

**OPEN LETTER FROM 26 INTERFAITH ORGANIZATIONS REQUESTING ROBUST FY16 FUNDING
ALLOCATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

June 3, 2015

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

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee for State and
Foreign Operations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee for State and
Foreign Operations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

As religious and faith-based organizations committed to ending extreme poverty and promoting the dignity of each human life with a just peace, we ask that you fund international humanitarian, poverty-focused development, and peacebuilding assistance programs in FY 2016 at equal or higher funding levels as those enacted in fiscal year 2015, as found in the State and Foreign Operations budget.

At this time of crisis in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Yemen, U.S. leadership and partnership is more important than ever. We are pleased that funding for international humanitarian assistance in FY 2015 acknowledged these significant needs and ask you to fund International Disaster Assistance and Migration and Refugee Assistance at least at FY 2014 levels or higher this year. In the context of these conflicts, we specifically call for U.S. support of an increase in unarmed civilian peacekeeping initiatives through the State Department, the United Nations, and NGOs, and the accompanying accounts some of which include the Complex Crisis Fund and Conflict Stabilization Operations (CSO).

Development funding is likewise a prudent return on investment. For less than one penny of every U.S. taxpayer dollar, this funding supports life-saving programs that help to break the cycles of poverty and introduce productive opportunities for individuals, families, and communities around the world. To provide one example, U.S. investments in primary education have resulted in over 23 million children enrolled in USAID supported primary and secondary schools in 2012 alone. In addition to providing funding for education initiatives, the Development Assistance accounts provide resources for critical and life-giving water and sanitation, agricultural, microenterprise, anti-trafficking and many other efforts, which help communities break the cycle of poverty and achieve sustainable solutions.

Through our own work overseas, we see how U.S. investments in global health benefit the lives of millions of people every year. U.S.-supported nutrition interventions during the critical 1,000 days from

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pregnancy to age two help to ensure a child's ability to grow, learn, and thrive throughout their lifetime. Improving nutrition during the 1,000-day window can boost a country's GDP by as much as 11% annually and individual earning capacity by up to 46% over a lifetime. Additionally, the U.S. government's support of PEPFAR has supported HIV testing and counseling for more than 12.8 million pregnant women in FY 2013 alone. This resulted in 95 percent of these babies being born HIV-free. In order to capitalize on these gains and realize the first AIDS-free generation since HIV was discovered, we cannot cut back on global health funding for PEPFAR and the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, as well as maternal and child health, vulnerable children, and nutrition.

Lastly, robust funding from the base account is especially important for our on-the-ground partners to plan effective programs and build sustainable partnerships to successfully address poverty, violent conflict, and disease. While pleased with the response to humanitarian crises in FY 2015, we are concerned by the continued use of overseas contingency operations (OCO) funds to bolster humanitarian assistance. We urge Congress to incrementally move OCO humanitarian funding into the base International Development Assistance (IDA) and Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) accounts in order to respond to protracted conflicts.

As you work on FY 2016 appropriations, we urge you to continue to fund humanitarian, poverty-focused development, and peacebuilding assistance programs at levels comparable or higher than those enacted in the previous fiscal year. In doing so, we will continue to build a just peace and a more hope-filled world, where all God's children can pursue a future reflective of great promise and opportunity. We recognize the tight budget constraints in which you are working, and we stand ready to help you as you discern the nation's priorities for 2016.

Thank you again for your continued support.

Sincerely,

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| 1. Bread for the World | 10. Faiths for Safe Water |
| 2. Catholic Medical Mission Board
(CMMB) | 11. Food for the Hungry |
| 3. Children's Medical Ministries | 12. Friends Committee on National
Legislation |
| 4. Christian Connections for
International Health | 13. IMA World Health |
| 5. Church of the Brethren Office of
Public Witness | 14. Islamic Society of North America |
| 6. Church World Service | 15. Leadership Conference of Women
Religious |
| 7. Conference of Major Superiors of
Men | 16. Mennonite Central Committee, U.S,
Washington Office |
| 8. Disabled Children's Fund | 17. Office of Social Justice of the
Christian Reformed Church of North
America |
| 9. Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America | 18. Presbyterian Church (USA) |

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| 19. The Episcopal Church | 23. United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society |
| 20. The Salvation Army USA | 24. World Renew |
| 21. Union of Reform Judaism | 25. World Vision |
| 22. United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries | 26. American Hindu World Service |

