



Commonly Asked Questions: *President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)*

What is PEPFAR?

PEPFAR stands for the *President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief*. It is the largest commitment ever by the United States, or any other nation, for an international health initiative dedicated to a single disease. It was proposed by President George W. Bush and passed into law by Congress in 2003 as a 5-year, \$15 billion plan to fight the HIV pandemic in fifteen of the world's most affected countries, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean. For more information about the benefiting countries, please visit www.pepfar.gov.

In July 2008 PEPFAR was reauthorized for another five years and includes the following important provisions that Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) advocated for:

- Authorizes \$48 billion over five years to provide prevention, care, treatment, and support services to people affected by HIV, malaria and tuberculosis in developing countries, especially in Africa.
- Bolsters food and nutrition programs that are vital for HIV-affected populations.
- Invests in growing the healthcare workforce in PEPFAR countries.
- Maintains an effective conscience clause that allows religious organizations such as CRS to participate in PEPFAR without compromising adherence to our moral teachings.
- Ensures that PEPFAR-supported prevention programs receive "balanced" funding that promotes abstinence before marriage and mutual fidelity within marriage.

What has PEPFAR accomplished so far?

- PEPFAR has **saved the lives of more than 1.4 million men, women and children** by providing them with antiretroviral treatment at more than 1,900 treatment sites worldwide.
- **Nearly 6.7 million people** living with and affected by HIV, including **more than 2.7 million orphans and vulnerable children** have received care through PEPFAR programs.
- An estimated **152,000 infants have been saved** from HIV infection.
- PEPFAR has **trained hundreds of thousands of people** to provide counseling and testing services, care for orphans and vulnerable children and for people living with HIV.
- PEPFAR has supported **outreach activities to more than 61.5 million people** to help prevent the sexual transmission of HIV.

For a detailed overview of PEPFAR's accomplishments, please visit: www.pepfar.gov.

How has Catholic Relief Services worked with PEPFAR?

The Catholic Church has long placed a high priority on providing care, support and treatment to people living with HIV, particularly among vulnerable populations. Based on our moral obligation to care for the "least of these" the USCCB has provided leadership to advocate on behalf of those impacted by HIV by affirming the fundamental dignity of all human beings. Together, USCCB and CRS made significant contributions to the original authorization of PEPFAR in 2003. HIV and AIDS programming is also a priority for CRS. CRS is a major implementer of PEPFAR programs with projects in 9 of the 15 PEPFAR focus countries.

AIDSRelief: CRS' largest PEPFAR award is a 5-year, \$335 million CRS-led consortium. AIDSRelief provides antiretroviral therapy, care and treatment in nine PEPFAR focus countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean by partnering with 227 local partners—the majority of them local Church-based health care providers – to respond to the HIV pandemic. At the end of February 2009, 154,550 people were receiving antiretroviral therapy and nearly a half a million people living with HIV were enrolled in care and support services. AIDSRelief has exceeded overall treatment targets every year of the grant to date.

Orphans and Vulnerable Children Program: CRS currently operates a \$9 million, 5-year, PEPFAR-supported program that provides quality services to children affected by HIV in Botswana, Haiti, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania. The program provides education and vocational training and support, health care,

psychosocial support, food and nutrition, protection services, shelter and care. As of March 31, 2009, this program has reached 142,000 orphans and vulnerable children, far exceeding our targets.

HIV Prevention: CRS addresses prevention of sexually transmitted HIV through age-appropriate abstinence and behavior change education among youth in three focus countries—Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Uganda. CRS’ “Avoiding Risk, Affirming Life” prevention program works with a broad range of Church- and community-based partners that share CRS’ commitment to equip youth with the values, attitudes, skills, and support to either abstain from sex prior to marriage or recommit to abstinence until marriage, and then to remain faithful in marriage. As of September 30, 2007, the program reached 1,107,000 youth and adults.

Other PEPFAR initiatives: In addition to these PEPFAR central awards, CRS has also received numerous country-specific grants to provide more or additional HIV services.

Why is PEPFAR a key policy priority for CRS?

Now that PEPFAR has been successfully reauthorized, CRS will work to ensure that the provisions of the bill will be implemented accordingly. Specifically, CRS will focus on advocating that:

- 1. Congress appropriates the full \$48 billion for PEPFAR programs as authorized over the next five years.** While the reauthorized PEPFAR legislation authorizes Congress to appropriate \$48 billion over five years, the Congress must still actually make the funding available. Given budget constraints and other important priorities, CRS expects to advocate extensively so that the full funding is actually appropriated.
- 2. PEPFAR’s focus on its foundational goals of saving lives, caring for people affected by HIV, and preventing further spread of this deadly disease is preserved.** CRS expects that there will be renewed efforts to integrate family planning and reproductive health services into PEPFAR programs, to eliminate the conscience clause, and to eliminate required balance in prevention programming—thus minimizing funding to prevention components that promote abstinence and fidelity. Faith-based providers such as CRS would be unable to participate in PEPFAR if such services were mandated or given preferential treatment when awarding PEPFAR funds.

Why should I care about PEPFAR?

Our faith tradition as Catholics requires us to care for “the least of these” and to promote the life and dignity of all people. People living with HIV and AIDS need and deserve our love and care just as Jesus called on us to care for those who are “hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison.”

Catholic social teaching also instructs us to live in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world by embracing our obligation towards people. Pope John Paul II reminded us that we must commit ourselves to the common good: “That is to say the good of all and each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”

PEPFAR has saved millions of lives – men, women and children living with and affected by affected by HIV and has given them hope for the future. PEPFAR is an expression of love and compassion from the people of the United States to our brothers and sisters suffering from HIV in some of the poorest countries on earth. As Catholics, we can support and improve this critical program by communicating our unique perspective to promote life, dignity and the sacredness of every human life within PEPFAR.

What can I do to help?

Lend your voice to this important cause by joining the CRS Advocacy Network. Persuading your Members of Congress of the Catholic perspective regarding PEPFAR by ensuring they know your support for this position will help bring about the changes we need to improve the lives of people living with and affected by HIV in some of the poorest countries in the world. **Visit <http://actioncenter.crs.org/signup> or email advocacy@crs.org to join our Advocacy Network today.**

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