

**OPEN LETTER FROM 15 FAITH ORGANIZATIONS EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER POTENTIAL CUTS TO
INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

June 18, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee for State and
Foreign Operations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee for State and
Foreign Operations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

As communities of faith and faith-based organizations committed to empowering the impoverished and marginalized throughout the world, we remain deeply concerned by the Senate Appropriations FY15 allocation for the State –Foreign Operations (SFOPs) budget. In order to protect vital funding for humanitarian and poverty-focused development assistance programs, we urge the Senate Appropriations Committee to support the House’s funding level in all final conference negotiations.

Through our united advocacy efforts and the programs we implement overseas, we seek to end extreme poverty and promote the dignity of each human life. We remain especially focused on supporting robust funding levels for all humanitarian and poverty-focused development programs. However, in recognizing the low base line funding level for FY15 that was provided in the Senate SFOPS budget, we remain concerned that our efforts and that of our partners may be severely diminished in the years ahead should allocations be enacted at such a low level.

As you know, humanitarian and poverty-focused development programs are part of a balanced development approach that includes support for programs ranging from global health, food and nutrition security, basic education, water and sanitation, child survival, women’s empowerment, refugee assistance and emergency humanitarian response. By investing in these programs, our shared efforts continue to yield impressive results. From 2005 to 2011, poverty rates across Feed the Future focus countries fell by an average of nearly six percent. And, in FY12, this initiative provided nutrition services to nearly 12 million children in 19 countries.

On the humanitarian assistance front, Food for Peace and the Emergency Food Security Program helped feed 45 million hungry people in crisis last year. These achievements should embolden us to increase our commitment to these programs, not possibly reduce them. And, given the worsening

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political crises in countries like the Ukraine, Syria, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic, we need adequate humanitarian resources to appropriately respond to growing demands in these areas as well.

While the Senate Appropriations Committee increased the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget in order to mitigate the baseline SFOPS reduction, we remain concerned that such an action creates a harmful precedent. By reducing baseline funding, appropriations for humanitarian and poverty-focused development assistance programs may be cut, as a large source of funding for these priorities has traditionally come from baseline funding sources. Further, OCO funding is projected to decline in coming years, which may place an even greater burden on limited baseline funding and severely impact humanitarian and poverty-focused assistance.

Our faith traditions call us to lift up those who are the least and the last in terms of the resources of this world. The moral measure of any society is how it treats the most vulnerable, and the divine call to love of neighbor knows no national boundaries. For these reasons, we must accelerate, not pull back, from the many gains made in recent years. As this year's appropriations process proceeds, we urge you to support the House's funding level in all final conference negotiations.

Sincerely,

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. American Jewish World Service2. Bread for the World3. Children's Medical Ministries4. Christian Connections for International Health5. Church World Service6. Conference of Major Superiors of Men7. Disabled Children's Fund8. Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice | <ol style="list-style-type: none">9. Food for the Hungry10. Franciscan Action Network11. IMA World Health12. Leadership Conference of Women Religious13. Presbyterian Church (USA)14. United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries15. United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society |
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Franciscan Action Network
Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

