

Action Sheet

JUNE 2020

Almighty God, we pray that nations act to help all who are displaced by violence and conflict so that the futures of each person and our world may be bright.

ACTION

We commemorate World Refugee Day this month by holding our refugee brothers and sisters in prayer and ramping up our efforts to advance the Global Child Thrive Act in the Senate. Our action sheet action this month will be to write our U.S. Senators urging them to cosponsor or thanking them if they have already cosponsored the Global Child Thrive Act (**S. 2715**). If they are a cosponsor, ask your senators to take the next step in supporting the bill by asking the Chairman and Ranking member in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to bring the bill up in committee. In addition to writing your own email, we encourage you to coach 1-2 friends and family members to write a letter to their senators with the same ask.

The Global Child Thrive Act, introduced by Sens. Coons (D-DE) and Blunt (R-MO), will mandate that Early Childhood Development interventions be integrated into existing U.S. government international programs focused on young children and their families. Doing this will ensure U.S. foreign aid programs will be as effective as possible in helping young children thrive, especially during times such as this current global crisis.

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.

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), lead sponsors of H.R. 4864, or Sens. Coons (D-DE) and Blunt (R-MO), lead sponsors of S. 2715, in cosponsoring the Global Child Thrive Act, directing the administration to integrate ECD activities into international child-focused programs? Passage would greatly mitigate the impact of future pandemics and disasters on the poorest families.

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 continues to devastate families and communities across the United States and world. While needs increase in the United States, we must also be deeply concerned about the impact around the world, where families and communities face daunting barriers to basic needs and services. With the support of the Catholic community in the United States, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its partners are working tirelessly to respond to COVID-19, focusing on supporting high risk populations like vulnerable children, refugees and other people uprooted from their communities, many of whom live in densely congested living spaces with limited access to water, health services and sanitation.

COVID-19, 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. 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. Given the prevalence of underlying health conditions such as HIV infection, poor nutrition, and limited access to quality health services, mortality rates due to COVID-19 may be much higher in low-income countries. 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, separation from loved ones and social exclusion.

The Global Child Thrive Act would integrate Early Childhood Development into development and humanitarian programs serving vulnerable children and their families without requiring additional funding—helping children recover from the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and building their resilience to future emergencies and trauma. Moreover, the holistic nature of the bill means it connects to many aspects of care. For example, it promotes access to clean water and hygiene practices, which are the primary tools in stopping the spread of COVID-19. It elevates the necessity of providing safe, family-based care for children without family care, including those who may lose parental care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, it promotes psychosocial support, which will be crucial for young children experiencing violence, traumatic events, and economic hardships, like refugee children, which are expected to increase as a result of this pandemic.

To view a video that describes the impact of forced displacement on children, [journey to our campaign YouTube playlists](#).

TAKE ACTION: Write a letter to your U.S. Senators & invite others to join you

1. **Go to the website of one of your U.S. Senators and see how they want you to write them** (e.g. by filling out an online form or by email.)
2. **Introduce yourself:** Provide personal information to root yourself in the community (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 parish or diocese to help children and families, etc. Share if you've visited a related CRS program.
3. **Thank your senator:** Express gratitude for Congress' action to help address the needs of the most vulnerable people in the U.S. and around the world amidst this pandemic.
4. **Make the ask:** Ask your U.S. Senator to cosponsor the Global Child Thrive Act (S. 2715) introduced by Sens. Coons (D-DE) and Blunt (R-MO). [If your Senator is already a cosponsor](#), thank them. Ask them to also to take a next step in their support of the legislation by speaking to the key decision-makers on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to urge consideration of the bill.
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, especially as World Refugee Day approaches (June 20). Visit the body of this Action Sheet to support your argument.
6. **Repeat the 'ask', say thank you, and request a response:** Leave your name, address, phone number and email address so they can get back to you with their decision.
7. **Coach others in the action:** Invite 1-2 friends or family members to join you in taking action by writing an email with the same asks of your senators.