

Action Sheet

OCTOBER 2020

God of Creation, we pray that we may be good stewards of all you have given us and prophetic advocates for our brothers and sisters who suffer from hunger and malnutrition.

SKILL-BUILDING ACTION

We commemorate World Food Day this month by holding our sisters and brothers who experience hunger and malnutrition in prayer and continuing our efforts to advance the Global Child Thrive Act, S. 2715, knowing that its passage would help millions of children facing adversity overseas. Our Skill-building Action Sheet action this month is to write a personal email to both of our senators urging them to sign onto a letter being initiated by Sens. Blunt and Coons, lead sponsors of S. 2715, to the decision makers on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) urging that they retain the Castro-Fitzpatrick Global Child Thrive Act amendment in the final Fiscal Year 2021 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 Sens. Coons (D-DE) and Blunt (R-MO), lead sponsors of S. 2715, in supporting 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 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 the novel coronavirus. 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. CRS continues to prioritize the need for emergency funding to address COVID-19 as one way of prioritizing the reduction of long-term effects on vulnerable children and families. While we've seen partisan divides around advancing further emergency response funding for COVID-19 needs both domestically and internationally, the Global Child Thrive Act continues to gain bipartisan support as one way to make all foreign aid funding much more effective at mitigating long-term

impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable children.

COVID-19, Hunger, Malnutrition and the Global Child Thrive Act: 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 hunger, we must address malnutrition, and one key way 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. During the pandemic and in its wake, 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 Global Child Thrive Act would direct the Administration to integrate ECD interventions into development and humanitarian programs serving vulnerable children and their families without requiring additional federal funding. Investment in quality ECD programs has been shown to produce a 13 percent return per year on investment by improving health outcomes, boosting salaries, spurring the economy, and reducing a country’s deficit. The integration of ECD activities into humanitarian programming will help children recover holistically from the long-term impacts of disruptions caused by displacement or COVID-19 and build their resilience to future emergencies and trauma. ECD programs will support the boosting of economies in the near and distant future as vulnerable communities work to rebuild following the pandemic’s economic damage. 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 the issue of hunger and malnutrition and how you can lead the way on hunger, check out our [Lead the Way on Hunger video \(En Español\)](#) and [Labaladezy and Frankline’s story](#).

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

1. **Go to the website of your senators and see how they want you to write them** (e.g. filling out an online form or by email.)
2. **Introduce yourself:** Share personal information to root yourself in the community (I am active in my parish, I volunteer at our local food bank, etc.) and briefly share why this issue matters to you. Share connections to your faith and to activities you’re involved with in your parish or diocese to help children and families. 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. [If your senator is a co-sponsor of S. 2715, be sure to thank them.](#)
4. **Make the ask:** Ask both your U.S. Senators to sign onto a letter being initiated by Sens. Blunt and Coons, lead sponsors of S. 2715, to the decision makers on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) House/Senate Conference Committee urging them to retain the Castro-Fitzpatrick Global Child Thrive Act amendment in the final Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA bill. If your senator is a *Republican*, they should contact Alexandra_McPhee@Blunt.senate.gov to sign onto the letter. If your senator is a *Democrat*, they should contact Carter_Thompson@Coons.senate.gov to sign onto the letter.

Note: The PDF of the sign-on letter will be distributed in the email from your CRS Representative following the National Chapter Call on October 10th.

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 Food Day approaches (October 16). 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.