

Statement of Dr. Carolyn Woo
President and Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Relief Services
Testimony to the Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Thank you Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Merkley for receiving this testimony. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) requests a minimum of \$1.716 billion in FY2017 appropriations for the Food for Peace program, and of this urges \$375 million be designated for non-emergency development programs. CRS also requests \$201 million for the McGovern-Dole Food for Education program, and \$80 million for the USDA Local and Regional Procurement program.

CRS and the U.S. Catholic Church

CRS is the international relief and development agency of the U.S. Catholic Church. We are one of the largest implementers of U.S. funded foreign assistance. Our work reaches millions of poor and vulnerable people in over 100 countries. CRS works with people and communities based on need, without regard to race, creed, or nationality. CRS often partners with the local Catholic Church within the countries we operate in. This engenders substantial trust in us by local populations and gives us an expansive reach no other aid organization can duplicate.

Food for Peace – Agile, Responsive, and Impactful

The Food for Peace (FFP) program is the flagship international food aid program of the US government. It provides funding for emergency food aid programs that assist communities in acute need and funds long-term development programs to address underlying causes of hunger, both of which CRS currently implements. FFP programs are subject to comprehensive reporting requirements and are targeted to meet specific and measurable goals. More importantly though, FFP directs resources to the most vulnerable people and communities. As such, few other US foreign assistance resources are as important for poverty alleviation and saving lives. The following provides a brief snapshot of the critical work that CRS accomplishes in its FFP-funded projects.

Ethiopia – Joint Emergency Operation

Ethiopia, a country with over 90 million people, has been particularly hard hit by the El Nino weather phenomena, leading to the most severe drought the country has faced in decades. About 80% of Ethiopia's population are subsistence farmers and 95% of farms are rain-fed. Due to El Nino, some regions have not seen rain in over a year, leading to steep declines in crop yields and hundreds of thousands of livestock deaths. Presently, over 10 million Ethiopians are in need of emergency food assistance. Further, while there are expectations that rains will return to dry areas during this year's rainy

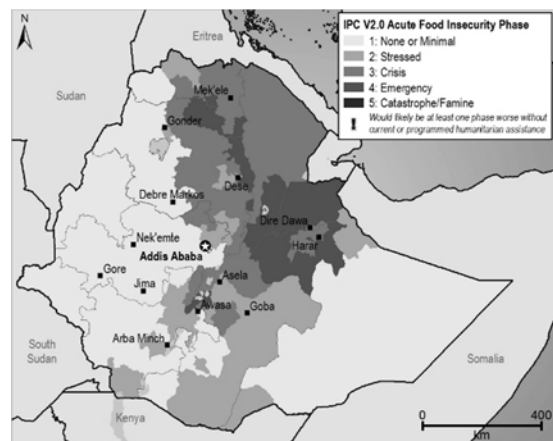


Chart 1 – Projected Food Insecurity Levels, Ethiopia, June-Sept 2016, Source: FEWS Net

season (July-September), it is also projected that emergency conditions will persist in drought effected areas through at least September 2016 (see Chart 1).

Catholic Relief Services manages the Joint Emergency Operation (JEOP), an emergency food aid program funded by FFP. JEOP is implemented through a consortium of international and national NGOs. Its current operational service area includes 76 woredas (counties). Activities are coordinated with the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) and the World Food Program (WFP). In addition to the emergency food distributions targeting the most vulnerable, the JEOP has implemented a Behavior Change Communication strategy to improve nutrition for children, supported the formation of savings and internal lending communities (i.e., microfinance), and has trained community members to regularly provide information on food security indicators that feed into national food security warning systems.

With the onset of the El Nino-driven drought, JEOP has ramped up food distribution operations (see Chart 2). By December 2015, JEOP served almost 2.6 million beneficiaries throughout Ethiopia. Beneficiaries generally receive a ration of wheat or sorghum, yellow split peas and vegetable oil, sourced largely from the United States. JEOP also provides Corn Soy Blend+ and vegetable oil to organizations implementing emergency supplementary feeding. Between September 2015 and January 2016, Food for Peace has supplied the JEOP with three separate commitments for commodities totaling over 360,000 metric tons.

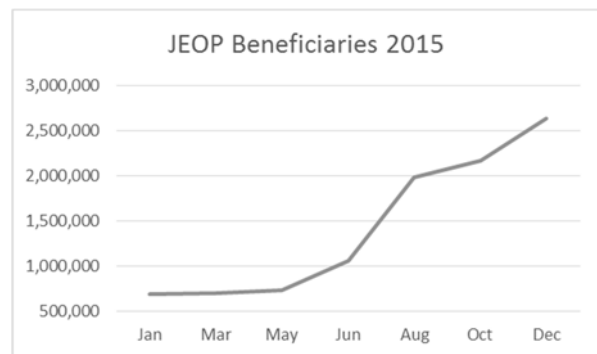


Chart 2 – JEOP Beneficiary level 2015

The JEOP has provided much needed stability for millions of Ethiopians at a critical time. During this same period the GoE and WFP have devoted significant resources to address the country's acute food emergency needs. While the world community has come up short in answering GoE and WFP's calls for additional funding, the U.S., primarily through the JEOP, has remained steadfast in its support to Ethiopia. Despite overall resource constraints, the worst case scenario has thus far been avoided in Ethiopia, thanks in no small measure to the JEOP. Many Ethiopians are alive today thanks to this program. The JEOP presently has enough resources to continue operations through July 2016, and we expect FFP to continue to help Ethiopia get over this hurdle.

South Sudan – Jonglei Food Security Program

South Sudan, bordering Ethiopia to the southwest, is the newest country in the world, having secured independence from Sudan in 2011. To support the new country, USAID awarded Catholic Relief Services funding for a multi-year FFP development program, the Jonglei Food Security Program (JFSP). Operating in Jonglei State, the largest and most populous state in South Sudan, the program was to address root causes of food insecurity through food for work programs to build community assets and support for small farmers, among other things. However, in 2013 the country was plunged into a civil war.

Jonglei was one of the epicenters of the conflict. The ensuing insecurity prevented CRS from continuing JFSP development activities and ultimately damaged or destroyed much of the community assets and farming improvements made through the program. Fleeing for their

safety, many residents of Jonglei state left their homes for the safety of camps both inside South Sudan and in neighboring countries. Given the radically different nature of the needs in Jonglei, CRS worked with the Office of Food for Peace to convert JFSP into an emergency response program. From 2014-2015, JFSP funding was used to provide emergency food assistance to nearly 140,000 people. Some areas in need were impossible to reach by land because of the fighting. Partnering with WFP, food supplies were airlifted into remote areas of Jonglei to CRS staff, who then continued emergency food distributions to those hardest hit.

In August 2015, government and opposition forces signed a peace agreement. While fighting continues in some places in the country, the peace has largely held in Jonglei State and staff and officials on the ground credit JFSP in part. The calm has allowed resumption of development activities in some areas, and relief convoys to enter other regions for the first time in over two years. Most people and officials in these areas did not believe aid convoys would be allowed in. When convoys began arriving earlier this year, they were met by people cheering and dancing. One local official commented that “this is not food for work but food for hope.” Our staff noted that “at least in Jonglei, the food convoys have brought a feeling that real peace might be feasible.” We have already seen a number of internally displaced people coming back to Jonglei, and it is our expectation that continued engagement through JFSP will direct most people’s energy and focus back to preparing for the planting season instead of fighting.



Building a dike through Food for Work in South Sudan

Malawi – Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement

In 2014, CRS completed Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement (WALA), a five-year development Food for Peace project in Malawi. As with most Food for Peace development projects, WALA took a multi-sectoral approach to food security. The project included helping farmers adopt new and better techniques and technology, connecting them to markets, addressing the nutritional needs of young children and expecting mothers, providing better access to water for agriculture and hygiene, helping communities build productive assets, and among other interventions. While most program success indicators showed strong results, one standout area was in watershed rehabilitation and management.

Heavy rains characterize the wet season in Malawi. Communities targeted by WALA are prone to soil erosion from rushing water running off their land during these rains. In the lean season, many water sources for these communities would dry up and most small farmers could not produce enough food over the year to get them through this period. Given these circumstance, through food for work, WALA introduced a number of communities to techniques, like water absorption trenches, that slow and reduce run off and help water percolate into the soil. Check dams were constructed in areas where run-off had formed gullies. Native cover crops, grasses, and trees were introduced in key areas of farm land to help with soil retention and to improve nutrient content.

The results of these efforts have been dramatic. The water table has risen, resulting in more water availability in wells. Wells and streams that would dry up during the lean season now flow year round. Water clarity in streams has increased also. Over just one or two years, check dams have filled gullies, helping farmers reclaim farmland. With more moisture and nutrients in the soil, and more land to cultivate, agricultural yields have increased. Neighboring communities not in the WALA program noted these successes and on their own adopted the knowledge and techniques used in WALA.

These programs demonstrate huge successes – addressing the acute needs of people gripped by severe drought in Ethiopia, being able to shift between emergency and development work as needs change and to capitalize on opportunities for peace in South Sudan, and in making a foundation for a better life more resilient life for people in Malawi. Unfortunately, needs are expanding. The world is seeing more people being impacted by shocks like conflict and weather patterns like El Nino, and potentially La Nina later in the year. The funding requested for FFP, \$1.716 billion, will be critical for the US to respond to the growing emergency needs around the world. Further, directing more than the minimum level of funding to FFP development programs will help more communities get ahead, so that when shocks to strike, they are better prepared to meet their own needs.

McGovern-Dole and USDA LRP

McGovern-Dole Food for Education programs provide food for school lunch programs. In many cases, the lunch provided through McGovern-Dole is the only meal children receive all day. Parents who would not otherwise send their children to school are motivated to do so because they know their children will be fed. This has been especially true for girls, whose education is not traditionally encouraged in many parts of the world. Catholic Relief Services currently implements five McGovern-Dole programs. In addition to school feeding, we also use McGovern-Dole resources to strengthen teacher training and to make improvements to schools.

The USDA Local and Regional Procurement (LRP) program, made permanent by the 2014 Farm Bill, is intended to be used in conjunction with McGovern-Dole programming and we view it as critical to the sustainability of school lunch programs. Specifically, we believe these funds can be used to establish the systems needed to source food used in school lunches from local farmers. This will entail helping these farmer grow the quality and quantity needed for school lunches and organizing parent groups to manage school canteens. Ultimately, once these systems are in place, local governments can assume responsibility for these programs.

Improving Food Aid

Catholic Relief Services supports several improvements to the current food aid system, including the phasing out of requirements to monetize food aid commodities, reducing the burden of agricultural cargo preferences on food aid, and giving implementers greater flexibility to determine how food aid resources are used. We refer you to testimony Catholic Relief Services submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April 2015 and the House Agriculture Committee in September 2015 for more details concerning these improvements.