essential tool to protect life, uphold human dignity, and pursue sustainable solutions to the world’s toughest challenges. Making up less than 1% of the annual federal budget, poverty-reducing foreign assistance is a

small yet smart investment to accomplish Church priorities and advance U.S. interests: to foster economic opportunity, promote peace and security, and project our core values abroad. USCCB and CRS prioritize accounts that most effectively and sustainably address issues of human suffering and global poverty. And to be most effective, assistance must be an expression of our solidarity with all people living in poverty, not just an exercise in short-term self-interest, or self-promotion.

CRS has partnered with the U.S. government for decades across the globe to save lives and reduce poverty. In 2023 alone, CRS served more than 200 million people in more than 100 countries with public and private resources. CRS has worked with farmers in Nigeria to improve their food security, communities in Guatemala to address the root causes of migration, cities in the Philippines to be more resilient in the face of climate change, and families in crisis-affected areas like Gaza and Ukraine who are in desperate need. Through partnerships with agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Department of State, CRS has witnessed first-hand how U.S. leadership, expertise, and partnership have impacted the world for the better. With conflict, hunger, and displacement ravaging communities across the world, U.S. leadership and international collaboration is more important than ever to wisely resolve the many crises of our time and to build a foundation for a safer, more prosperous, and just world.

We commit to working with Congress to uphold human dignity, to stand in solidarity with the poor, to be good stewards of the earth, and to prioritize the common good. We do have principled concerns about certain health activities we find inconsistent with Catholic teaching, and do not implement or advocate for these activities. We also strongly urge Congress to maintain the Helms Amendment in FY25 and FY26.

State of Play

Congress has yet to finalize Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations. As outlined in the USCCB/CRS chart of accounts, the House of Representatives has proposed deep cuts to humanitarian and development assistance while the Senate has proposed to largely maintain funding. We anticipate the new Congress and new Administration to negotiate a final funding deal in the first months of 2025. Moreover, we expect the new Administration to propose deep cuts to foreign assistance in their Fiscal Year 2026 proposal, which we expect to be released around March. During the Administration's first term, they proposed cutting foreign aid by as much as 40%. Cuts at this level would have an incredible impact on the ability to serve populations in need and advance U.S. interests. It is critical that we voice our support for the highest funding levels possible to help families and children in need around the world.

Resources

Visit <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/international-assistance> and <https://www.crs.org/get-involved/campaigns/action-center>.



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is an assembly of the hierarchy of bishops who jointly exercise pastoral functions on behalf of the Christian faithful of the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
