

# Congressional Meeting Briefing Document: Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations

## LEADING THE WAY ON MIGRATION & HUNGER

### OVERVIEW

*This document is meant to assist you in preparing to meet with the offices of your members of Congress by providing background information on the issues you will be discussing.*

CRS believes that our work together in the United States is the outward expression of missionary discipleship. Together, we are called to encounter Christ in the members of our human family most in need and to share the Good News with others, becoming prophetic advocates for justice and the common good.

We have launched campaigns to *lead the way* on the global issues of hunger and forced displacement and migration. Our Lead the Way on Migration campaign is focused on ensuring our brothers and sisters on the move can exercise their right to lead dignified lives, and ultimately thrive. Our Lead the Way on Hunger campaign calls forth a vision where all people have the conditions they need to access regular, healthy food, ensuring optimal nutrition to ultimately thrive. **Your congressional meetings, and other forms of communication with offices, will be an opportunity to take part in these campaigns to support our human family suffering from poverty, hunger, forced migration and displacement.**

**As an opportunity to stand with migrants, refugees and those experiencing hunger, your congressional meetings will focus on protecting international poverty-reducing development and humanitarian assistance in the Fiscal Year 2021 federal budget.**

The talking points on pages 3 and 4 can serve as a guide for how to structure your meeting with the offices of your members of Congress so that you can highlight this issue in your conversation. The most important part of your preparation is to reflect on how you will express why you and your community care about these issues—as well as the stories you can share with the offices you meet with about how you and your community are engaged on these issues of importance and support those most vulnerable around the world.

### BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUES OF MIGRATION & HUNGER

The unprecedented global challenge of COVID-19 will require a comprehensive and extraordinary international response to save lives, care for those affected and ensure human dignity. COVID-19 is particularly dire for communities that are already vulnerable, including refugees, migrants and those suffering from food insecurity. According to the UN, there are almost 80 million people forcibly displaced around the world, 26 million of whom are refugees, and 135 million people requiring emergency food assistance. The international community already faced daunting challenges in 2020, and COVID-19 exacerbates these existing hardships. As COVID-19 continues to spread around the world, CRS and our partners are adapting programs to address the needs of older adults and vulnerable children, refugees and migrants, people with compromised immune systems and their caregivers, as well as other high-risk populations.

Pope Francis reminds us, “This is not a time for indifference, because the whole world is suffering and needs to be united in facing the pandemic.” Serving more than 159 million people in 114 countries in 2019, CRS can attest first-hand to the significant challenges poor and vulnerable communities encounter, especially those who are hungry or have been displaced, and to the impact of poverty-reducing foreign assistance. To end poverty, hunger and disease, and to support migrants and the forcibly displaced, CRS provides shelter to refugees, helps farmers to grow better crops in the face of climate change or drought, promotes peace in communities divided by differences, creates opportunities for parents and caregivers to learn about nutrition and how to support their children’s development and provides immediate response in emergencies. CRS is proud to partner with the U.S. government to bring hope and safety to communities—from refugees fleeing Syria to farmers seeking opportunity in El Salvador.

**MIGRATION:** In Central America, which has some of the highest rates of violence outside of war zones, CRS works on community development and youth empowerment, creating opportunities for youth and families to thrive in their communities and not feel compelled to flee north. In Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in Uganda, where almost 300,000 South Sudanese refugees reside, CRS focuses on livelihoods, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and housing for people with special needs. With no end in sight to the ongoing conflict in South Sudan, the humanitarian efforts are critical to meet the needs of the population. Furthermore, across the Middle East and Europe, CRS and our local partners have helped more than 1.4 million Syrians. In partnership with Caritas Jordan, CRS provides Syrian refugee children with access to safe, quality educational opportunities. These opportunities are important not only for the educational purposes, but also for the healing space they provide for children impacted by the conflict. Lastly, CRS and Caritas Iraq are helping displaced Iraqis return home and rebuild their lives. This includes the repair of war-damaged homes, livelihoods support and access to quality education.

[Visit this link for individual stories about the experiences of migrants and refugees around the world](#) or [crs.org/leadtheway](https://crs.org/leadtheway).

**HUNGER:** CRS implements a multi-sectoral approach to addressing food security that starts with better management of natural resources. Soil degradation and lack of water are common obstacles facing the small farm families CRS works within our food security programming. To reverse years, and even decades, of poor land and water management practices, CRS works with communities to adopt proven conservation practices that slow rainwater runoff and improve its absorption into the water table. This improves access to water, which allows for the introduction of irrigation farming, and is coupled with better farm practices like intercropping, cover crops and agroforestry which improve soil quality. Together, these interventions have shown to improve agricultural yields for small farm families, and generally help insulate them against some of the effects of climate change. In addition to better land and water management, our food security programming also helps farm families better engage with markets, gain access to microfinancing and adopt better mother-child nutrition practices. The cumulative effect of these strategies improves food security, raises farm incomes and moves people out of poverty.

[Visit this link for individual stories about the experiences of hunger and malnutrition around the world](#) or [crs.org/leadtheway](https://crs.org/leadtheway).

## CURRENT STATE OF PLAY OF THE BUDGET

Each year, Congress negotiates how to spend U.S. taxpayer dollars through a process called appropriations. Of the \$4 trillion U.S. federal budget, about 1% is appropriated, or allocated for spending by Congress, to foreign assistance. *Half* of that 1% is directed toward poverty-reducing humanitarian and development aid. Through the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, organizations such as CRS partner with the U.S. government to implement programming funded by the U.S. government. While foreign aid has large bipartisan support, the administration proposed to reduce foreign aid by nearly 30% for three consecutive years. Fortunately, Congress rejected these cuts and largely maintained U.S. investments in poverty-reduction programming thanks to the work of constituents who call on Congress to prioritize protecting this funding.



## Fiscal Year 2021 International Poverty-Reducing Humanitarian and Development Funding

On February 10, 2020, the administration released their Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) budget request, calling for a 22% cut to foreign assistance, including deep and disproportionate decreases to poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance. The House and Senate ultimately decide on funding levels for this budget. The House of Representatives has passed FY21 appropriations bills that largely maintain strong investments in the accounts we prioritize (see chart). The Senate has yet to introduce their FY21 bills. As the Senate proposes their bills and begins negotiating differences with House passed legislation, it is critical that Congress hears from interested stakeholders, such as CRS, about our priorities.

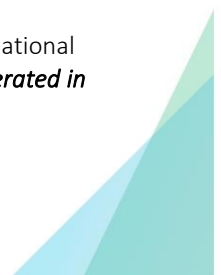
In addition to regular appropriations, Congress has passed legislation to respond to the growing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of the beginning of August 2020, Congress has passed four bills providing much-needed aid, particularly for U.S. workers and businesses and sick and vulnerable low-income persons. The first and third emergency packages also included initial funding, roughly \$1.6 billion, to support preparedness and humanitarian efforts abroad. While CRS will urge Congress to provide additional funds for the overseas response to COVID-19 in the next supplemental, advocacy on the Fiscal Year 2021 budget remains critical to promote U.S. global leadership and to ensure adequate funding for poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance.

## TALKING POINTS

- **Thank you for your time to discuss international development and humanitarian aid.**
  - *The introduction is an opportunity to share a little about yourself, your work in the state/district and your connection to CRS.*
- **As Catholics, we believe there is a moral obligation to provide assistance and address the root causes of poverty, hunger and forced migration.**
  - *Share your personal story of why you support Catholic Relief Services' international humanitarian and development work, to illustrate your concern about our human family around the world and these global issues.*
- **The U.S. government has the responsibility and capacity to address the needs of the poor to prevent conflict and hunger, promote opportunity and keep all people safe.** By helping communities with humanitarian assistance and development programs today, we can avoid catastrophes in the future. Pope Francis has said, "Our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members."
- **We are pleased that Congress protected international assistance in Fiscal Year 2019 and Fiscal Year 2020.** Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned about the Administration's Fiscal Year 2021 budget request, which proposed a 22% cut to foreign aid. **We urge Congress to protect international funding that supports poor and marginalized communities to the levels indicated in the chart (Share Chart).** CRS is proud to partner with the U.S. government to provide assistance overseas. U.S. leadership is critical in our collective effort not only to end poverty, hunger, forced displacement and disease, but to address their root causes and to prevent, prepare and respond to COVID-19.
  - *Share a story about the importance and impact of these programs overseas.*
  - *Think of how you can tell your community's story about how they organize to support CRS because of their call to support our human family most in need. This might be connected to CRS Rice Bowl participation or it could be about some other type of activity the community has participated in.*

## THE ASK

1. At a time of unprecedented humanitarian need, we urge Congress to protect poverty-reducing international development and humanitarian assistance in Fiscal Year 2021. ***[The accounts which do this are enumerated in CRS' appropriations chart.]***



## QUESTIONS/COMMENTS TO RAISE

1. If the Senator/Representative travels abroad, please let us know if he/she would like to visit CRS programming. As you know, we are in 114 countries around the world and would welcome an opportunity to show the Senator/Representative the impact US dollars have on the ground.
2. Please see CRS and me as a resource both here in Washington, DC and back home in the state/district. Express an interest in continuing to dialogue with the Senator/Representative, or his/her staff, on these and other issues of mutual interest.



A partnership between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services

