

Action Sheet

MAY 2021

Loving God, you entrust us to be stewards of your creation. May we renew our commitment to you and our neighbor with love and action.

SKILL AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING ACTION

The president released his ‘skinny’ budget on April 9. Once he releases his full budget proposal, the Senate will begin reviewing the Administration’s proposed budget and start drafting their respective bills. Our Action Sheet action this month is to write a letter to the editor urging your U.S. Senators to increase international poverty-reducing development and humanitarian assistance in Fiscal Year 2022.

LASER TALK

Since 1990, 1 billion people have moved out of extreme poverty. U.S. sponsored international humanitarian and development aid has provided opportunities for countless millions around the world to move out of poverty. Of the more than \$4 trillion federal budget, Congress allocates half of 1% towards poverty-reducing international aid with strong bipartisan support. Beyond a belief in the moral imperative, the United States recognizes it is in our best interest to invest resources that foster peace and security and promote the common good.

The World Bank estimates that the impacts of COVID-19 will cause between 143 and 163 million people to fall into poverty in 2021, the first rise in extreme poverty globally in 20 years. Our faith compels us to uphold the dignity of individuals and communities around the world, especially those experiencing forced displacement and hunger. Therefore, it is critically important to increase funding that supports sustainable solutions to poverty, changing climates and disease.

Will you help increase international poverty-reducing development and humanitarian assistance in Fiscal Year 2022? The accounts which do this are outlined in CRS and the USCCB’s appropriations chart. The innovative programs that this funding supports can help ensure that decades of development gains are not lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND

Holistic advocacy on the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget

The World Bank now estimates that in 2021, we will see the first rise in global extreme poverty in 20 years. Your consistent action demonstrates that many in our nation, inspired by their faith and goodwill, want the government to be a beacon of justice, peace and hope, especially for the 143 to 163 million people that may fall into poverty in 2021 due to COVID-19.¹ Your action demonstrates our nation wants the U.S. government to engage with every corner of the world to help lead the way on solving global health crises, protecting human rights and responding quickly to food insecurity, malnutrition and changing climate impacts like droughts and floods. The poverty-reducing development and humanitarian accounts in the [CRS/USCCB chart of accounts](#) fund programs around the world, including many CRS programs, that work to end hunger and forced displacement.

¹ The World Bank. [Updated estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty: Looking back at 2020 and the outlook for 2021](#). 11 January 2021. Blog.

CRS, alongside the international NGO community, is looking for Congress to increase funds to international poverty-reducing accounts. To do this, CRS pushes for a top-line amount of resources to go to foreign assistance, so there is space to increase the poverty-reducing accounts outlined in the chart of accounts. The chart subsequently outlines the specific requests for the accounts that address poverty, hunger and disease. The holistic approach ensures a significant amount of funding is available for these issues overall. We have principled concerns with providing taxpayer funding for activities inconsistent with our Catholic faith and basic human rights. Therefore, we also strongly urge Congress to maintain the Helms Amendment in Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations, which prohibits the use of U.S. funded foreign assistance for abortion.

Climate focused programming and the budget

Climate impacts challenge the ability for many families and communities around the world to remain in their homes and have consistent access to nutritious foods. Nearly 25 million East Africans are threatened with hunger due to the largest invasion of desert locusts in Africa in 70 years.² Each year, more than 20 million people must leave their homes due to environmental degradation, prolonged droughts, desertification or cyclones.³ To ensure that the international poverty-reducing accounts that impact climate focused programming receive the highest top-line allocations, we advocate holistically on the chart of accounts. The Green Climate Fund is one example of an account that works to support poverty-reducing, climate-focused programming. Additionally, other poverty-reducing accounts work to address the impacts of changing climates on the lives of our sisters and brothers around the world. Non-emergency Title II Food for Peace funding, which support CRS programming to improve soil health and land restoration, work to foster climate adaptation and resilience.

Read the story of [Labaladezy and Frankline](#) to see how programming funded by Title II Food for Peace impacts families.

TAKE ACTION: Write a letter to the editor focused on your U.S. Senators

1. **Find the local newspaper you will target:** To learn what is required for letters to the editor, Google the following: “(Name of the paper) letters to the editor guidelines.” Identify the word limit and submission method (i.e., via the website or email).

2. **Think about the placement of the piece:** If you are writing to a daily newspaper, find an article or editorial that provides an entry point to discuss the need to care for vulnerable families and communities amidst this pandemic. If you are writing to a smaller weekly paper, write in a way that would be of interest to local readers.

3. **Research:** Read a few letters to the editor in the newspaper you are targeting to see how they begin and the general tone.

4. **Write your letter to the editor:** Using the newspaper’s guidelines and this Action Sheet’s information, identify yourself and share what values or experiences move you to work to support the world’s most vulnerable individuals. Have another chapter member provide some edits for your letter. Find additional guidance in this [letter to the editor training](#) (40:20 mark).

5. **Include your specific message:** Urge your U.S. Senators to increase poverty-reducing international development and humanitarian assistance in Fiscal Year 2022. [The accounts which do this are enumerated in the [CRS/USCCB appropriations chart](#).] We strongly urge Congress to maintain the Helms Amendment in Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations, which prohibits the use of U.S. funded foreign assistance for abortion.

Note: If the word count allows, consider urging your U.S. Senators to take the next step by speaking to the chairs or ranking members of the State, Foreign Operations (SFOPs), Agriculture or Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS) subcommittees.

6. **Report back and celebrate:** If your letter is published, contact your CRS representative, share it on social media tagging your members of Congress, send it to your members of Congress by email and have your chapter’s liaison call the key aide to make sure they saw it! If it’s not published, consider editing it, if needed, and sending it to another newspaper.

² Gilliland, Hailey. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/gigantic-locust-swarms-hit-east-africa>. 12 May 2020. National Geographic online.

³ UNHCR. [Climate change and disaster displacement](#). UNHCR online.