

CRS Chapters: COVID-19 Advocacy

Loving Creator, help and heal all impacted by the coronavirus: patients, healthcare and aid workers, vulnerable families and communities in all the world.

COVID-19 and International Humanitarian and Development Assistance

COVID-19 continues to devastate families and communities across the United States and world. While needs increase in the United States, we are deeply concerned that the impact could be far greater in the developing world, where families and communities face daunting barriers to access needs and services. Furthermore, the impacts on livelihoods and hunger could be catastrophic. With the support of the Catholic community in the United States, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its partners are working tirelessly to respond to COVID-19, knowing that we cannot ultimately protect the vulnerable here if we do not protect the vulnerable everywhere.

Across more than 30 countries, in partnership with the local Church, governments and organizations, CRS' global response includes:

1) Addressing the immediate health crisis by working with health systems to provide essential services and support in preventing the spread of COVID-19:

- Working to ensure awareness of accurate health information.
- Providing critical hygiene supplies for prevention.
- Training health care staff and providing support—including supplies and protective equipment—for local health institutions.
- Strengthening capacity for local partners to address needs.

2) Helping to mitigate social and economic impacts:

- Strengthening food security, or consistent access to nutritious food, and meeting basic needs.
- Minimizing the impact of job loss
- Strengthening overall psychological well-being and relationships and cohesion among different community groups.

CRS aims for a locally led COVID-19 response that helps ensure people survive with dignity, rebuild their lives and communities, and strengthen their long-term stability and resilience to future crises.

CRS focuses on mitigating the risks facing the highest-risk populations, like vulnerable children, elderly people, people with disabilities and refugees and other people uprooted from their communities who are often in

densely congested areas, confined living spaces or multi-generational households with limited access to water, health services and infrastructure. Where possible, CRS is adapting existing programs to continue to meet people's needs beyond this crisis, while not contributing to the spread of the virus during the delivery of critical assistance.

COVID-19 and Congress

Congress has been quickly passing legislation to respond to the growing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of the beginning of April, Congress has passed three 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 \$2 billion, to support preparedness and humanitarian efforts abroad. **While Congress continues to prioritize U.S. domestic needs in the next supplemental package, Congress and the Administration recognize that to address COVID-19 we need to resolve the pandemic everywhere, which includes U.S. global leadership in providing additional funds for poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance.**

Additional bills are currently being negotiated, and it is critically important that we continue to support Congress in their work to support Americans in need here in the U.S. and to urge our nation to be a global leader in addressing this pandemic around the world by caring for those most vulnerable living in poverty.

Congress and the Administration must commit and disburse foreign assistance resources that are sufficient and flexible to respond appropriately to this unprecedented crisis. While COVID-19 is a domestic priority, it is all too clear how interconnected our world is and, therefore, the importance of addressing the health crisis everywhere, including in developing nations.

Key accounts for this funding in the International Affairs Budget include:

- **Lifesaving Global Health-USAID:** helps strengthen fragile health systems while preparing and educating communities confronting the spread of COVID-19.
- **International Disaster Assistance (IDA):** funds will support existing humanitarian crisis contexts and respond to emerging humanitarian consequences through water, sanitation, and hygiene programs; food security and nutrition efforts; as well as health, livelihoods, and shelter.
- **Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA):** helps protect refugees and internally displaced persons, who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

Now is the time to bravely commit to a bold response, and to support organizations best placed to effectively address community needs. In addition, we want to ensure that charitable nonprofits are supported in their service of responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

Talking Points: U.S. Leadership Is Needed Now More than Ever

The Holy Father calls to us, "let us remain united. Let us make our closeness felt to those who are alone and to those who are most stricken." This crisis has reminded us all how interconnected we are and how important U.S. leadership is to assist the poor and vulnerable both in the U.S. and around the world. We must stand with our human family and work to care for one another.

As the Administration continues to respond to the crisis globally, we urge Congress to:

- Provide no less than \$20 billion in emergency supplemental resources for the International Affairs Budget to support the global response in the next supplemental package. Funding should prioritize immediate health needs and respond to humanitarian and economic impacts while targeting the poorest and most vulnerable communities, including displaced, children and the elderly. Key accounts to

consider are International Disaster Assistance, lifesaving Global Health-USAID, and Migration and Refugee Assistance.

- Ensure the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development expeditiously spend the roughly \$1.6 billion in supplemental funds already appropriated, or allocated by Congress, for poverty-focused international humanitarian and development assistance.

