



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops



June 9, 2025

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on International Justice and Peace, Committee on Migration, and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), **we urge Congress to fund international poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance under the jurisdiction of the House Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs, in Fiscal Year 2026 to at least the levels indicated in the attached chart.**

The Catholic mandate to serve the common good takes on an increased urgency in 2025 as the Church celebrates a Jubilee Year—a Holy Year of grace when we are called to bring hope to our global family. This Jubilee Year coincides with a realignment of U.S. international assistance to ensure that all programs make the U.S. safer, stronger, and more prosperous. As Congress considers how to accomplish these priorities, we welcome the opportunity to share a Catholic, life-affirming vision for U.S. international assistance.

A Catholic vision begins with the foundational understanding that both Church institutions and states have a *shared* responsibility to promote human life and dignity. Catholics and the Catholic Church have a moral duty to respond to our neighbors in need, whether near or far. This work cannot be left to individuals and the Church alone. Catholic teaching has long asserted that governments must actively pursue the common good, not only for their own citizens, but for all members of our global family. This also means that a Catholic vision for U.S. international assistance rests on strong partnerships between the U.S. government and the U.S. Catholic Church.

An effective, life-affirming approach to international assistance should exemplify three core principles: **inherent human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity:**

- A commitment to **inherent human dignity** means investing in lifesaving responses, such as emergency food assistance that keeps families from resorting to early child marriage, recruitment by gangs, and forced migration. It also means investing in development programs that help farmers increase yields, communities improve their potable water infrastructure, and children receive a basic education.
- A commitment to **solidarity** means investing in programs that are grounded in authentic partnerships with civil society, governments, and the private sector. In Ethiopia, for example, CRS's U.S.-funded poverty-reduction programming aligns with the existing national safety net and public works program.
- A commitment to **subsidiarity** means investing in local community organizations that sit closest to a challenge, with the recognition that they best understand how to address it. For example, CRS' efforts to support Church partners across Latin America have enabled 24 faith-based organizations to take responsibility and leadership for disaster response in their

countries. Efforts to promote subsidiarity strengthen local communities and thus mitigate the need to migrate.

Given the vision for international aid that Catholic teaching provides, we urge Congress to prioritize the following in Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations:

- ***Reinforce humanitarian response capacities:*** We ask Congress for a robust allocation to the **International Disaster Assistance** account, which provides aid to families in emergencies, stems instability, and protects the dignity of our brothers and sisters living amid conflicts and natural disasters. We also ask Congress to prioritize the **Migration and Refugee Assistance** account, which supports displaced individuals and helps them return home or settle in safer locations, while decreasing the drivers of irregular migration.
- ***Invest in development programming and poverty reduction:*** The **Development Assistance** account and the **Economic Support Fund** promote self-reliance through long-term improvements in food security, water security, literacy, and care for creation. We urge Congress to further advance shared prosperity with contributions to the **World Bank's International Development Association**, which provides financing to low-income countries that are experiencing high debt burdens and cannot invest in growth. The international debt crisis seriously constrains development in many countries.
- ***Build on the legacy of U.S. global health programs:*** Funding for the **Global Health Programs** account supports some of the most successful foreign policy programs in U.S. history, including PEPFAR, as well as efforts to eliminate infectious diseases before they reach our shores. The Catholic Church has principled concerns about certain health activities inconsistent with Catholic teaching, including artificial family planning. We have long advocated for maintaining the Helms Amendment and all related pro-life riders as well as supported the inclusion of the Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance policy in the SFOPS/NSRP bill. The USCCB will oppose any bill that expands taxpayer funding of abortion, including any appropriations bill. Nevertheless, we support strong funding for morally-appropriate Global Health Programs given the scale at which they advance the dignity and well-being of our collective family, including Americans.
- ***Fund mechanisms that bolster the private sector and strengthen government institutions:*** In line with the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, international assistance goes further when it is complemented by a thriving private sector and strong government institutions. We ask Congress to robustly fund the **U.S. International Development Finance Corporation**, which promotes private investment in low-income countries, and the **Millennium Challenge Corporation**, which incentivizes good governance while partnering with countries to address critical infrastructure needs. Congress must ensure improved coordination with other U.S. humanitarian and development assistance and leverage these agencies to create supportive environments for the most vulnerable families.

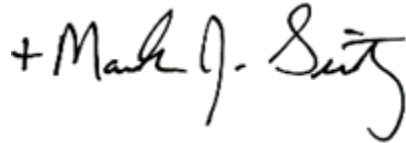
Ensure mechanisms to translate funds into effective programs: Congress should see to it that any U.S. agencies managing international assistance have technical expertise, and the operational capacity to deliver timely assistance.

As members discern FY26 spending priorities, we ask Congress to keep human dignity front and center. We thank Congress for its steadfast commitment to a stronger America and a more peaceful world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ A. E. Zaidan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan
Chairman
Committee on International Justice and Peace
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Mark J. Seitz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Mark J. Seitz
Chairman
Committee on Migration
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Callahan". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Sean Callahan
President and CEO
Catholic Relief Services



International Poverty-Reducing Development and Humanitarian Accounts

May 15, 2025



Appropriations Accounts (\$ in thousands)	FY24 Base Approps	FY25 House Bill	FY25 Senate Bill	FY25 CR	USCCB/CRS FY26 Request*
<i>State, Foreign Operations (SFOPs)</i>	29,922,456	23,938,237	30,255,030	29,922,456	29,922,456
Global Health Programs Includes maternal and child health, nutrition, vulnerable children, HIV/AIDS (USAID and State), Global Fund, global health security, malaria, tuberculosis, neglected tropical diseases	10,030,450	9,268,712	9,674,950	10,030,450	10,030,450
Development Assistance Includes agriculture and rural development, education, environment, water and sanitation, democracy and governance, microfinance, and anti-trafficking in persons	3,931,000	3,000,000	4,153,150	3,931,000	3,931,000
International Disaster Assistance	4,779,000**	3,452,362	4,829,000***	4,779,000**	4,779,000
Complex Crises Fund	55,000	30,000	60,000	55,000	55,000
Economic Support Fund	3,890,400	3,430,888	4,083,324	3,890,400	3,890,400
Migration and Refugee Assistance	3,928,000**	1,953,236	4,028,850***	3,928,000**	3,928,000
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance	100	0	100	100	100,000
Millennium Challenge Account	930,000	937,000	937,000	930,000	930,000
Contribution to the International Development Association	1,380,256	1,097,010	1,480,256	1,380,256	1,380,256
Green Climate Fund	0	0	0	0	500,000
U.S. International Development Finance Corporation	998,250	769,029	1,008,400	998,250	998,250
<i>Agricultural (Ag)</i>	1,927,583	1,240,000	1,970,607	1,927,583	1,927,583
Title II Food for Peace	1,687,583	1,000,000	1,720,607	1,687,583	1,687,583
McGovern-Dole	240,000	240,000	250,000	240,000	240,000
COMBINED TOTAL	31,850,039	25,178,237	32,225,637	31,850,039	32,449,939

Message to Congress

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, including those that lead to forced displacement. Making up less than 1% of the annual federal budget, international humanitarian and development assistance is a small yet smart investment to advance U.S. interests: to foster economic opportunity, promote peace and security, and project to the world the values this country holds dear. Therefore, the USCCB and CRS urge Congress to prioritize these accounts in order to save lives, reduce poverty, alleviate the drivers of forced migration, and invest in peace.

* The President has proposed an 84% reduction in FY26 State and International Programs in comparison to FY25 enacted levels.

** The base bill designates \$750 million as an emergency requirement for IDA and MRA respectively.

*** The base bill designates \$1.4 billion and \$1.1 billion as an emergency requirement for IDA and MRA respectively.

Account Descriptions

State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

Global Health Programs support multiple health activities managed by USAID and State. We do have principled concerns about certain health activities we find inconsistent with Catholic teaching, including artificial family planning, and do not implement or advocate for these activities.

Maternal and Child Health programs provide low-cost, life-saving interventions such as micronutrient supplementation, nutritional support, newborn care, immunization, and treatment of pneumonia and diarrheal disease – addressing the biggest killers of mothers and children. This account provides funding for the U.S. contribution to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, which purchases vaccines for children in poor countries.

Nutrition programs provide interventions such as micronutrient supplementation and growth monitoring, which combined with an adequate diet and clean water and sanitation, improves outcomes during the first critical years of a child's life. Malnutrition is the underlying cause of 45 percent of preventable child deaths.

Vulnerable Children funding promotes family care for vulnerable children and seeks to reduce violence against children.

HIV and AIDS PEPFAR (USAID & State Funding) supports HIV and AIDS efforts in 50 countries to achieve epidemic control. Ten percent of PEPFAR funding focuses on mitigating the negative impact of HIV on orphans and vulnerable children affected and infected by HIV and AIDS. Also included is funding for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria which works to prevent, treat, and care for people with HIV, TB and Malaria and build health systems.

Malaria programs treat, prevent, and control this deadly disease which is one of the biggest killers of children under five worldwide.

Tuberculosis programs screen, diagnose, and treat millions of people each year. TB is the leading infectious killer globally.

Global Health Security programs prevent, prepare for, and respond to unanticipated and emerging global health threats.

Development Assistance programs support an array of critical development activities.

Agriculture and Rural Development funding supports The Global Food Security Strategy, or Feed the Future, to address the root causes of hunger and poverty. Programs support agriculture development, nutrition, and resilience; research; and technical assistance.

Education funding includes basic education, which increases access to and improves the quality of education in low-and middle-income countries and helps children and youth develop skills to reach their fullest potential.

Environment programming includes climate adaptation, which supports efforts to build resilience to storm surges in coastal communities, stabilize areas prone to landslides, improve soil health, and reduce food insecurity through regenerative, sustainable agriculture.

Water and Sanitation programs provide access to safe drinking water, toilets, and handwashing to improve the health, security, and economic potential of communities.

Democracy and Governance programs, such as strengthening the rule of law and civil society, support efforts to build a more peaceful and prosperous world.

Microfinance provides people who cannot access most formal financial institutions with access to financial services such as credit, savings, and insurance.

Anti-Trafficking in Persons assistance helps other nations to prevent trafficking, prosecute perpetrators, and support victims (also addressed through ESF).

Complex Crisis Fund enables rapid investments to catalyze peace and mitigate conflict in the face of unforeseen crises or violence.

Economic Support Fund supports development and economic assistance in countries of importance to U.S. foreign policy. We support a poverty-focused use of ESF funds.

International Disaster Assistance funds emergency health, water, shelter and nutrition efforts, as well as disaster risk reduction and rehabilitation through the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). It also supports cash and voucher-based Emergency Food Security Program (EFSP).

Migration and Refugee Assistance protects refugees and internally displaced persons, helps them to repatriate when conflict ends or natural disaster responses permit, and supports legal resettlement pathways to safe third countries such as the U.S. for those who are unable to be repatriated.

Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance is a drawdown account used, with Presidential authority, to respond to humanitarian crises. ERMA is capped at \$100M.

Millennium Challenge Account provides U.S. funding to countries with a commitment to good governance, focusing on infrastructure projects.

Contribution to the International Development Association help the World Bank provide concessional loans, grants, and debt relief to the lowest-income countries. In addition to IDA, Congress should consider funds to support other multilateral development banks that support poverty-reduction.

Green Climate Fund provides assistance to developing countries to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. In addition to GCF, other multilateral programs to address climate change adaptation and mitigation should be considered, including the Adaptation Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund.

U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, created by the BUILD Act, utilizes financial tools such as loans and loan guarantees, technical assistance, feasibility studies, political risk insurance, and equity investments to promote private investment that bolsters health, agriculture, energy security, infrastructure, and small businesses in low- and lower-middle income countries.

Agriculture

Title II Food for Peace provides U.S. food aid for emergencies and funds \$365 million in long-term development programs that support nutrition and build resilience.

McGovern-Dole provides school lunches and take-home food rations to encourage students, especially girls, to attend school, and other school support efforts. No less than \$26.5 million should provide for local and regionally procured commodities for sustainability.