

Action Sheet

NOVEMBER 2019

ACTION

In order to invite more people to join the newly formed chapter and the new campaign to lead the way on the issue of forced migration through promoting legislation on Early Childhood Development, our action this month will be to write 2-3 friends inviting them to join you at the December CRS Chapter National Conference Call meeting. You can invite them to either the December 14th CRS Chapter Monthly Conference Call itself or the meeting a few days later when your chapter gathers to listen to the conference call.

LASER TALK

When we invest in our values, we save lives. We value children—since 1990, U.S. international aid has saved nearly 100 million children. We value mothers—in that same time frame, we’ve seen maternal mortality rates drop 44 percent worldwide. But we can’t stop there.

Children need to do more than survive; they need to thrive. That’s why investing in Early Childhood Development, or ECD, is so important. Equipping caregivers with age-appropriate techniques—singing, reading, playing with colorful objects—will stimulate young minds and ensure a better future. It only costs 50 cents per child per year. And we know it works: the benefits of ECD programming are worth six times their cost. But the U.S. government doesn’t integrate ECD into international programs for children. Our Catholic faith compels us to care for life from conception to natural death. That means giving each child a strong foundation from which to reach his or her God-given potential.

Will you join Reps. Castro (TX) and Fitzpatrick (PA) in cosponsoring the Global Child Thrive Act (H.R. 4864)—legislation directing the administration to integrate Early Childhood Development activities across international child-focused programs, thereby improving the lives of vulnerable children?

BACKGROUND

At Catholic Relief Services, we integrate Early Childhood Development (ECD) into both our long-term development and emergency programs using private resources. When working with migrant and refugee children and their families overseas, CRS endeavors to provide spaces where children can be safe playing, learning, making friends and just being children. The latest estimates show that there are 36.1 million children who are refugees and 17 million internally displaced children worldwide—and these numbers are on the rise.

Being uprooted from home as a young child can have significant negative repercussions on a child’s overall development. For example, the chaos and fear associated with life on the move can directly disrupt a child’s brain development given that when a child feels unsafe, his or her brain will spend more time focusing on survival, rather than on new areas of growth and exploration. Children experiencing toxic stress will grow smaller brains with fewer neural connections than children who are not traumatized; they may experience speech or reading delays, and later suffer depression, anxiety and behavioral issues. In addition, migrants often have a lack of adequate nutrient intake and limited access to health care. This can be particularly devastating if children experience these elements during key developmental windows, such as the first years of life. Studies

have found that forced migration during early childhood was significantly associated with poor cognitive well-being later in life.

Our work at Catholic Relief Services focuses on providing family support and learning activities for migrant and refugee children to mitigate the impact of such trauma. Playing and interacting with caregivers in a nurturing way, along with good nutrition, clean water and sanitation, health services and parental support are all components of the ECD that Catholic Relief Services provides to migrant and refugee children. In this way, CRS works to build children's resilience and promote their healing, so that they may achieve their God-given potential. For traumatized children, specialized interventions provided as early as possible are necessary to target the cause of the stress and protect them from its consequences. The United States should integrate ECD into its international humanitarian programs supporting young migrant children and their families.

TAKE ACTION: Write a letter to your U.S. Representative

1. Reflect on your short time with the CRS Chapter.

- Did you complete any of the following actions and were any of them new to you?: a) sending a personal letter to a member of Congress, b) calling your Congressperson's staff about your letter, c) writing a letter to the editor, d) having a letter to the editor published, and/or e) meeting or are in the process of planning for a meeting with a member of Congress or their aide?
- Do you have any reflections about having a more powerful role in your democracy and your ability to make a difference for your brothers and sisters living in poverty?

2. Which friends would be most interested in learning more about this kind of work and these personal breakthroughs?

- Make a list of 2-3 friends and family members you'd like to invite to your next CRS Chapter meeting.
 - You may invite more than 2-3 if you like.

3. Write 2-3 friends inviting them to attend a) the Saturday, December 14th CRS Chapter National Conference Call and action planning meeting or b) the meeting a few days after the national conference call when your chapter will listen to the recording instead.

In your letter:

(a) tell them why you saw them as someone who would be interested in supporting the work of CRS Chapters,

(b) share about a new action you have taken and any reflections about yourself and your abilities to be a more effective advocate since joining the chapter,

(c) invite them to join you at either (1) the December 14th CRS Chapter National Conference Call and action planning meeting letting them know the location, to arrive at 12:45pm and that the meeting goes from 1:00-3:00pm **or** (2) the meeting a few days after the national conference call where your chapter listens to the recording of the call and writes your letters.

(d) let them know that, at the meeting they will be guided through writing a letter to their U.S. Representative on legislation that will truly benefit children and families living in poverty, and finally,

(e) let them know that you will call in a few days to see if they can make it.

4. Mark your calendar to call your friends a few days after you write them to encourage them to come. If they can make it, remind them a few days before the meeting takes place.

