

Action Sheet

JANUARY 2021

God, rescue your children trapped in the scourge of modern-day slavery, and give us courage and perseverance to act against this injustice this new year and always.

SKILL-BUILDING ACTION

The Global Child Thrive Act passed into law as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)! Our Action Sheet action this month will be to write personal emails to your U.S. Senators and Representatives sharing this good news and thanking Congress for passing the Global Child Thrive Act as amendment to the FY21 NDAA. Please see specifics outlined below for thanking members who played a key role. Conclude your letters by expressing your desire to continue to work with your respective member of Congress to continue addressing global poverty and prioritizing the well-being of all individuals in our world.

LASER TALK

More than half of the world's estimated 26 million refugees are children. Globally, the number of children who face a lifetime of developmental challenges caused by malnutrition exceeds 149 million—more than twice the total number of children in the United States. According to the World Food Program, COVID-19 may push an additional 10 million children into acute malnutrition.

The good news is that since 1990, U.S. international aid has saved nearly 100 million children. But children need to do more than survive; they need to thrive. That's why investing in Early Childhood Development, or ECD, is so important. Singing, reading and playing with colorful objects stimulates young minds, but the U.S. government doesn't integrate ECD activities into international programs for children. Our faith compels us to care for all life which means giving each child a strong foundation from which to reach their God-given potential.

The Global Child Thrive Act passed into law as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, directing the administration to integrate ECD activities into international child-focused programs. The Global Child Thrive Act law will continue to greatly mitigate the impact of future pandemics and disasters on vulnerable children and their families.

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 continues to devastate families and communities everywhere. Nearly two million deaths have been recorded worldwide since February 2020 due to COVID-19. While needs continue to increase in the United States, we must also be deeply concerned about the impact globally. With your support, and that of the U.S. Catholic community, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its partners are working tirelessly to respond to COVID-19 through adapted programming to address immediate and long-term needs, with a focus on supporting high risk populations like vulnerable children.

Migrant and Refugee Children and the Global Child Thrive Act: Worldwide it's estimated that 31 million children have been forcibly displaced from their homes. More than half of the world's estimated 26 million refugees are children, according to

the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. These children will have their development disrupted and may grow smaller brains than children who have not experienced the trauma of fleeing violence. That's why early intervention during emergencies is incredibly important. By integrating Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions into programs for young children and their families, CRS has been able to multiply positive outcomes for children in adversity—like migrants and refugees, and those suffering from malnutrition and living in poverty. During the time of COVID-19, ECD is more important than ever. The death or illness of a caregiver, the loss of income and rising tensions within a household combined with social isolation—all can reduce supervision, family protection and responsive caregiving in affected families. During the pandemic and in its wake, vulnerable children may experience heightened levels of neglect, mental or psychological distress, stalled educational progress, child labor, human trafficking, separation from loved ones and social exclusion.

One key way to address the negative impacts of forced displacement, hunger and malnutrition on children's development is to incorporate ECD activities into programs that support vulnerable children. With non-U.S. government funding, CRS and other international development and humanitarian agencies have been able to multiply positive outcomes for children in adversity by integrating ECD activities into programs for young children and their families. The Global Child Thrive Act, passed into law as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA, directs the U.S. Administration to integrate ECD activities into the current U.S. government's international development and humanitarian programs serving vulnerable children and their families around the world. The Global Child Thrive Act does not require additional federal funding. The integration of ECD activities into humanitarian programming will help children reach their developmental milestones despite disruptions caused by displacement or COVID-19 and build their resilience to future emergencies and trauma.

Read [Majid's story](#) for learning more about CRS' educational opportunities prioritizing uninterrupted learning for children facing displacement.

TAKE ACTION: Write personal emails to your U.S. Senators and Representative

- 1. Go to the website of your U.S. Senators and Representative to see how they want you to email them** (e.g., by filling out an online form on their website or by emailing a specific email address from the website).
- 2. Introduce yourself:** Provide personal information to root yourself in the community (e.g., I am active in my local parish, I volunteer at our local food bank, etc.) and briefly share why this issue matters to you. Share connections to your faith, activities you're involved with in your community to help children and families, etc.
- 3. Express gratitude to Congress:** Thank Congress for passing the Global Child Thrive Act into law as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Visit the body of this Action Sheet for additional information and share in your own words why this legislation is important, including why it was critically important to pass this bill now given the COVID-19 pandemic. Consider the following points for expressing gratitude for any specific leadership role your member of Congress may have held:
 - Keep in mind, we are not thanking for the passage of the NDAA holistically given CRS' purview within the Church, and that not all members of Congress may have acted in support of the Global Child Thrive Act. Therefore, lead your message with thanking the 116th Congress for passing the Global Child Thrive Act into law, then get specific.
 - If you are writing a newly elected member of Congress, share the good news that the Global Child Thrive Act passed into law as an amendment to the NDAA and why you advocated for the bill. If you wish to write a member of Congress who recently retired or was not re-elected, check with their staff to discover the best way to get your message to them.
 - Check to see if your [U.S. Senators cosponsored S.2715](#) or if your [U.S. Representative cosponsored H.R.4864](#). Specifically name and thank your member(s) of Congress for cosponsoring the legislation, if applicable.
 - Specifically thank and acknowledge your member(s) of Congress for their leadership if they held one of the following key roles in the process: *lead sponsor of the Global Child Thrive Act or chair or ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, House Foreign Affairs Committee, House or Senate Armed Services Committees.*
- 4. Share your desire to continue working together:** In your own words, express to your member(s) of Congress why and how you are looking forward to continuing to work with them in the 117th Congress. For example, you might suggest that you look forward to meeting with them soon to continue sharing your priorities and addressing global poverty together.