

# Action Sheet: Chapter Launch Workshop

**JUNE/JULY 2020**

---

*Join a powerful movement of advocacy and action to transform our world. Leading the way begins now. We come together as a community and as individuals to pray, learn and take meaningful action to help those who will suffer the most from this global pandemic: migrants and refugees, communities that lack access to enough food and nutrition and people living in poverty.*

---

## Action

Our action this month will be to write our U.S. Senators and ask them to (1) cosponsor the Global Child Thrive Act (S.2715) introduced by Sens. Blunt (R-MO) and Coons (D-DE) and (2) meet with members of the new chapter being started this evening/afternoon to discuss this exciting international development intervention.

## 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), 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

Our work at Catholic Relief Services focuses on the most vulnerable children, helping their families ensure they reach school age healthy and well-nourished, intellectually curious, socially confident and equipped with a solid foundation for life-long learning. Using private funding, CRS invests in Early Childhood Development (ECD) to ensure that health and nutrition services, responsive caregiving, safety and security, and opportunities for early learning are available for the most vulnerable children in countries such as Kenya, Malawi and Zambia. We have developed a process for integrating ECD into ongoing programming that reaches children during their first 1,000 days of life up through the age of 8 years old and have implemented that programming in 20 countries around the world, serving 1.36 million children and their families.

For refugee and other children who have seen the devastation of war and violence in their communities or have been forced to flee their homes due to that violence—their development is severely hindered due to their trauma. CRS is supporting children who have been displaced by violence by creating classrooms and child-friendly spaces where children can have access to education that brings stability, and opportunities for growth and expression to heal from the trauma they have experienced. Malnutrition stunts children’s growth and impairs their cognitive and physical development. But it is not enough for children to simply have access to food, they need nutritious food and nurturing care to properly grow and develop. ECD is a way to help children thrive despite these challenges.

**Moving from Surviving to Thriving—A New Approach and Ask for Congress:** According to the British medical journal, *The Lancet*, “a staggering 43 percent of children under five years of age—an estimated 250 million—living in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of suboptimal development caused by poverty, nutritional deficiencies, and inadequate learning opportunities.” Experts now recommend targeting caregivers and children with ECD during the first years of life to ensure children living in adversity do not fall below their potential.

U.S. government efforts to assist children in low income countries have often focused on specific areas of vulnerability—for example, programs focused on children and HIV or malnutrition or child labor. Although such efforts have produced substantial benefits, this diffused approach has resulted in a fragmented programmatic response for children. The incorporation of ECD interventions as core components of U.S. government programs across all child-focused areas would multiply outcomes for children and ensure the most effective use of precious foreign aid resources.

Based on new research and our first-hand experience, we are calling on the U.S. government to become a global leader. As the biggest donor of foreign assistance worldwide, the United States has a critical role to play in improving the lives of the world’s most vulnerable children. Under our world’s current circumstances, ensuring the conditions for vulnerable children to survive and thrive is critical. The Global Child Thrive Act, if passed by Congress and signed into law, could be an important part of this effort. The Global Child Thrive Act would integrate Early Childhood Development into development and humanitarian/emergency programs serving vulnerable children and their families, helping them recover from the COVID-19 virus and building their resilience to future emergencies and trauma.

## TAKE ACTION: Write a letter to your U.S. Senators

- 1. Go to the website 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 are involved with in your community to help children and families, etc.
- 3. Find something for which to thank the 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 **(a)** cosponsor the Global Child Thrive Act (S. 2715) introduced by Sens. Blunt (R-MO) and Coons (D-DE) and **(b)** meet with the CRS Chapter being started this today. *If your Senator is already a cosponsor of the Global Child Thrive Act (S. 2715), thank them and ask them to take a next step in their support of the legislation by speaking to leadership in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to urge consideration of the bill.*
- 5. Provide some background to support your argument:** In your own words, share why it is important for Congress to encourage the administration 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.
- 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.