

Background Information and Talking Points: Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations

OVERVIEW

This document is meant to assist you in preparing to communicate with the offices of your members of Congress by providing background information on the budget and appropriations process.

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. CRS' campaigns on the global issues of hunger and climate change allow you to do just that.

Your advocacy will be an opportunity to take part in these campaigns to support our human family suffering from poverty, hunger, forced migration and displacement, and the effects of climate change by continuing to build your relationship with your members of Congress and their staff.

The background information and talking points below can serve as a guide for how to structure your correspondence and meetings with the offices of your members of Congress. The most important aspect of any advocacy action is to demonstrate why you, and your community, care about these issues—as well as the stories you can share with the offices about how you and your community support those most vulnerable around the world.

BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUES OF CLIMATE CHANGE & HUNGER

The number of people living in poverty has increased for the first time in 20 years, as the United Nations World Food Program estimates that 48.9 million people are currently on the brink of starvation. Extreme hunger has more than doubled since 2019, with surging food, fertilizer, and energy prices further constraining household purchasing power and agricultural productivity more recently. As the world experiences an increase in storms, prolonged drought, record temperatures, and rising sea levels, millions are plunged into humanitarian despair. Climate change is a threat multiplier that drives social and economic inequality – and disproportionately affects the most vulnerable – by destroying agriculture and natural resources, disrupting livelihoods, contributing to mass displacement, and increasing the risk of conflict.

On the World Day of Peace this past January, Pope Francis reminded us that “the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth constantly make themselves heard, pleading for justice and peace.” CRS hears the cries of communities ravaged by COVID-19 and pushed into poverty; of families in Afghanistan and Ukraine not knowing where they will find their next meal; and of people, who have done the least to contribute to climate change, that are disproportionately impacted by extreme weather events. As Catholic Relief Services responds to these cries, we recognize that U.S. government support is critical to uphold human dignity, to stand in solidarity with the poor, to be good stewards of the earth, and to prioritize the common good.

THE PROBLEM: Climate change and extreme poverty are inextricably linked. Low-income communities mired by hunger and poverty are disproportionately impacted by the Earth’s changing climate due to high levels of exposure and vulnerability posed by climatic shocks on already strained agricultural and economic systems. The World Bank estimates that an additional 130 million people will be thrust into extreme poverty from the impacts of climate change alone, meaning that those who have contributed the least to the global climate crisis will suffer the greatest.

To protect hard-won development gains and those at risk of being further left-behind, CRS is working around the world to integrate and promote climate adaptation to help people living in vulnerable contexts cope with the rapid and slow-onset consequences of climate change. We do this by restoring degraded landscapes to create new farming opportunities and support livelihoods; improving watersheds for reliable clean water access for land use and human consumption; repairing soil health for more prosperous yields; and promoting biodiversity for optimal human health and environmental wellbeing. CRS employs various nature-based solutions – working with nature rather than against it – to plant trees and diversify crops among other evidence-based activities that mitigate the effects of climate change on smallholder farmers who are reliant on their own agricultural production for both food and income. Additionally, we implement complementary support activities that train communities on optimal nutrition for young children and new mothers, provide access to microfinancing, and establish market pathways.

In the eastern landscapes of Madagascar, CRS is scaling a wide-reaching land restoration effort that engages local communities, governments, and businesses for better environmental stewardship; increases youth livelihood opportunities; and improves the education and health of local farmers. SPICES, the Securing and Protecting Investments and Capacities for Environmental Sustainability program, supports biodiversity – which Madagascar rightly prides itself on – by implementing climate-smart practices for better, sustainable agricultural yields. The project focuses specifically on vanilla, cinnamon, cloves, pepper, turmeric, ginger, and cocoa to both protect these crops and generate increased revenue for farmers. This additional income will allow households to invest in education, nutrition, and health care.

Today, SPICES continues to partner with local communities throughout Madagascar. CRS is currently working with seven Dioceses in five regions of the country to reach over 20,000 households.

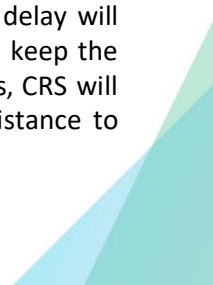
Visit crs.org/act for stories about the experiences of hunger and malnutrition around the world .

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 more than \$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. Congress. Foreign aid maintains strong bipartisan support. Congress largely maintained previous levels of assistance when passing Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations this March. Protecting these accounts would not have been possible without the diligent work of constituents who call on Congress to prioritize this funding.

Fiscal Year 2023 International Poverty-Reducing Humanitarian and Development Funding

The administration released their Fiscal Year 2023 budget proposal in March. The House and Senate have drafted bills but do not plan to finalize appropriations until after the midterm elections in November. This delay will require Congress to pass a continuing resolution before September 30, the end of the fiscal year, to keep the government running at Fiscal Year 2022 levels. Until Congress finalizes Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations, CRS will continue to advocate on our priority accounts to ensure the U.S. government provides robust assistance to alleviate suffering and eliminate poverty.



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.*
- **We believe there is a moral obligation to provide assistance to communities impacted by food insecurity and climate change.**
 - *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, avert severe climate impacts for the most vulnerable, 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 2022. We urge Congress to ensure the highest funding levels possible for poverty-reducing international development and humanitarian assistance in Fiscal Year 2023 (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 to address the effects of climate change and to end poverty, hunger, forced displacement and disease.
 - *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

At a time of unprecedented humanitarian need, we urge Congress to ensure the highest funding levels possible for poverty-reducing international development and humanitarian assistance in Fiscal Year 2023. ***[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 in the future. As you know, we are in more than 100 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 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