

THE END OF VITAL U.S. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IMPACTS THE MOST VULNERABLE AROUND THE WORLD



In Somalia, a doctor measures a baby's arm circumference in a CRS-supported clinic. The red mark means the child is severely malnourished and needs additional food and care. U.S.-funded humanitarian assistance provides lifesaving health and nutrition care across Somalia. *Photo by Omar Faruk for CRS*

The recent and abrupt suspension and termination of lifesaving U.S. humanitarian assistance programs is having immediate life-and-death consequences on vulnerable people around the world. Catholic Relief Services teams and partners across the world are witnessing the impacts in real time: As food distributions are halted, people are going hungry. Without treatment for acute malnutrition, children will die. Entire communities are without shelter and clean water. Farmers are unable to plant crops. Mothers and infants are going without health care.

While there has been an exemption for some lifesaving assistance, funds for many of these programs have yet to be released. Some families in countries experiencing starvation and hunger—like Sudan—have taken extreme measures, eating soil and leaves to survive.

CRS has been looking forward to working with the administration to recommend common sense reforms to humanitarian assistance. But, stopping these lifesaving measures without warning is leading to confusion, potential harm to staff and partners, and risk of death among the most vulnerable people. It also hurts America's credibility: The position of the U.S. as a trusted global partner is at risk, which could allow corrupt governments or terrorist groups to take advantage of the situation and fill the void left behind.

TAKE ACTION

■ Advocate:



■ Donate online: crs.org/help-crs



Silverio Mendez has worked to restore his drought-impacted land and boost soil conservation with agriculture support provided through CRS programs in Guatemala's Dry Corridor. Photo by Julian Spath/CRS



In our more than 80 years of work for people in need around the world, CRS has witnessed how humanitarian assistance makes the world—including the United States—a safer place. Thriving societies contribute to greater global stability, reduce the risk of conflict, and create safer and more prosperous environments for all. Our programs integrate young people into society, reducing their likelihood of turning to violent extremism. Additionally, profitable farmers can remain on their land, avoiding migration.

While many CRS program supported by private donations continue unabated, here are just a few examples of how interrupting or suspending U.S. humanitarian assistance impacts the millions of people who CRS and our partners reach daily in more than 100 countries:

In Sudan:

- If famine-like conditions spread as predicted, more than 100,000 people are at risk of starvation in the next 30 days without continued food assistance.

In Democratic Republic of Congo:

- At least 3 million people are expected to suffer from extreme hunger and malnutrition over the next six months.

“The fuel of the human being is food—to stand, to walk, to work, even to speak. When I am hungry, my heart is tired. My stomach feels sick. I lose my ability to think or communicate. I lose my power. I can only sleep.” —Batlewat Sete, Amhara region, Ethiopia

In Kenya:

- Malnourished children are no longer receiving therapeutic foods and supplementary feeding supplies—without which, they are at risk of becoming acutely malnourished and dying.

In Guatemala:

- 10,000 families are not receiving the tools, seeds and cash they need to plant their crops in the upcoming May planting season. This missed planting means an increase in hunger and malnutrition—both of which are leading causes of migration.

In Iraq:

- 1,205 young men and women, including those from minority Yazidi and Christian ethnic groups, are not receiving seed money as part of a youth employment project, which could spur migration abroad, increase the risk of radicalization and sectarianism, and decrease trust in U.S. support for religious minorities. This program in Iraq wards off the influence of anti-U.S. militias.

In Haiti:

- At least 21,00 children under age 5 are at risk of malnutrition in the next six months
- 65,285 people who are displaced by conflict are not receiving staple foods intended to prevent women and children from going hungry.



Young Ngoc Thi Anh, right, lives a healthy life thanks to CRS' collaboration with local partners to provide home-based care. Photo by Jen Hardy/CRS

LIFELONG IMPACTS OF NUTRITION EARLY IN A CHILD'S LIFE

The 1,000 days from conception to a child's second birthday are critical for development, playing a significant role in shaping the child's future.

Ensuring good nutrition during a child's first 1,000 days is critical to their physical and mental growth—as well as the future of entire societies. For children and infants under age 2, the consequences of malnutrition can be irreversible. Babies who are malnourished in the womb have a higher risk of dying in infancy. Children whose growth is stunted can have weakened immune systems. In addition, they're less able to perform well in school later in life and are less likely to find job opportunities as adults. The suspension and termination of vital nutrition programs means the lives of the world's most vulnerable children are at risk.

CRS collaborates with local churches and organizations to deliver compassionate, lifesaving care that strengthens families and communities. Our programs meet urgent, lifesaving needs and promote long-term health and stability. For years, many of these lifesaving programs have been supported by the U.S. government.

LIFE-AND-DEATH IMPACTS: HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMS IN PERIL



In Guatemala, CRS assists vulnerable, emergency-affected communities to rebuild their lives, livelihoods and homes as quickly as possible—and restore their long-term stability through agriculture practices that boost their yields. Photo by Dinorah Lorenzana/CRS

PEOPLE AT RISK

Landscape Restoration: Improving Agriculture Practices in Guatemala

The PRO-RAICES project in Guatemala has improved food security and economic stability for 457,000 people by teaching farmers effective practices to restore land, conserve water and boost yields, while also helping communities activate emergency plans. It has addressed the severe malnutrition crisis, particularly among children, and helped families build resilience through improved farming practices and crop diversification.

“*Since the project began, I don't have to migrate. We stayed working and cultivating the land, producing. Today we have new expectations.*”

—Nery Garcia Martinez, Program Coordinator,
CRS Water-Smart Agriculture program,
Honduras.

Julieta, a member of a CRS-supported savings group, at her home shop in Ngaremara, Kenya.

Photo by Anthony Nyandiek/CRS



Resilience and Sustainability: Improving Health and Nutrition in Kenya

Children, pregnant women and new mothers are among the thousands of people who have benefited from vital health and nutrition care in northern Kenya. For years, the Nawiri project supported families to improve their livelihoods and financial resilience—leading to greater stability and reduced migration and conflict.

Preventing Violent Extremism: Strengthening Livelihoods in Mali

When people feel connected to their society, they are less likely to turn to violent extremism. The Kisili 6 project, led by CRS and local partners, addresses the root causes of extremism by providing resources that support basic survival needs and improve livelihoods. Strengthening local partners is crucial as they can operate more effectively, a core pillar of stability contributing to a more secure Sahel region

Livelihoods: Enhancing Economic Stability in Iraq

Young men and women, including those from minority Yazidi and Christian ethnic groups, have been taking part in activities that strengthen their skills and opportunities for employment. Through the Shared Future project, they benefited from seed money and community grants for their livelihoods and business opportunities. The project also built intercommunal relationships and promoted economic and social benefits of peaceful cohabitation.

Local Leadership: Strengthening Local Capacities, Reducing Reliance on Aid

The EMPOWER approach has strengthened the capacity of local organizations to support communities affected by emergencies. Local Church and civil society organizations are often the first to respond to crises, and have long-standing presence, experience and credibility in communities. U.S. government funds have helped CRS build the capacity of local organizations, governments and civil society to respond effectively in times of crisis. The investment also helps reduce reliance on international assistance.



CRS Technical Advisor Carlos Rivas, pictured right, engages with community members to improve their resilience in emergencies. The CRS EMPOWER initiative supports Caritas Brazil to help vulnerable communities develop disaster risk reduction plans.

Photo by Felipe Thomaz/CRS

“The benefit that EMPOWER has brought to Caritas is the ability to grow as an institution ... As a national and local organization, we are the ones who know the realities of the area and the situations they are experiencing. Working from this perspective and strengthening it will also allow us to continue our work.”

—Cristina Pancho, Caritas Ecuador

The Catholic Church is a powerful social, economic, cultural and political stakeholder in countries around the world.

By supporting faith-based organizations and local partners, the United States strengthens its strategic interests, counters violent extremism and fosters long-term stability.

- The Catholic Church is among the most influential, credible, trusted and respected institutions around the world.
- The Catholic Church is a critical partner to the United States in many countries that receive assistance, and local Church agencies are key development and humanitarian actors.
- The Catholic Church holds influence and respect as a key provider of education, and health and social services, with Catholic sisters playing a prominent role. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, faith-based organizations provide more than 80% of health care. The Church and its agencies can reach even the most remote communities and deliver critical social services.
- Local Church agencies have deep relationships in and the trust of communities, making them sources of stability and support, especially during times of crisis or instability.
- The Church has convening power and influence, globally, nationally and regionally. It is a critical ally that can defend against violent extremist organizations.
- Working with the Church advances sustainable, local solutions. Working with local faith actors allows the U.S. government to build on existing local assets and activities.
- The suspension of U.S. funding has an even greater impact on local organizations, as they have less of a safety net to weather funding pauses and delays.
- Investing in humanitarian and development programs is not just a moral imperative—it directly benefits U.S. security and global stability.
- The Catholic Church, with its unparalleled reach and credibility, is an essential partner in advancing peace, resilience and sustainable development in some of the world's most fragile regions.
- Empowering the Church and other local actors promotes peace, safeguards religious freedom and enhances America's global standing.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND OUR MISSION

As Catholics, we are called to protect our sisters and brothers living in poverty. Catholic social teaching emphasizes the responsibility of wealthier nations to support poorer ones, and the principle of solidarity—that we are a global community and one human family. This belief recognizes that the fates of people everywhere are interconnected. Our commitment to these values guides us to uphold the dignity of all people. We act on this commitment with the highest standards of professionalism, ensuring that we fulfill our mission effectively, efficiently and with good stewardship of the resources entrusted to us.

“ I never dreamt to have the life I have now. The malnutrition issue for my son is solved and my current thoughts are focused on how to expand my business and how my children can have a greater future.”

—Laetitia, a program participant in Rwanda. [Read more of her story here.](#)