



Hill Notes

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INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE: THE BIG PICTURE AND HAITI



What is the Church's vision for U.S. foreign assistance programs?

The Church views foreign aid as an essential tool to promote human life and dignity, advance solidarity with poorer nations, and enhance security throughout the world. Foreign aid is not simply an optional commitment; it is a moral responsibility to assist “the least of these.”

What credibility does the Church have in speaking out on foreign assistance?

First, the Church in the United States has broad and deep **experience** reaching out to our brothers and sisters in need through Catholic lay movements and religious communities of men and women who operate numerous missions, schools, health structures and humanitarian groups across the globe. Catholic Relief Services, the official relief and development agency of our Conference, has been active for 65 years and now works in about 100 countries around the world. Second, the Catholic Church in our nation also has profound and abiding **relationships** with the Church in many developing countries and frequently is guided by the lived experience of the local Church. Third, our Church has a rich body of **teaching** that offers principles that can help guide the reform of foreign assistance, including: the defense of the life and dignity of the human person; promotion of the common good through participation and subsidiarity; the centrality of the option for the poor; and building peace through justice.

Why is foreign assistance important to the foreign policy of the United States?

Generous and effective foreign assistance is a moral imperative. It also expresses our values as a nation by reaching out to poor and vulnerable people who live at the margins of the global community. A commitment of foreign assistance focused on human development and humanitarian needs is an indicator of United States leadership in the world. Foreign aid is also an investment in the future well being of people in developing countries and improves global security and stability, thus contributing to the security of our own nation. Pope Paul VI taught us that “the new name for peace is development.” Development funding is a vital tool in a balanced foreign policy. It is one of the three Ds (development, diplomacy and defense) that together can build a world that is more secure and prosperous for all.

What are current levels of funding for poverty-focused foreign assistance programs?

In 2009, the U.S. spent \$17.48 billion on poverty-focused assistance programs that USCCB and CRS support. These funds went to aid and development-related activities: child survival and maternal health; HIV/AIDS; water and sanitation; development, humanitarian and emergency assistance; health; peacekeeping; migration and refugee services; and infectious disease control.

What else is needed to promote development beyond international assistance?

The U.S. should formulate a coherent global strategy that integrates development assistance, debt relief, trade, agriculture, climate change and other policies to promote human development and reduce poverty;

What recommendations do USCCB and CRS have for U.S. assistance to Haiti?

USCCB and CRS commend the U.S. government for immediate relief efforts and for granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 18 months to Haitians in the U.S.; and also urge investment in longer-term recovery and development, including: sustaining international assistance; broadening trade preferences (e.g. HOPE II; from t-shirts to polo shirts); ensuring total debt relief; and extending TPS for additional periods as necessary.

Why would extending Temporary Protected Status to Haitians in the U.S. help recovery efforts?

A natural disaster can reverse years of development gains. Under the TPS program, the U.S. government is allowing eligible Haitians to stay in the U.S. since conditions in Haiti prevent their safe return. In addition, by granting

them temporary work permits, the U.S. is enabling Haitians to work in the U.S. and to send money back to their families in Haiti, facilitating economic recovery and development. While 18 months seems long enough for stabilizing a country after an earthquake, it is not enough time for significant recovery, especially for the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. Helping Haitians in the U.S. to help their own country recover and rebuild is consistent with the American work ethic and our Catholic principle of subsidiarity.

If the U.S. has already forgiven all debt owed it by Haiti, what more does it need to do?

The U.S. has granted full debt relief for the bilateral debt owed to the U.S. by Haiti and is offering grants instead of loans for Haiti's recovery. These actions will help encourage other governments as well as multilateral institutions to do the same. Furthermore, in addition to its example, the direct leadership of the U.S. government can help bring about multilateral debt relief for Haiti through action at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The forgiveness of debt and the provision of assistance in the form of grants, so that further debt is not incurred, will enable Haiti to invest these additional resources in infrastructure, education, health, and rebuilding the economy.

Are trade preferences that important for Haiti?

Yes. In 2006 Congress enacted the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act (HOPE I) which granted Haiti limited trade preferences but provided the Haitian economy with badly needed jobs. In 2008 Hope II expanded the benefits for Haiti and extended the program to ten years. However, Haitian factories are limited in what they can produce and export under the U.S. preference program to basic garments that have "little" added value. This causes investment to be limited. After the earthquake investors may be less reluctant to rebuild factories if trade preferences are improved beyond the benefits that HOPE II provides. Expanding the list of goods that can be produced and exported by Haitian factories to include more "value added" goods may result in more jobs in the Haitian apparel industry and thus help in the recovery and rebuilding efforts.

What recommendations do USCCB and CRS have for U.S. foreign assistance?

USCCB and CRS urge the Congress and the Administration to:

1. **Improve** these **poverty-focused** programs and **increase** their funding toward the Administration's goal of doubling international assistance by 2015:
 - a. HIV/AIDS programs, especially the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR);
 - b. Development and Humanitarian assistance and emergency programs, including Title II Food Aid;
 - c. Millennium Challenge Account;
 - d. Debt relief for poor developing nations;
 - e. Peacekeeping programs; and
 - f. Migration and Refugee Services and Emergency Migration and Refugee Assistance.

2. Support **immediate relief efforts for Haiti** and granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 18 months to Haitians in the U.S.; but urge substantial and sustained investment in **longer-term recovery and development**, including:
 - a. sustaining U.S. international assistance to Haiti and encouraging the donor community to also do so;
 - b. broadening trade preferences (e.g. HOPE II, going from t-shirts to polo shirts, from knits to woven);
 - c. ensuring total debt relief by urging multilateral institutions (IMF and IDB) and other nations to forgive Haiti's debt so that they can invest in recovery and development; and
 - d. extending TPS for Haitians in the U.S. for additional periods as necessary.

Where can I find more information on foreign assistance?

Visit the web: www.usccb.org/globalpoverty/ and www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/foreignind.shtml. For further information on foreign aid, contact *Steve Hilbert*, Office of International Justice and Peace, USCCB, 202-541-3149 (phone), shilbert@usccb.org, and for information on Haiti, contact *Rev. Juan Molina, O.S.S.T., Ph.D.*, Office of International Justice and Peace, USCCB, 202-541-3153 (phone); jmolina@usccb.org.