



# 116<sup>th</sup> Congress

## POLICY BRIEF AND TALKING POINTS FOR CONGRESSIONAL MEETINGS

### BACKGROUND ON GLOBAL MIGRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS: SPRING 2019

#### Forced Migration

In the aftermath of World War II, in attempt to defend the millions of people facing persecution, war, and violence, the global community established the international refugee regime. The newly formed United Nations and member states created a series of international treaties, norms, and decision-making procedures to protect refugees and displaced persons and to seek durable solutions - including voluntary repatriation, local integration, and third country resettlement. Treaties such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol; bodies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration; and norms such as non-refoulment, or the prohibition against forced return of refugees to their country of origin, created a foundation for an international system of protection and support.

Today, we face humanitarian and development challenges unseen since World War II. From Syria to Central America, South Sudan to Burma, poverty, conflict, natural disaster, lack of opportunity, and climate shocks are causing unprecedented forced migration. Of the 68.5 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide, 40 million are internally displaced and another 25.4 million are refugees, meaning they have fled their home country due to persecution, war, or violence. Catholic Relief Services' international development and humanitarian work, grounded in our Integral Human Development framework, seeks to address the root causes of displacement, to respond to emergency needs when they arise, and to support refugees and internally displaced persons return home and rebuild their lives:

- In Central America, which has some of the highest rates of violence outside war zones, CRS works on community development and youth empowerment, allowing youth and families to thrive in their communities and not feel compelled to flee. In Venezuela, where political and economic instability continue to negatively impact the livelihoods and health of millions, we are experiencing the largest displacement of people in Latin American history. CRS supports Church partners in Venezuela to implement nutrition and health activities as well as partners throughout the region to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.
- In Uganda, where more than one million South Sudanese have fled to escape civil war, CRS supports programs in Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement, one of the largest refugee settlements in the world. CRS focuses on providing shelter for people with special needs, improving sanitation and access to water, and supporting families and individuals to start businesses and learn trades.
- Across the Middle East and Europe, CRS and its local partners have helped more than 1.4 million Syrians. In partnership with Caritas Jordan, CRS provides Syrian refugee children with access to safe, quality educational opportunities. These opportunities are important not only for educational purposes, but also for the healing space they provide for children impacted by conflict.

- In Bangladesh, where 700,000 Rohingya have fled to escape extreme violence and religious and ethnic persecution in Burma, CRS supports local partners to provide vital shelter, WASH, and protection assistance for vulnerable groups.

## Appropriations

Each year, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate negotiate how to spend U.S. taxpayer dollars through a process called appropriations. Every February, the Executive branch, which expends the money appropriated by the Legislative branch, sends a budget proposal to Congress. Of the \$4 trillion U.S. federal budget, only one-quarter, or a little over \$1 trillion is defined as *discretionary* spending, or money that Congress decides how to spend each year. The other three-quarters is *mandatory* spending, or expenditures that are permanently designated in law, such as Social Security.

After Congress receives the President's Budget Request, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees each develop their own plans for spending taxpayer dollars for the upcoming fiscal year. Each Chamber of Congress conducts hearings, accepts outside requests related to spending from constituents, drafts legislation, and debates the spending bills in Committee before voting on the legislation in the full Chamber. After each Chamber passes their own appropriations bills (there are twelve in total that fund the various agencies of the government), the House and Senate meet in conference to debate the differences between the bills. After they negotiate and come to a compromise, they pass the bills and send them to the President to sign into law. Congress is expected to complete this process before the beginning of the next fiscal year, which is at the end of September.

Historically, about 1% of total spending is appropriated to foreign assistance as part of two appropriations bills: the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill, which funds the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Agriculture bill, which funds the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Half of that 1% (roughly \$25 billion) is directed toward poverty-reducing humanitarian and development aid. Through funding from the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, organizations such as CRS partner with the U.S. government to implement programming. While foreign assistance has large bipartisan support, each of the last three years, the Administration has proposed to reduce foreign aid by 30%. Thanks to constituent voices like yours, Congress has rejected these cuts and largely maintained U.S. investments in poverty reduction programming.

## STATE OF PLAY

### What's the connection between forced migration and appropriations?

As the world's wealthiest nation and the largest provider of international humanitarian assistance, the United States plays a key role in protecting and promoting the global common good, addressing chronic causes of poverty, and responding to complex humanitarian emergencies. U.S. leadership inspires other nations and donors to give generously and sets policy agendas for alleviating poverty. CRS is a recipient of these public funds, which support key CRS programs that addresses the migration crisis. CRS also receives private funds, especially from Catholic Church partners and foundations, allowing us to innovate, be flexible, and scale up quickly during emergencies.

To respond to the needs of those who are forcibly displaced and address the root causes of poverty and violence in contexts where communities are vulnerable to displacement, CRS depends on the U.S. government continuing to support robust funding for foreign assistance. Advocating with your member of Congress on appropriations is an important way to influence how the U.S. government prioritizes relief and assistance overseas. Many of the projects CRS implements in Central America to address the root causes of migration and poverty, in Uganda to support the life-saving needs of those who have fled South Sudan, and across the Middle East in places such as Jordan to support educational efforts for Syrian refugee children come directly from U.S. government appropriations.

## TALKING POINTS

- Thank you for your time to discuss international development and humanitarian aid. *The introduction is an opportunity to introduce CRS (especially for new members), who you are, and that you are there to discuss migration and appropriations.)*
- Serving more than 130 million people in 110 countries in 2017, CRS can attest first-hand to the significant challenges communities encounter and to the impact of poverty-reducing foreign assistance. To address lifesaving needs and the root causes of forced displacement, CRS provides shelter to refugees, helps farmers grow better crops in the face of climate change and drought, promotes peace in communities divided by differences, and provides immediate response in emergencies. For 75 years, in partnership with the U.S. government and generous donors around the country, CRS has worked to bring hope, safety, and opportunity to communities.
- As committed Catholics, we believe the United States must continue to be a global leader in aiding refugees and displaced people **and** addressing the root causes of forced displacement. *(Share a personal story of why **you** support migrants & refugees and Catholic Relief Services' international humanitarian and development work. Share information on CRS programs that address forced migration you may know about, but even more importantly, share about the work you do in your diocese or community to advocate on behalf of the poor and the marginalized overseas.)*
- The U.S. government has the responsibility and capacity to address the needs of the poor to prevent conflict, promote opportunity, and keep all people safe so they are not forced to flee their home. By helping communities with humanitarian assistance and development programs today, we can avoid catastrophes in the future.
- We are pleased that Congress protected international assistance in Fiscal Year 2018 and Fiscal Year 2019 and rejected the Administration's draconian proposals to cut assistance by 30%. CRS is proud to partner with the U.S. government to provide assistance overseas.
- **As Congress develops and negotiates Fiscal Year 2020 spending, we urge you to ensure the highest funding levels possible for poverty-reducing international development and humanitarian assistance. [Share chart of accounts (provided by CRS before your meeting) and explain that the range of poverty-reducing accounts support the poor and the vulnerable, alleviate suffering, and allow communities to thrive.]**

## QUESTIONS/COMMENTS TO RAISE

- If the Senator/Representative travels abroad, please let us know if he/she would like to visit CRS programming. As you know, we are in 110 countries around the world and would welcome an opportunity to show the Senator/Representative the impact U.S. dollars have on the ground.
- Encourage the Senator/Representative to see to see you and CRS as a resource in the state/district and in Washington, DC.
- If you hold community events, invite the Senator/Representative or their staff to your next gathering.
- Express an interest in continuing to dialogue with the Senator/Representative, or his/her staff, on these issues.