

Action Sheet

SEPTEMBER 2020

“May he, who shared in the sufferings of those who flee from the hatred of the powerful, console and protect all our brothers and sisters driven by war, poverty and necessity to leave their homes and their lands to set out as refugees for safer places.” – Pope Francis, World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2020

SKILL-BUILDING ACTION

We commemorate World Day of Migrants and Refugees this month by holding our migrant and refugee sisters and brothers in prayer and continuing our efforts to advance the Global Child Thrive Act, knowing that its passage would help millions of children facing adversity around the world. Our skill-building Action Sheet action this month is to **coach 1-2 friends or family members** in writing a personal email to their U.S. senators urging them to cosponsor the Global Child Thrive Act, S. 2715, or, if they are already a cosponsor, thanking them for cosponsoring and asking them to take a next step in their support of the legislation by speaking with the leadership of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and urging them to hold a business meeting and take up the bill. **Writing your own letters and encouraging others to lift their voices is critical as we approach the Congressional finish line.**

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 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 everywhere. While needs increase in the United States, we must also be deeply concerned about the impact around the world. Fragile or non-existent health systems often mean families face daunting barriers to basic care. 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, focusing on supporting high risk populations like vulnerable children, refugees and other people uprooted from their communities, many of whom live in congested living spaces and camps with limited access to clean water, health services and sanitation.

COVID-19, Migrant and 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, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 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 (ECD) into development and humanitarian programs serving vulnerable children and their families without requiring additional federal funding. It would help children recover from the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and build their resilience to future emergencies and trauma. Moreover, the holistic nature of the bill means it connects to many aspects of care for children. For example, it promotes access to clean water and hygiene practices at home, which are primary tools in stopping the spread of COVID-19. It elevates the necessity of providing safe, family-based care for children, including for those who are at risk of losing parental care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, 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 children's experiences of forced displacement and migration check out our [Lead the Way YouTube playlist \(En Español\)](#) and [this bilingual collection of stories of Majd, Annet and Soraya crs.org/leadtheway](https://www.crs.org/leadtheway).

TAKE ACTION: Coach others to write an email to their U.S. Senators

- 1. Coach others in the action:** Invite 1-2 friends or family members to join you in your work by writing a personal email to their U.S. senators. Consider inviting a prominent community member you know who may grab the attention of the senators.
- 2. Visit the websites 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.)
- 3. Introduction:** Start with 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 community to help children and families, etc.
- 4. Express gratitude:** Thank your senator for something they've done that you appreciate.
- 5. Make the ask:** Ask your U.S. Senators to co-sponsor the Global Child Thrive Act (S. 2715) introduced by Sens. Coons (D-DE) and Blunt (R-MO). [If a senator is already a cosponsor](#), thank them and ask them to take the next step in their support of the legislation by speaking to leaders of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to hold a business meeting and urge consideration of the bill.
- 6. 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 [Word Day of Migrants and Refugees](#) approaches (September 27th). Visit the body of this Action Sheet to support your argument.
- 7. 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.