

Testimony of William O’Keefe
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 regarding **Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations** to the House subcommittee on
State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
 March 12, 2019

Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Rogers: On behalf of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), I respectfully request that you increase international poverty-reducing humanitarian relief and development assistance in Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) appropriations. We urge you to prioritize the accounts below according to the levels indicated. We deeply appreciate your commitment to these accounts in Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19), and your recognition of the critical leadership role the United States plays in responding to immense needs around the world every year.

Maternal & Child Health (USAID)	\$845,000,000
Nutrition (USAID)	\$145,000,000
Vulnerable Children (USAID)	\$27,000,000
HIV/AIDS (USAID)	\$330,000,000
Malaria (USAID)	\$755,000,000
Tuberculosis (USAID)	\$302,000,000
Neglected Tropical Diseases (USAID)	\$105,950,000
Global Health Security	\$100,000,000
PEPFAR/Global Fund (DOS)	\$5,930,000,000
Development Assistance (USAID)	\$3,100,000,000
International Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)	\$4,500,000,000
Migration and Refugee Assistance (DOS/PRM)	\$3,604,000,000
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (DOS/PRM)	\$1,000,000
Complex Crises Fund (DOS)	\$30,000,000
Millennium Challenge Account (MCC)	\$905,000,000
Atrocities Prevention Board (ESF & INCLE)	\$5,750,000
Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities (DOS/IO)	\$1,825,000,000
Peacekeeping Operations (DOS/IO)	\$552,940,000
Green Climate Fund (Treasury)	\$500,000,000
United States Institute of Peace	\$38,634,000
Anti-Trafficking in Persons (DA, ESF, AEECA, INCLE)	\$80,822,000

As the international relief and development agency of the Catholic community in the United States, we aspire to save lives and alleviate suffering; accelerate the end of poverty, hunger, and preventable diseases; and cultivate just and peaceful societies. CRS operates in 110 countries, partners with almost 2,000 local, national, and international organizations, and serves more than 136 million individuals. Our aspirations and work are driven by the desire to uphold the dignity of each human person. As Pope Paul VI wrote, our collective efforts and solidarity should “allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny.”

We urge Congress to increase the international affairs budget to \$60 billion to ensure protection of poverty-reducing international assistance. We ask that funding for the poverty-reducing accounts listed above not come at the expense of other development, life-saving global health, and humanitarian programs that engender a safer and more prosperous world.

I. Preserve Humanitarian Programs and Policies

CRS commends Congress' steadfast leadership to address humanitarian crises and the more than 132 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. **CRS urges Congress to increase FY20 funding for International Disaster Assistance to \$4.5 billion and Migration and Refugee Assistance to \$3.6 billion, given unprecedented levels of forced displacement.** We urge the committee to work with the administration to ensure a rapid response to new crises without neglecting other smaller, less publicized crises impacting needy populations.

U.S. humanitarian leadership requires more than the allocation of funds and distribution of goods and services. Humanitarian leadership also encompasses principled humanitarian decision making that is concerned with how, when, and where we respond to the needs of people. Assistance should always occur in a just and transparent manner, in accordance with established international humanitarian principles. Humanitarian aid should be informed by contextual analysis and grounded in a shared understanding of the intended target group and expected outcomes. Furthermore, U.S. led humanitarian efforts, from South America to Asia to the Middle East, must focus on building local capacity and strengthening resilience of host communities. Local leadership of humanitarian aid allows for the most rapid and needs driven response. At CRS, we are committed to working with local partners, especially domestic Caritas agencies and faith-based organizations, to empower them to be effective and impactful leaders.

In Venezuela, millions of people face a dire situation. Food shortages, hyperinflation, the collapse of the health system, and a climate of violence have forced more than 3 million people to flee the country. Experts predict more than 2 million more people could flee by the end of this calendar year. Neighboring countries in South America and the Caribbean have limited resources to meet basic needs of refugees and host communities. CRS is grateful for the U.S.' commitment to respond to this crisis, but U.S. humanitarian assistance must be driven by needs and separated from the political context. CRS supports local Caritas partners in the region through focused technical support and accompaniment. Caritas Venezuela continues to provide health and nutrition programming across 14 dioceses in 10 states and the capital. Caritas Colombia, in partnership with the U.S. government, supports almost 10,000 refugees with shelter, protection and cash assistance for legal processes. Caritas Peru and Ecuador offer multipurpose cash, food security, nutrition, shelter, and protection to a growing number of Venezuelans who are traveling further distances seeking help.

In 2017, widespread violence in Rakhine, Burma caused 700,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh. Over 900,000 Rohingya refugees remain in Bangladesh, which is now home to the world's largest and most densely populated refugee settlement, Kutupalong-Balukhali Expansion Site. CRS provides shelter and settlement; water, sanitation, and hygiene; and protection services within the expansion site. We support Caritas Bangladesh to provide food and non-food items. Two years in to this response, vast needs remain for a refugee population seeking peace in their lives. As the

U.S. and others pursue broader solutions to this crisis, the U.S. must ensure that any repatriation is voluntary and safe.

While we appreciate the U.S. response to crises like those in Venezuela and Burma, we lament the termination of all bilateral and multilateral contributions to support Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. Of the 1.9 million people in Gaza, 53 percent live in poverty and more than half - approximately 1.24 million - need international food assistance to survive. The cessation of U.S. assistance has increased hopelessness and unnecessarily risks more regional instability. We call on Congress to address the barriers to aid to the Palestinian people. First, assistance provided through the Economic Support Fund and delivered to people in need through organizations like CRS is not sufficient to establish jurisdiction over the Palestinian Authority pursuant to the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act. Second, we ask Congress to include clear direction to the administration in FY20 appropriations to expend at least \$225 million for assistance to the West Bank and Gaza. Congress should also prompt the administration to use already appropriated funds to meet ongoing and urgent humanitarian needs. Lastly, we urge Congress to provide the administration a clear framework in conducting its review of aid in this region.

Efforts to end violence and suffering cannot be achieved through humanitarian assistance alone. U.S. diplomatic engagement and political solutions are necessary to alleviate suffering, resolve conflict, and recognize human rights and dignity. In South Sudan and the Central African Republic, CRS has been working with faith leaders to bring healing and reconciliation to communities suffering from years of trauma. Pope John XXIII said, “Man’s awareness of his rights must inevitably lead him to the recognition of his duties.” As a blessed nation, it is our duty to promote peaceful and just societies. **Therefore, we urge the committee to continue to support Church leaders seeking to bring resolution to ongoing violence and suffering and to maintain its investments in peacekeeping, the Atrocities Prevention Board, the Complex Crisis Fund, and the U.S. Institute of Peace.**

II. Catalyze Development Outcomes at Scale

CRS applauds the committee and Congress on their efforts to meet global development challenges. USAID’s journey to self-reliance will demand increased investments to catalyze development outcomes at scale. Development programs help communities gain access to basic education and clean water, grow nutritious food, combat trafficking in persons, promote economic development and good governance, respond to climate shocks, and create more democratic societies. To sustainably address the root causes of poverty, hunger, and injustice, we must scale approaches that foster change within governments, markets, and communities. **We therefore urge you to increase critical investments funded by the Development Assistance account to \$3.1 billion and support Economic Support funds that achieve the goal of poverty reduction.**

In Central America, populations suffer some of the highest rates of violence outside of warzones. Moreover, high unemployment, increased food insecurity in rural areas, and lack of economic opportunity cripple communities, offering them limited means to achieve their fullest potential. With increased attention on the Northern Triangle, now is the opportunity for this committee to direct additional development assistance to Central America to address the underlying push factors of migration from the region. CRS implements projects in youth development, water smart agriculture, education, health, and emergencies across Central America to allow people to thrive

in their home communities. Innovative approaches to development such as impact investing also help address the urgent and multidimensional issues of poverty and injustice. In El Salvador, CRS structured Azure, a blended finance and technical assistance facility, to improve water and sanitation services for underserved communities. Azure mobilizes capital and technical support for water service providers to upgrade and expand, with a goal to improve quality of services for 500,000 people through the end of 2020. The U.S., through efforts like Azure, must continue to support holistic programming that addresses issues of prosperity, governance, and security.

In Ethiopia, CRS implements the Feed the Future Livelihoods for Resilience - Oromia Project funded as part of the Global Food Security Act (GFSA). The program promotes on-farm (crop and livestock), off-farm, and employment livelihood pathways for close to 30,000 households. The program serves households enrolled in the Government of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program and provides higher-level services like advanced education on access to credit and deeper support for local agribusiness/farmer connections. The participating households will be able to build productive assets and establish multiple income streams that will allow them to be more resilient to recurrent extreme weather impacting the Horn of Africa. **We are grateful that Congress reauthorized the GFSA last year and urge the committee to fulfill the funding commitment made in that legislation by allocating \$1 billion of Development Assistance funding for the agriculture, resilience, and nutrition programs, which support projects like Oromia. We also request that at least \$80 million is made available for the Community Development Fund, which is used to support Title II Food for Peace non-emergency programs that connect with GFSA programming.**

III. Expand U.S. Leadership in Global Health

Past investments in global health initiatives have saved millions. We are deeply appreciative of the committee's historic support for PEPFAR and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria. **We ask the committee to provide \$5.93 billion in funding for PEPFAR, which includes an increase in appropriations for the Global Fund. The U.S. pledge at the Global Fund's Replenishment Conference this October in France will leverage a two to one match from other donor countries.**

The Global Fund has determined that at least \$14 billion is needed over the coming replenishment cycle (2020 – 2022) to maintain its leadership role in putting the world on track to end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. **To leverage adequate support from other donors, we ask that the committee appropriate at least \$1.56 billion to the Global Fund this year.** This investment alone will help to save an additional 1.8 million lives, avert more than 26 million new infections or cases of AIDS, TB, or malaria, and reinforce health systems.

The United States has also been a world-leader in saving children's and mothers' lives for the past 30 years. Since 1990, an estimated 100 million children have been saved, due in large part to the congressional investment in child survival programs. In addition, maternal mortality rates have dropped 44 percent with the help of U.S. funding. Nutrition programs, funded by the global health account, Food for Peace non-emergency programs, and Feed the Future, have also been key to child survival and maternal health.

While USAID has made great contributions in ending the preventable death of mothers and children, there is more that could be done to amplify our investments. Experts now recommend targeting caregivers and children during early human development (0-8 years) to ensure children do not fall below their potential. Age appropriate mental stimulation and nurturing care, called Early Childhood Development (ECD), includes screening for early developmental delays, training in positive reinforcement, and activities such as singing, reading, playing, and interactive feeding. Because the U.S. government does not currently invest in ECD across sectors, we at CRS use private funding to integrate ECD into our existing maternal and child health, nutrition, basic education, protection, and other child-focused programs. ECD integration has multiplied the impact of interventions and amplified the return on our investment in the form of positive outcomes for children. **We urge the U.S. government to incorporate ECD into existing child-focused programs to make the most effective and impactful use of that funding, and we thank the committee for report language to that effect in FY18 and FY19.**

We also urge the committee to increase funding for the Vulnerable Children account, as this money will help implement an updated Action Plan on Children in Adversity over the coming years. The Action Plan will focus on three objectives: building strong beginnings, putting family care first, and protecting children from violence, abuse, and neglect. CRS is grateful the Action Plan will emphasize the importance of ECD as a part of its first objective.

IV. Uphold Human Dignity

With U.S. leadership, in partnership with agencies such as CRS, we have made incredible progress in reducing poverty and alleviating suffering. Millions of Catholics steadfastly support U.S. led efforts to serve the poor and the vulnerable overseas. Nevertheless, there remain major barriers to human development, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized people among us. Global fragility, conflict, and violence disrupt pathways out of poverty and destabilize communities. Natural resource scarcity, environmental degradation and climate change, as well as pandemics and global health emergencies present new threats to our common home. Growing inequality and a lack of economic opportunity and dignified livelihoods, especially for youth, offer unique challenges for our future. And large-scale forced displacement pushes us to find new ways to meet basic needs and address long-term sustainable development.

These barriers threaten our shared goals: to promote the common good and uphold human dignity. Opportunities to reach our aspirations are available. Ongoing efforts by the U.S., CRS, and other countries and agencies of good will to promote social equity and inclusion, to care for creation, to foster civic engagement, and to empower local leadership will confront these barriers head on.

With guidance from this committee and support from the Catholic community in the United States, we can tackle these problems socially, economically, and politically. Pope Francis, in his message for the celebration of the 52nd World Day of Peace on January 1, wrote, “good politics is at the service of peace.” At CRS, we contend that good policy and good programming are at the service of upholding human dignity. The programs under this committee’s jurisdiction that support international poverty-reducing humanitarian and development aid accomplish just that. Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Rogers, allow me to profoundly thank you for your commitment to humanitarian and development assistance and for the “good politics” you bring to this challenging space.