

**Catholic Relief Services**  
**Appropriations Requests for Fiscal Year 2017**  
**Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs**

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, as Catholic Relief Services (CRS) addresses the many affronts to human dignity across the globe, we are reminded of the importance of US leadership. The United States sets the tone and tenor among governments around the globe for the role of civil society, the response to refugees, and the long-term efforts to establish safety and opportunity. CRS appreciates your critical efforts to ensure this leadership through robust funding for programs to reduce poverty and save lives. Herein CRS and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) provide our requests for FY 2017 appropriations in the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs subcommittee:

<b>Appropriations Account Title (\$ in thousands) (OCO included)</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>USCCB/CRS Request</b>
Maternal and Child Health	USAID	\$814,500
Nutrition	USAID	\$230,000
Vulnerable Children	USAID	\$30,000
HIV/AIDS (USAID)	USAID	\$330,000
Malaria, TB, Global Health Security & NTDs	USAID	\$1,095,000
HIV/AIDS	DOS/OGAC	\$5,670,000
Development Assistance	USAID	\$3,100,000
International Disaster Assistance	USAID	\$2,794,184
Migration and Refugee Assistance	DOS/PRM	\$3,600,000
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance	DOS/PRM	\$100,000
Complex Crises Fund	USAID	\$50,000
Millennium Challenge Account	MCC	\$1,000,000
Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities	DOS	\$2,394,930
Peacekeeping Operations	DOS	\$475,391
Mechanism for Peace Operations Response	DOS	\$150,000
Green Climate Fund	DOS	\$750,000
Combatting Trafficking in Persons (in all accounts)	DOS	\$56,000

Created to carry out the USCCB’s commitment to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas, CRS is proud to partner with the United States government to bring opportunity and safety to millions of people every year, often in the world’s most dangerous places. We are a member of and access the Catholic Church’s global network of Caritas agencies. Like many faith-based organizations, CRS is also trusted by beneficiaries because we work with trusted local partners (often church leaders and institutions), have demonstrated our commitment to their well-being, are sensitive to local customs and cultures, and build the capacity of the local community to implement the work itself. Because of this trust, we can coordinate with a broad spectrum of actors, including local governments, beneficiaries, businesses and other stakeholders. A certain independence from governments enables that trust. Efforts to require NGOs to share beneficiary information; personal information about staff (e.g., the Partner Vetting System (PVS)); or details about conflicts violate that trust. Consequently, they impact our abilities to

operate effectively and put our staff at risk. We urge the United States government to protect the roles of non-governmental organizations as independent partners, recognizing too that the United States government's stance towards civil society will be imitated.

This testimony will highlight the USCCB and CRS' appropriations requests in five areas: 1) humanitarian assistance; 2) conflict management; 3) global health, especially Malaria and Nutrition; 4) providing safety and opportunity in Central America; and 5) climate change.

**Humanitarian assistance** The number of people affected by humanitarian crises today is staggering. Less visible than those fleeing to Europe, the scale of displacement in places like South Sudan, Eritrea, and Burundi is extremely high and straining neighboring countries. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates the total number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has surpassed 60 million. Even worse, the severity of conflicts in the world causing displacement is not subsiding, as indicated by the fact that the voluntary return rate of those displaced from their homes of origin is at the lowest point in three decades.

With sorrow, we acknowledge that this week marks five years of conflict in Syria. CRS has served more than one million Syrians, in partnership with many courageous women religious, the local Caritas agencies, and Syrian refugee volunteers. We do so with profound respect for the generosity of Syria's neighbors. In the fall of 2015, our partnerships with the local Caritas agencies enabled us to respond with agility and speed, using private funds, to serve the tens of thousands of Syrian, Afghan, and other refugees fleeing to Europe. As their routes to safety and needs change through the seasons and political uncertainties, we continue to flexibly serve their needs. Yet this crisis requires global leadership.

More than half of Syrian refugees are children. UNICEF reports that 2.8 million Syrian children are out of school. And they have witnessed horrific atrocities. Among our many emergency response initiatives to respond to Syrians affected by the crisis, CRS has particularly focused on formal and informal education, and trauma-healing of children. In child-friendly spaces, children draw photos of bombs and dismembered bodies. With No Strings International, CRS has developed a trauma-healing program using puppets which helps children to process what they have experienced. Unless the international community invests heavily in these children and youth, an entire generation of Syria's children could be lost. This is not only morally unacceptable, but also could negatively reverberate across the region and globe.

CRS appreciates the Administration's leadership in hosting a high-level refugee summit around the UN General Assembly this year. Congress' robust funding of humanitarian accounts in recent years enables the US to credibly lead such an effort. We urge you to once again increase that funding, providing \$3.6 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance and nearly \$2.8 billion for International Disaster Assistance. CRS is concerned about the significant amount of funding requested by the Administration through the Overseas Contingency Operations for these accounts, and we urge you to restore base funding. We also urge you to seek ways to maximize the efficiency of these funds, in part by increasing the speed with which the US government assists refugees and asylum-seekers.

Finally, we urge Congress to support the Administration to resettle our fair share of vulnerable Syrians into the United States: our vetting process is the strongest in the world.

**Conflict management** In places like Central African Republic and South Sudan, CRS partners with the local church in peacebuilding efforts. Yet humanitarian intervention and peacebuilding efforts would be impossible without United Nations or regional peacekeepers. We urge you to support the Administration's entire request for peacekeeping, including the Peace Operations Response Mechanism. These same fragile countries that require peacekeeping troops need U.S. strategies and funding to prevent the descent into conflict and to halt violence, negotiate ceasefires and rebuild vibrant governments, private sectors and civil societies. We urge you to fund the Complex Crises Fund to assist countries to politically manage conflict and promote restorative justice and reconciliation among those caught in civil war.

**Global health programs** CRS and the USCCB support the global health programs enumerated in the chart above. In particular, we urge Congress and the Administration to seek ways to strengthen health systems globally. As the Ebola outbreak demonstrated, weak health systems in other parts of the world that are unable to withstand shocks can lead to needless death and suffering and could quickly impact us here. For this reason, CRS supports the Global Health Security account; we work in partnership with the Global Health Security Agenda in Mali and Guinea-Bissau to address antimicrobial resistance, biosecurity and biosafety and to strengthen community disease surveillance.

In the end, Ebola took over 11,000 lives, robbed over 23,000 children of a parent or caregiver, wiped out health gains and plunged millions more people in West Africa into abject poverty. Ebola also indirectly caused a significant increase in deaths from malaria, as sick people avoided health clinics for fear of catching Ebola. More than 3 billion people globally are at risk of being infected with malaria, and pregnant women and young children are the most vulnerable. In 2015, 305,000 African children died of malaria before turning five years old. Yet this is a preventable disease. With our local church partners, CRS works to train communities to keep their homes free of standing water and to provide long-lasting, insecticide-treated mosquito nets to more than 17.5 million people. We also deliver medicine to young children in high-risk areas. We support the President's request for malaria.

Poor nutrition is the underlying cause of 45 percent of deaths of children under five years old worldwide. Poor nutrition also leads to stunting, which causes significant and permanent mental and physical impairment, especially when malnutrition strikes early in life. Malnutrition stymies economic development and keeps families and societies locked in poverty. Investments in nutrition save lives, create more potential for prosperity, and reduce health challenges in developing countries. Investments in nutrition from pregnancy to a child's second birthday can boost a country's GDP by as much as 11% annually, and increase individual earning capacity by up to 46% over a lifetime. CRS works with local partners to alleviate childhood malnutrition with low-cost interventions addressing inadequate feeding practices and exposure to illnesses. Some of these services include breastfeeding support for mothers, growth monitoring for children, training on proper food preparation and storage, and managing chronic illnesses. We urge Congress to expand funding for nutrition in the global health budget to \$230 million.

**Central America** CRS believes that children are part of the solution to the crisis in Central America. "Just give us a chance," they say. Our successful youth workforce program, modeled on Youthbuilders, is being scaled up throughout the region. Our Food for Education program in Honduras, which improved educational outcomes and attendance in Intibucá province is now being replicated across the country at the request of the Government of Honduras. And our public-private partnerships to establish cooperatives among small-scale farmers and link them to markets is now being applied to cocoa in El

Salvador. As many as 10,000 farmers devastated by climate change's impact on coffee will have a reliable alternative crop through this program.

CRS and USCCB applaud the provisions in the FY 2016 omnibus requiring each northern triangle government to ensure that an independent, autonomous Board comprised oversees funding to the governments; and that governments involved affected populations in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs affecting them. We urge Congress and the Administration to press the governments to ensure that these Boards play a meaningful role and are comprised of a wide variety of non-governmental actors, including academics, non-profit social service agencies, think tanks, foundations, and faith-based organizations.

We also join a chorus of organizations who urge Congress and the Administration to make public to civil society in the United States and the northern triangle the benchmarks and indicators used to measure successes in each country. We appreciate the efforts of Congress and the Administration, including USAID, to ensure that programs and funds are focused on the most marginalized and needy communities, such as the Western Highlands of Guatemala.

The United States relies on partnership with the Government of Mexico to respond to these fleeing children and youth. The Southern Border Program has exported to Mexico a policy of enforcement and deterrence; we urge you to focus on exporting protection and due process. The many courageous Catholic organizations responding to these asylum-seekers stress that the increased enforcement has pushed them further underground and increased the risks of the trek. We urge you to provide financial and technical assistance to the government of Mexico's National System for the Holistic Development of the Family (DIF) to accept custody of unaccompanied children; ensure their best interests are evaluated; and ensure protection needs are assessed and met. We also urge you to ensure the Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees meaningfully implements best practices for the identification and treatment of asylum seekers and victims of trafficking. Finally, we urge Congress to work with the Administration to scale up the number of refugees processed through UNHCR and the Central American unaccompanied minors program.

**Climate Change** In his Encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis calls us all to a renewed and authentic stewardship of the resources God has entrusted to us. CRS and USCCB view the Green Climate Fund as an important step to answering this moral call, particularly because climate change disproportionately affects the poor. We especially support the Green Climate Fund's emphasis on adaptation and on least developed and other highly vulnerable countries. CRS applauds the recent release of FY 2016 money for the Fund, and we urge you to ensure that the FY 2017 commitment is met.

CRS has leveraged US funding to support projects that have significant climate change adaptation benefits. For example, we implement multi-sectoral projects in places like Malawi, Ethiopia, and Madagascar. The primary goal of these projects is to improve food security, but they include measures such as watershed restoration, use of green manure cover crops, disaster risk reduction interventions, and the introduction of drought resistance seeds. Together, these kinds of interventions are allowing farmers to withstand the more variable rain patterns, longer periods of drought, and more intense storms. Some of these methods also greatly increase the carbon in the soil poor farmers are using, thus improving farm productivity and sequestering more carbon than the land otherwise would. We asked a beneficiary in Ethiopia what the project meant to her; she replied, "None of my children died this year."