



April 25, 2024

Dear Senator/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 increase international poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance under the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs in Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations to at least the levels indicated in the attached chart.**

Each year, USCCB and 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. In a January letter, Pope Francis highlighted these priorities, asking global leaders to “be mindful of the moral responsibility that each of us has in the fight against poverty, the attainment of an integral development for all our brothers and sisters, and the quest for a peaceful coexistence among peoples.” 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.

In this spirit of dignity, integral human development, and peace, we ask Congress to prioritize the following in Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations:

Increase International Disaster Assistance and Migration and Refugee Assistance.

During this calendar year, nearly 300 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection due to conflicts, environmental emergencies, and other causes. Twenty percent of all children worldwide are living in or fleeing from conflict and 1 in 73 people are forcibly displaced. The United States has a long tradition of being the moral leader in the international arena, providing aid to protect and support human life. Assessed global needs are close to a record high.¹ Increasing humanitarian funding is critical to save lives and alleviate human suffering.

Support climate adaptation through the Green Climate Fund and other bilateral and multilateral accounts. In [Laudate Deum](#), Pope Francis called us to action, inviting leaders everywhere to rise above self-interest and imagine a future shaped by the common good and a deep respect for the sanctity of our shared home. Global warming and increasing atmospheric carbon density are projected to have significant and potentially catastrophic

¹ <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-enarfres>

impacts on food production, nutrition in food, access to potable water, and rates of vector-borne illnesses like malaria. The brunt of these effects will be borne by those who have contributed the least to climate change. Unfortunately, climate finance for adaptation continues to be woefully insufficient to prepare for these threats, falling far short of what is required to effectively support vulnerable populations. It is imperative that the United States significantly increase investments to ensure marginalized communities can survive and thrive as the climate changes.

Strengthen Development Assistance. With more than 700 million people living in extreme poverty today, programs funded through Development Assistance that support climate change adaptation and sustainable landscapes, conflict management and mitigation, food security and agriculture – including in Feed the Future, and basic education are critically important. These programs help advance the moral, economic, and security interests of the United States by focusing on ending extreme poverty, expanding economic growth, and fostering resilient, democratic societies. By investing in long-term development activities, we not only provide hope and opportunity for communities today but also foster a more prosperous, safe, and secure world for us all tomorrow.

Protect life-saving Global Health Programs. In 2022, roughly 249 million people contracted malaria²; every minute, a child under five dies of malaria, and children under five comprise 75% of malaria deaths worldwide.³ The World Health Organization conservatively estimates that by 2030, an additional quarter of a million people will die each year from global health impacts of climate change, such as increasing vector-borne diseases like malaria, more prevalent undernutrition, diarrheal diseases, and heat stress⁴. Moreover, approximately 1.3 million people,⁵ including 130,000 children,⁶ were newly infected with HIV in 2022, and 1.2 million people died from tuberculosis.⁷ While significant global health challenges remain, the United States has led the world’s most successful global health efforts to ensure that all people can live safe and healthy lives free from disease. Funding these important, life-saving programs and planning for future threats to global health will pay dividends for generations of children and families as we build better and more accessible health systems, including here in the United States.

Advance peacebuilding, atrocities prevention, and social cohesion programs. While support for humanitarian efforts is a moral imperative, we must also strive to prevent and mitigate conflict. The Complex Crisis Fund, peacekeeping accounts, atrocities prevention, and development initiatives focused on social cohesion are invaluable to save lives and promote peace.

We recognize that the U.S. cannot address all global challenges or meet all needs. Pope Francis continued in his letter to say that “there is an evident need for international political action that,

² <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malaria>

³ <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/malaria/>

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

⁵ https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/UNAIDS_FactSheet_en.pdf

⁶ <https://data.unicef.org/topic/hiv/aids/global-regional-trends/>

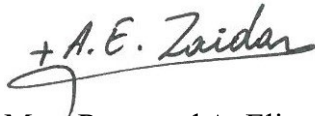
⁷ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tuberculosis>

through the adoption of coordinated measures, can effectively pursue the goals of global peace and authentic development.” When compassionate U.S. investment, expertise, and innovation leads, others follow and leverage our generosity.

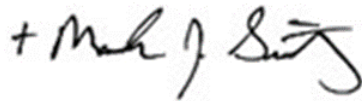
And while we will always support the life-saving work advanced by Congress, we do have grave concerns about providing taxpayer funding for activities inconsistent with right reason and basic human rights that Catholic teaching provides. We therefore strongly urge Congress to maintain the longstanding, bipartisan, and life-saving Helms Amendment and all related pro-life riders in the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill. The USCCB will oppose any bill that expands taxpayer funding of abortion, including any appropriations bill. Furthermore, consistent with our longstanding support for the Mexico City policy, we strongly urge you to apply the Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance policy to the bill.

We thank Congress for its ongoing support for international poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance and look forward to working together to combat poverty, promote integral development for all our brothers and sisters, and foster a peaceful coexistence among nations and peoples.

Sincerely,

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

Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan
Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

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

Most Reverend Mark J. Seitz
Bishop of El Paso
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration

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

Mr. Sean Callahan
President and CEO
Catholic Relief Services



International Poverty-Reducing Development and Humanitarian Accounts

March 25, 2024



Appropriations Accounts (\$ in thousands)	FY22 Base Approps	FY23 Base Approps	FY24 Base Approps	Administration's FY25 Request	USCCB/CRS FY25 Request
<i>State, Foreign Operations (SFOPs)</i>	23,300,906	24,270,435	25,008,465	25,395,089	27,976,569
Maternal and Child Health (including GAVI)	890,000	910,000	915,000	940,000	940,000
Nutrition	155,000	160,000	165,000	160,000	172,500
Vulnerable Children (orphans and displaced children)	27,500	30,000	31,500	30,000	32,500
Malaria	775,000	795,000	795,000	795,000	820,000
Tuberculosis	371,050	394,500	394,500	394,500	469,000
Neglected Tropical Diseases	107,500	114,500	114,500	114,500	114,500
Global Health Security	700,000	900,000	700,000	900,000	1,000,000
HIV/AIDS (State PEPFAR and USAID)	4,720,000	4,725,000	4,725,000	4,725,000	4,725,000
Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis	1,560,000	2,000,000	1,650,000	1,191,600	2,000,000
Development Assistance (including Water, Basic Ed)	4,140,494	4,368,613	3,931,000	4,534,697	4,769,787
International Disaster Assistance	3,905,460*	3,905,460**	4,779,000***	4,543,362	4,850,000
Migration and Refugee Assistance	2,912,188*	2,912,188**	3,928,000***	3,827,236	4,211,188
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance	100*	100	100	100,000	100,000
Complex Crises Fund	60,000	60,000	55,000	60,000	60,000
Millennium Challenge Account	912,000	930,000	930,000	937,000	937,000
Atrocities Prevention Fund (ESF & INCLE)	5,000	6,000	6,000	-----	6,000
Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities	1,498,614	1,481,915	1,367,407	1,234,144	1,234,144
Peacekeeping Operations	455,000	460,759	410,458	411,050	411,050
Green Climate Fund (Treasury)	0	0	0	500,000^^^	1,000,000
Anti-Trafficking in Persons (DA, ESF, AEECA, INCLE)	106,000	116,400	111,000	-----	123,900
<i>Agricultural (Ag)</i>	1,977,000	1,993,331	1,927,583	2,043,331	2,065,000
Title II Food for Peace	1,740,000*	1,750,000**	1,687,583	1,800,000	1,800,000
McGovern-Dole	237,000	243,331**	240,000	243,331	265,000
<i>Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS)</i>	106,000	116,125	81,725	162,395	162,395
Bureau of International Labor Affairs (DOL/ILAB)	106,000	116,125	81,725	162,395	162,395
COMBINED TOTAL	25,383,906	26,379,891	27,017,773	27,603,815	30,203,964

* Total enacted with supplemental funding for Afghanistan/Ukraine: IDA-\$11.3B; MRA-\$5.1B; ERMA-\$2.28B; FFP-\$1.84B.

** Total enacted with supplemental funding for Ukraine/globe: IDA-\$4.837B; MRA-\$4.447B; FFP-\$1.8B; FFE-\$248M.

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

Summary of Message to Congress and Account Descriptions

The Church views international assistance as an essential tool to promote human life and dignity, advance solidarity with low and middle-income nations, and enhance human security. The USCCB and CRS prioritize the accounts below because they are most focused on saving lives and reducing poverty. This assistance is just over one-half percent of the federal budget. We urge Congress to **fund international poverty-reducing development and humanitarian programs to alleviate suffering and invest in peace.**

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 in the developing world. This account also provides funding for the U.S. contribution to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, which purchases vaccines for children in poor countries. Programs such as these have helped reduce the number of preventable child deaths worldwide from 12.6 million in 1990 to 5.3 million today.

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. The Global Fund is working in over 100 countries and has saved 32 million lives. Although we have principled concerns about those PEPFAR prevention activities we find inconsistent with Catholic teaching and do not implement or advocate for these activities, we support PEPFAR’s overall lifesaving mission and urge robust funding for the Global Fund.

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.

Neglected Tropical Diseases programs focus on scaling up integrated treatment to prevent parasitic and bacterial diseases that cause morbidity and mortality.

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, including basic education; Global Food Security Act implementation; clean water and sanitation; microfinance, climate change adaptation and mitigation, democracy promotion and good governance, and conflict management and mitigation.

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). *Due to budgetary constraints in FY22 and FY23, Congress reduced the base funding number and included what is ostensibly base appropriations in a supplemental title in the omnibus bill.*

Migration and Refugee Assistance protects refugees and internally displaced persons, helps them to repatriate when conflict ends or natural disaster responses permit, and supports admissions to safe countries like the U.S. *Due to budgetary constraints in FY22 and FY23, Congress reduced the base funding number and included what is ostensibly base appropriations in a supplemental title in the omnibus bill.*

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

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

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

Atrocities Prevention Fund provides resources to the Department of State for the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities, including by acting on the recommendations of the Atrocity Early Warning Task Force.

Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities deploy peacekeeping troops to protect civilians in places like Sudan and Somalia. Based on UN assessed rates of contribution, the U.S. is currently in arrears estimated at more than \$1.28 billion.

Peacekeeping Operations finances the training and equipping of peacekeeping troops and the professionalization of militia groups committed to protecting their people. The U.S. is currently in arrears estimated at \$108 million.

Green Climate Fund provides assistance to developing countries to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. In addition to GCF, other multilateral and bilateral programs to address climate change adaptation and mitigation should be considered, including the Adaptation Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund. *The Administration requested \$3 billion in mandatory budget authority for the Green Climate Fund to support the second replenishment (FY25-FY28).*

Anti-Trafficking in Persons assistance helps other nations to prevent trafficking, prosecute perpetrators, and support victims.

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.

Bureau of International Labor Affairs funds programs to combat the worst forms of child labor, forced labor, and trafficking in persons.