

September 14, 2015

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H-305 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-146A The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Cochran, and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski,

This year, the world continues to witness an unprecedented rise in the scale and number of humanitarian crises unfolding around the globe. In addition to protracted crises in Syria and South Sudan, there has been further deterioration in the situation in Iraq; a new conflict in Yemen; and back-to-back earthquakes in Nepal. These are just a few of the man-made and natural disasters to which humanitarian actors are currently responding. In the wake of these and other humanitarian needs around the world, we request your support for the highest possible base and overall funding levels in the Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations bills for humanitarian accounts. Now more than ever, it is critically important to shore-up funding for the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA), International Disaster Assistance (IDA), Food for Peace (FFP), and Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) accounts. Specifically, we urge that these accounts be funded at no less than the following levels - \$3.059 billion for MRA, \$1.895 billion for IDA, \$1.466 billion for FFP, and \$50 million for ERMA.

Fighting continues unabated in Syria compounding humanitarian needs as the country enters its fifth year of civil war. Currently, 12.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, while four million people are seeking refuge in neighboring countries. In Iraq, 3.2 million people have been displaced since January 2014 as waves of intense fighting have forced them to repeatedly flee. The Iraq crisis continues to deepen, and the displaced require immediate basic humanitarian assistance and protection. In Yemen, escalating conflict since March has displaced 1.4 million people. A staggering 21.1 million people – 80 percent of the population – is in need of some form of humanitarian assistance.

Outside of the Middle East, the civil war in South Sudan has displaced over 2 million people – of these, 600,000 have been forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries. Currently, 4.6 million South Sudanese face severe food insecurity – this number has almost doubled since the start of 2015. Despite an improvement in the humanitarian situation in Nepal following devastating earthquakes in both April and May, there are still urgent needs that must be filled. More than 710,000 families are in need of shelter support because their homes were either damaged or destroyed, and 1.4 million people still require food assistance. In addition, the earthquakes in Nepal and countless “silent” disasters that do not make international headlines underscore the need for disaster risk reduction programs that save lives and reduce costs associated with post-disaster recovery.

The humanitarian programs supported by the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA), International Disaster Assistance (IDA), Food for Peace (FFP) and Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) accounts are mechanisms within the federal budget that directly save lives and reduce suffering. These accounts aid vulnerable families during their times of greatest need, support U.S. interests and represent the best of our nation's moral values. Moreover, these accounts amplify and complement generous charitable contributions made by American individuals, foundations, and corporations to humanitarian organizations and have positioned the United States as the global leader on humanitarian response.

In 2014, 59.5 million people were forcibly displaced by conflict or natural disaster compared to 51.2 million in 2013. This is the largest increase in the number of forcibly displaced in a single year and sadly, the number and severity of crises has not abated in 2015 and needs will likely only grow in FY 2016. Eighty-six percent of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries that themselves have significant needs. At a time of escalating humanitarian needs, it is imperative that the U.S. continue its strong leadership and support for programs that provide children and their families with food, water and shelter, protective measures against further violence, assist with economic recovery, and promote stability and community resilience. As you finalize the FY2016 appropriations bills through either an omnibus or continuing resolution, we urge you to provide the highest possible base and overall levels of funding for humanitarian accounts which should not come at the expense of other critical poverty-focused foreign assistance programs that also help communities avoid and recover from disasters. At this juncture, and at a time of extraordinary levels of global need, the United States must continue to lead the global community.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

1. ACDI/VOCA
2. Action Against Hunger
3. ADRA International
4. Alliance for Peacebuilding
5. American Red Cross
6. American Refugee Committee
7. Amref Health Africa
8. ANERA
9. Better World Campaign
10. Bread for the World
11. Brother's Brother Foundation
12. CARE USA
13. Catholic Relief Services
14. CBM
15. Concern Worldwide
16. Counterpart International
17. EPIC: Education for Peace in Iraq Center
18. Global Communities
19. InterAction
20. International Medical Corps
21. International Relief & Development
22. International Rescue Committee

23. Islamic Relief USA
24. Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
25. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
26. Lutheran World Relief
27. Mennonite Central Committee, US, Washington DC Office
28. Mercy Corps
29. Mercy-USA for Aid and Development
30. Millennium Water Alliance
31. National Association of Social Workers
32. NCBA CLUSA
33. Nothing But Nets
34. Oxfam America
35. Pan American Development Foundation
36. PCI Global
37. Refugees International
38. Relief International
39. ReSurge International
40. Save the Children
41. SOS Children's Villages - USA
42. The Hunger Project
43. U.S. Fund for UNICEF
44. United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
45. US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
46. Water for South Sudan
47. WaterAid
48. Women Thrive Worldwide
49. Women's Refugee Commission
50. World Concern
51. World Food Program USA
52. World Vision

CC: Chairwoman Kay Granger
Chairman Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member Pat Leahy