

**OPEN LETTER FROM 34 INTERFAITH ORGANIZATIONS REQUESTING ROBUST FY17 FUNDING
ALLOCATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

February 24, 2016

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 national religious institutions and faith-based organizations committed to ending extreme poverty and promoting the dignity of each human life, we ask that you fund appropriate increases in the State and Foreign Operations budget for international humanitarian, global health, poverty-focused development, and peacebuilding assistance programs in FY 2017.

We appreciate the leadership that your committee exhibited last year, by increasing funding for critical lifesaving programs such as Nutrition, Food for Peace, and International Disaster Assistance. However, we are concerned with the low base-funding request made by the President in his budget for fiscal 2017. At this time of crisis in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, South Sudan, Zika and Ebola affected countries, U.S. partnership is more important than ever, and we urge Congressional leadership as it begins consideration of its fiscal year 2017 priorities.

The President's requested level of \$39.3 billion is a 1% reduction to an already dramatically reduced FY16 level, reducing funding to levels below 2008 at a time critical to human security and effective programs that build partnerships to successfully address poverty. We ask that you restore base funding to a minimum of FY16 levels or higher.

Funding for international humanitarian assistance in FY 2016, especially disaster aid, recognized these significant needs. We ask you to continue to fund the International Disaster Assistance account at least at FY 2016 levels, of \$2.8 billion. However, in order to meet the ever-increasing crises, the Migration and Refugee Assistance account should be increased above the FY 2016 level to \$3.604 billion. As a result of the conflicts that we are witnessing all over the world, we specifically call for the U.S. to increase peacebuilding initiatives, such as unarmed civilian

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protection programs, across all stages of conflict through the State Department and USAID. Specifically, we urge you to support \$100 million for the Complex Crises Fund (CCF), a mechanism in high demand that enables USAID to respond to emerging and unforeseen crises that give rise to violent conflict. We further urge you to support the Bureau of Conflict Stabilization Operations (CSO) at no less than \$21.5million, the level requested in the White House Budget.

Development funding is likewise a prudent return on investment and core to creating long-term stability and security. 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. The President's request makes dramatic cuts to basic education, biodiversity, water and sanitation and microfinance programs in the Development Assistance account, critical to breaking the cycle of poverty and achieving sustainable solutions, and we ask that you restore those programs to FY16 levels or higher and fund a topline number of \$3 billion to the Development Assistance Account.

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 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, Neglected Tropical Diseases affect more than one billion people, costing developing economies billions of dollars every year. With the recent outbreak of the Zika we cannot cut back on global health funding for NTDs or nutrition programs, and ask that you match the President's FY17 request of \$2.9 billion for USAID Global Health Programs.

As you work on FY 2017 appropriations, we urge you to fund humanitarian, poverty-focused development, and peacebuilding assistance programs at levels necessary to meet critical needs and the imperatives of global human security. In some critical accounts this will mean increases above FY16 levels. In doing so, we will continue to build a sustainable 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 work with you as you discern the nation's priorities for 2017.

Thank you again for your continued support.

Sincerely,

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1. ADRA International
2. American Hindu World Service
3. American Jewish World Service
4. Bread for the World
5. Catholic Medical Mission Board
6. Children's Medical Ministries
7. Christian Connections for International Health
8. Christian Reformed Church, Office of Social Justice
9. Church of the Brethren, Office of Public Witness
10. Church World Service
11. Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
12. Conference of Major Superiors of Men
13. Disabled Children's Fund
14. Disciples Center for Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)
15. The Episcopal Church
16. Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
17. Faiths for Safe Water
18. Food for the Hungry
19. Franciscan Action Network
20. Friends Committee on National Legislation
21. IMA World Health
22. International Orthodox Christian Charities
23. Islamic Relief USA
24. Islamic Society of North America
25. Leadership Conference of Women Religious
26. Lutheran World Relief
27. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
28. Mennonite Central Committee, Washington, DC Office
29. Muslim Public Affairs Council
30. The Presbyterian Church USA
31. Union for Reformed Judaism
32. United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
33. The United Methodist Church, The General Board of Church and Body
34. World Vision



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