

Action Sheet

NOVEMBER 2020

“Encountering the poor and those in need constantly challenges us and forces us to think. How can we help to eliminate or at least alleviate their marginalization and suffering?... The Christian community is called to be involved in this kind of sharing and to recognize that it cannot be delegated to others.” -Pope Francis on World Day of the Poor 2020

SKILL-BUILDING ACTION

We commemorate World Day of the Poor this month by holding our sisters and brothers who experience forced displacement and hunger in prayer and continuing our efforts to include the Global Child Thrive Act amendment in the final Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). We know that its passage, as part of the NDAA, would help millions of the world’s children who face adversity. **Our Action Sheet action this month is to write a personal email to our U.S. Representatives** urging them to write to the decision makers of the final NDAA, asking their support for retaining the Castro-Fitzpatrick Global Child Thrive Act amendment in the NDAA bill, coming out of the House/Senate Conference Committee.

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.

Will you join Reps. Castro (D-TX) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA) in efforts to have their Global Child Thrive Act amendment included in the final version of the NDAA, directing the administration to integrate ECD activities into international child-focused programs? Passage would 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. More than one million deaths have been recorded throughout the world 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.

Forced Displacement, Hunger and the Global Child Thrive Act: Worldwide it’s estimated that 31 million children have been forcibly displaced from their homes, according to UNICEF (2020). These children will have their development disrupted and

may grow smaller brains than children who have not experienced the trauma of fleeing violence. UNICEF (2020) reports that “between a quarter and a third of children under five (191 million) were stunted or wasted – too short or too thin,” in 2019. According to UNICEF (2019), global malnutrition, which stunts children’s growth and impairs their cognitive and physical development, is the underlying cause of 45 percent of all preventable deaths of children under five. Therefore, to address global poverty, we must address forced displacement, hunger and malnutrition as critical issues affecting the well-being and dignity of millions of children. Experts are concerned that vulnerable children are at greater risk of reduced access to life-saving vaccinations and primary health services, increased levels of neglect, mental or psychological distress, stalled educational progress, child labor, separation from or loss of loved ones, less responsive caregiving and social exclusion. The Gospel calls us to a preferential option for the poor, which given our current context, amplifies the need to act now to prevent the worst impacts of the pandemic for our vulnerable sisters and brothers around the world.

One key way to address the impact of forced displacement, hunger and malnutrition is to incorporate Early Childhood Development (ECD) activities into nutrition programming and other interventions that support vulnerable children. By using private funding and integrating ECD interventions into programs for young children and their families, CRS and other implementers have been able to multiply positive outcomes for children in adversity. The Global Child Thrive Act would direct the Administration to integrate ECD interventions into development and humanitarian programs serving vulnerable children and their families around the world without requiring 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. Additionally, it promotes psychosocial support and positive reinforcement, which will be crucial for young children experiencing the loss of a parent, isolation at home due to quarantines, malnutrition and magnified household economic stress, which are expected to increase as a result of this pandemic.

To reflect and learn more about forced displacement, hunger and innovative approaches to addressing global poverty, check out this [Providing Comprehensive Care video \(en español\)](#), [Soraya’s story \(en español\)](#) and [Alejandra’s story \(en español\)](#).

TAKE ACTION: Write a personal email to your U.S. Representative

- 1. Go to the website of your U.S. Representative and see how they want you to email them** (e.g., by filling out an online form 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. Thank your U.S. Representative:** Express gratitude for something related to this bill, global poverty or for their service in Congress. You can [check here to see if your U.S. Representative is a co-sponsor](#) of the Global Child Thrive Act (H.R. 4864).
 - **Important note:** Keep in mind the most recent election and the status of your U.S. Representative’s re-election for the next Congress.
- 4. Make the ask:** Urge your U.S. Representative to write and/or speak with the key decision makers on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) urging them to retain the Castro-Fitzpatrick Global Child Thrive Act amendment in the final Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA bill when they merge the House and Senate versions of the NDAA bill in the weeks ahead.
- 5. Provide some background to support your argument:** In your own words, share why it is important to integrate Early Childhood Development activities across international child-focused programs to multiply positive outcomes for vulnerable children. Visit the body of this Action Sheet to support your argument, including why it is most critically important to pass this bill **now** given the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 6. Repeat the ‘ask’, say thank you, and request a response:** Leave your name, address, phone number and email address so the office can get back to you with their decision.

