



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.



International Poverty-Reducing Development and Humanitarian Accounts

December 18, 2024



Appropriations Accounts (\$ in thousands)	FY24 Base Approps	FY25 House Bill	FY25 Senate Bill	USCCB/CRS FY25 Request	USCCB/CRS FY26 Request*
<i>State, Foreign Operations (SFOPs)</i>	29,922,456	23,938,237	30,255,030	30,755,030	32,030,405
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	9,674,950	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	4,153,150	4,769,787
International Disaster Assistance	4,779,000**	3,452,362	4,829,000***	4,829,000	4,850,000
Complex Crises Fund	55,000	30,000	60,000	60,000	60,000
Economic Support Fund	3,890,400	3,430,888	4,083,324	4,083,324	4,083,324
Migration and Refugee Assistance	3,928,000**	1,953,236	4,028,850***	4,028,850	4,211,188
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance	100	0	100	100	100,000
Millennium Challenge Account	930,000	937,000	937,000	937,000	937,000
Contribution to the International Development Association	1,380,256	1,097,010	1,480,256	1,480,256	1,480,256
Green Climate Fund	0	0	0	500,000	500,000
U.S. International Development Finance Corporation	998,250	769,029	1,008,400	1,008,400	1,008,400
<i>Agricultural (Ag)</i>	1,927,583	1,240,000	1,970,607	1,970,607	2,065,000
Title II Food for Peace	1,687,583	1,000,000	1,720,607	1,720,607	1,800,000
McGovern-Dole	240,000	240,000	250,000	250,000	265,000
COMBINED TOTAL	31,850,039	25,178,237	32,225,637	32,725,637	34,095,405

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 accomplish Church priorities and 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.

* This request was formulated prior to the President's FY26 Budget Request and congressional 203(b) subcommittee allocations.

** The base bill designates \$750 million as an emergency requirement for IDA and MRA respectively. Total enacted with supplemental funding: IDA- \$10.5B; MRA-\$7.4B.

*** 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.