

**OPEN LETTER FROM 36 INTERFAITH ORGANIZATIONS CALLING FOR THE PROTECTION OF
INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

November 15, 2013

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairman
Budget Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Chairman
Budget Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Ranking Member
Budget Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Budget Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Murray, Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Sessions, and Ranking Member Van Hollen:

Thank you for your commitment to resolving our nation's current budget challenges. As faith-based organizations, we ask that you protect life-saving humanitarian and poverty-focused development assistance in the budget negotiations you are conducting. Recognizing that the multi-year sequester must ultimately be replaced for the good of our nation, we urge you to do so in a way that does not further cut the International Affairs Budget, particularly accounts that support humanitarian and poverty-focused development assistance programs.

Since 2010, the base foreign aid budget has been reduced by 19 percent, limiting programs that not only empower the impoverished and marginalized, but also serve pragmatic American interests by promoting our own economic growth and national security. As people of faith we recognize especially that these programs promote the inviolable dignity of each human person, a powerful motivation that underlies all of our work and efforts throughout the world.

Efforts to combat global poverty and enhance human security over the past several decades have yielded impressive results. Child survival is a one example. As a result of US leadership with partners around the world, 6 million fewer children around the world will die this year than did in 1990. Compared to the year 2000, pneumonia will kill 625,000 fewer children this year; diarrhea 663,000 fewer; measles, 397,000; malaria, 228,000; and AIDS 107,000 fewer children.

The U.S. government has provided indispensable funding, influence and leadership to launch initiatives, strengthen local capacity, and coordinate humanitarian strategies across national boundaries. America's public contributions overseas deliver results the private sector cannot achieve alone. This poverty-focused development assistance is some of the most effective investments we fund, annually costing Americans per capita:

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- \$1 to fund all U.S. government programs that provide access to safe water
- 50 cents to fund our efforts overseas to finally eradicate polio
- \$3 to fund our work to defeat malaria
- 30 cents to fund U.S. efforts to treat a collection of seven debilitating but preventable diseases that afflict one billion people.

As people of faith, we ask that you work with your colleagues on the Budget Conference Committee to continue to achieve these impressive bipartisan goals. Less than one percent of the budget, humanitarian assistance and poverty-focused development accounts are a small investment with enormous impact.

Sincerely,

1. American Friends Service Committee
2. American Jewish World Service
3. Auburn Theological Seminary
4. Bread for the World
5. Catholic Relief Services
6. Center for Interreligious Understanding
7. Christian Connections for International Health
8. Church World Service
9. Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
10. Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)
11. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
12. Food for the Hungry
13. Franciscan Action Network
14. Friends Committee on National Legislation
15. IKAR
16. IMA World Health
17. International Care Ministries
18. International Center for Religion & Diplomacy
19. Islamic Relief USA
20. Islamic Society of North America
21. Leadership Conference of Women Religious
22. Lutheran World Relief
23. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
24. Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)
25. National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA
26. Presbyterian Church (USA)
27. The Church of the Brethren: Office of Public Witness
28. The Episcopal Church
29. The Office of Social Justice of the Christian Reformed Church
30. Union for Reform Judaism
31. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
32. United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
33. United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
34. United Methodist Imagine No Malaria Campaign
35. Uri L'Tzedek (The Orthodox Jewish Social Justice Movement)
36. World Vision