

**Statement of Laura Dills  
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**Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture  
September 30, 2015**

Thank you Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson for this opportunity to provide testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture. I am Laura Dills, Deputy Regional Director of Program Quality for the East Africa Regional Office of Catholic Relief Services. I have been with Catholic Relief Services for 12 years and have been involved in Food for Peace projects in Burkina, Rwanda, India, Haiti, Madagascar, and now East Africa. I am honored to represent Catholic Relief Services in this hearing.

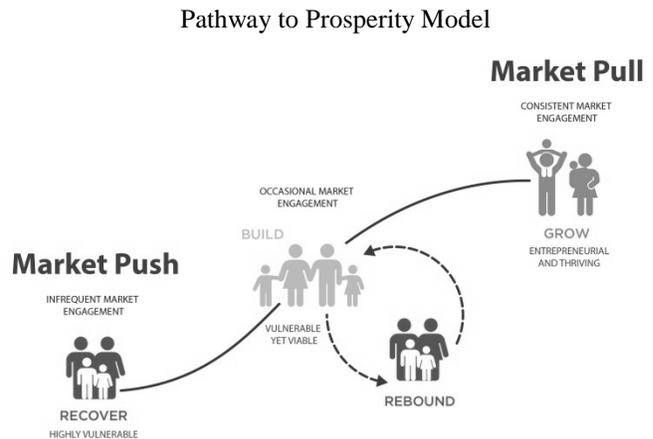
In my statement, I will review Catholic Relief Services' food security strategy, discuss how U.S. food aid programs help us to implement that strategy to help millions of people, and then make several recommendations from our experience that the Committee should consider as it seeks to improve the impact and efficiency of U.S. international food assistance.

**Catholic Relief Services and the U.S. Catholic Church**

Catholic Relief Services is the international relief and development agency of the U.S. Catholic Church. We are one of the largest implementers of U.S.-funded foreign assistance overall, and of international food aid programs under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committees. Our work reaches over 100 million poor and vulnerable people in nearly 90 countries. Catholic Relief Services works with people and communities based on need, without regard to race, creed, or nationality. We often partner with institutions of the Catholic Church and other local civil society groups in the implementation of programs, which from our experience is essential to understanding the needs of the communities we work with, and ultimately the long-term success of our work.

**Catholic Relief Services Concept of Food Security**

A core focus of our work is on improving the livelihoods of small holder farm families as a means to achieve food security. These families can be categorized according to their levels of assets, vulnerability, commercial prospects, education, and ability to take on new technologies or risk. Accounting for these differences, our objective is to move small holder farm families along a Pathway to Prosperity (see graph), and ultimately out of any need of assistance.



Moving people along the Pathway to Prosperity requires transitioning families from subsistence farming into greater engagement with markets. Ultimately, small holder farming is a small business and even very vulnerable farmers – with the right skills and opportunities – can increase their income through increased connections to markets.

Catholic Relief Services provides customized support to farm families at all levels of the Pathway in areas of building and protecting assets, acquiring new business skills, adopting better farming practices, and revitalizing the natural resource base. The vast majority of the people we work with are subsistence farmers who would be classified in recover or maybe the build segments of our Pathway to Prosperity model. That said, changes in production and commercial behavior by one group in a community will affect others, so our programming looks at a community-wide strategy that works with small holder farmers in each group and across a number of sectors. These sectors tend to include agricultural production, nutritional status, and market engagement. We believe that this holistic, community-wide approach is the most effective way to achieve long-term food security.

### **Food for Peace Program**

For over 60 years the Food for Peace program has provided food assistance to people in need around the world. Current operations of the Food for Peace program are split between emergency and development programming. Emergency food aid supplied by Food for Peace provides U.S. commodities to people who are impacted by natural disasters or civil conflict. Emergency programs have traditionally lasted 6-12 months, however, in many cases they are continued for much longer periods of time because the underlying emergency conditions are not resolved. This is particularly true for many refugees and internally displaced people who have fled violence at home. Catholic Relief Services currently is the prime implementer of an emergency Food for Peace program in Ethiopia, and is a sub-awardee to several emergency food aid programs.

Food for Peace development programs primarily serve extremely farm families in the recover and build levels denoted on our Pathway model. In line with our approach to food security, Food for Peace development projects are designed to address a number of sectors simultaneously – agriculture, nutrition, land regeneration, water management, infrastructure improvements, and market engagement – in order to address whole community needs. Food for Peace development programs are implemented over a period of at least five years, which gives implementers like us enough time to make a lasting impact on the people we serve, whether by revitalizing local ground water sources, teaching farmers’ skill sets and new practices, or constructing community assets like dikes and irrigation systems. Development programs are awarded on a competitive basis, allowing the best ideas and most successful implementers to carry out the work. And, these programs are designed to address chronic stress before negative trends devolve into outright crisis, thus helping people avoid the need for emergency food assistance. Catholic Relief Services is the lead implementer of eight Food for Peace development projects; these projects are in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Madagascar, Niger, and South Sudan.

The 2014 Farm Bill set funding for development projects at a minimum of \$350 million per year, and also permitted this funding to rise up to 30% of overall Food for Peace appropriations. The remaining Food for Peace appropriations are available for emergency food assistance programs. In practice, this has provided over \$1 billion for emergency food aid over

the last several years. The 2014 Farm Bill also eliminated a waiver system that would allow development funding to be used for emergencies if certain conditions were met.

Catholic Relief Services believes funding for both emergency and development food aid programs is critical, and that funding for one should not come at the expense of the other. As such, we are grateful that the 2014 Farm Bill eliminated the then existing waiver, and established a reliable level of funding for development projects. Consistent funding for long-term development programs is paramount to ensuring such projects are able to achieve their goals. That said, we are troubled that funding for Food for Peace has remained flat over the last few years, particularly in light of higher commodity and transportation costs. **We encourage Congress to prioritize higher levels of funding for the Food for Peace program so that more resources are available for both emergency and development food aid programs.**

### **Food for Peace in Practice – Madagascar**

Madagascar is an island off the Southeast coast of Africa, with a population of about 22 million people. About 80% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day, and greater than 50% are considered food insecure. In 2014 a Catholic Relief Services-led consortium completed the Food for Peace project Strengthening and Accessing Livelihood Opportunities for Household Impact (SALOH) project which served 630,000 people in the Central and Southern portions of Madagascar. The project focused on helping vulnerable groups within the target areas, including rural farmers in Eastern coastal areas who are often impacted by cyclones and floods, farmers living in largely inaccessible regions, pastoralists and farmers who often face drought in the South, and especially female-headed households in all project regions. The SALOH project had three main objectives; 1) improve child nutrition, especially for children less than five-years-old, 2) improve the livelihoods of food-insecure households, and 3) increase community resilience to the shocks that often befall Madagascar.

Addressing child nutritional needs was a major component of this Food for Peace project, particularly given that over 17% of the people in target areas were children under five. Project activities directly impacting child nutrition included the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding through five months, complementary feeding (supported in part with Food for Peace commodities) for children 6-23 months with continued breastfeeding, and prevention of micronutrient deficiencies and anemia. To help prevent childhood diseases, particularly diarrheal diseases common among beneficiary communities, SALOH focused on improving personal hygiene of beneficiaries, especially hand washing and food hygiene. The project also trained existing and new community health workers and volunteers in the area of children's health, encouraged mothers to bring their children for regular checkups to monitor their nutritional status and potential need for intervention, and addressed the needs of malnourished children.

Since the vast majority of beneficiaries in SALOH were smallholder, subsistence farmers, efforts to improve livelihoods focused on increasing agricultural production through Farm Field Schools (FFS) that brought small groups of farmers together to learn new farming techniques like planting in rows, use of better seed, basket composting, and use of organic fertilizer. SALOH also helped farmers organize themselves into village-level microfinance cooperatives that pooled and lent small amounts of capital to their own members. Working with these same farmer groups, SALOH also introduced agribusiness skillsets. Women made up half the participants in FFS groups and over half in microfinance cooperatives. The new techniques

and skills from these interventions often spilled over to community members who did not participate in the Food for Peace project, as they saw and learned from direct project participants.

To improve community resilience and to compliment other aspects of the project, Food for Peace commodities were used in food for asset activities, where community members would build and rehabilitate community infrastructure like roads, dams, canals, and irrigation channels in exchange for food rations. To ensure sustainability, several types of management associations were created to build and maintain these assets, some of which collect fees to raise money for upkeep expenses. SALOHI employed a “Go Green Strategy” in both its livelihood and resilience activities, which promoted natural resource management and sustainability. For instance, to protect farm land from soil erosion, the program promoted reforestation and agroforestry in and around agricultural areas. Such an approach shields farm land from strong winds, reduces soil erosion from flooding, and improves water quality and availability.

The final evaluation found that SALOHI met or exceeded most of its major targets. For children under five, stunting rates declined from 47% to 41% and underweight children decreased from 29% to 20%. Average food availability in households increased from 7.7 months to 9.1 months. Adoption of new agricultural practices increased yields in staple crops like rice (80%) and cassava (38%), and led to more vegetable production and the adoption of new crops like sweet potatoes. Almost 4,300 hectares of land were reforested or protected, almost 900 kilometers of roads were built or rehabilitated, and over 9,800 hectares of land are now being irrigated thanks to SALOHI. What these numbers mean is that farmers are able to grow more food, on less land; farmers are not losing as much of their crops to storms, floods and pests; farmers are able to get their crops to market, sell more of their crops, and receive better prices; preventable childhood diseases are in fact being prevented; children who need special care are being helped; families have learned how to better care for their children; and overall, children are healthier and people are more productive. These are the kinds of achievements characteristic of Food for Peace development projects.

We plan to continue and build on the successes in SALOHI, as Catholic Relief Services was recently awarded a second Food for Peace five-year development project in Madagascar. In addition to bringing our interventions to new regions in Madagascar, we are especially excited about new ways we are integrating market engagement into project activities. For instance, we are working with a local business in Madagascar to certify participating farmers in the production of organic vanilla. While Madagascar already produces the majority of the world’s vanilla, there is a growing world demand for certified organic vanilla, which most of Madagascar’s producers can’t meet. We hope to help project farmers to meet this demand, first by earning organic certification and second by connecting them with international buyers like McCormick’s and Ben and Jerry’s, and in the process help them earn a premium for their product.

### **McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program**

The McGovern–Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program provides U.S. commodities for overseas school lunch programs. These programs target some of the most food insecure communities, so providing school lunches serves as a major incentive for parents in these areas to send their children to school. Indeed, for many of the children served by McGovern–Dole programs, their school lunch is the only full meal they receive all day. This program has led to significant increases in school attendance, particularly of girls who in many

communities are most likely to be kept home by their families. In addition to providing school lunches, Catholic Relief Services also implements complimentary activities that focus on literacy and strengthen educational quality, such as curriculum development, teacher training, and mentoring. Catholic Relief Services is currently implementing Food for Education projects in Benin, Burkina Faso, Guatemala, Honduras, Laos, Mali and Sierra Leone.

### **Food for Education in Practice – Honduras**

Catholic Relief Services is implementing a Food for Education program in Intibucá, a department (state) in Honduras which has the 4th highest adult illiteracy rate in the country and which is situated in highlands which geographically is difficult to reach. The program is serving more than 53,000 children, in over 1,000 schools, and includes a daily breakfast for all participating children, as well as take home rations for certain students. Food used in these programs is largely U.S. commodities donated by the American people.

Beyond providing meals, this Food for Education project funds implementation of a multi-prong approach to improving student attendance and achievement, and students' overall learning environment. This includes organizing school vegetable gardens which help supplement the U.S. commodities used in the program; peer-to-peer tutoring programs that target under achieving youth with special help from fellow classmates and teachers; drop-out intervention committees that help identify and address the root causes of why children are absent from school; support to especially poor families who cannot afford school supplies like books, backpacks, and uniforms; the creation of a substitute teacher program made up of community volunteers, so that the overtaxed regular faculty can attend trainings and professional development workshops; and physical improvements to schools, like building and improving latrines, classrooms, and kitchen areas.

One of the more exciting recent developments in the program is that the Government of Honduras has decided to invest \$625,000 into the program for the purchase of local foodstuffs to support the feeding and take home rations component. While this is only a one-year pilot that will end in December 2015, we are hopeful that the government will be willing to renew this investment in subsequent years.

### **Food for Progress Program**

The Food for Progress program improves commodity value chain development and market engagement for vulnerable farmers, helping them earn more and better support their families. Projects are funded through monetization of U.S. agricultural products in host country markets. Catholic Relief Services is presently implementing Food for Progress projects in Burkina Faso, the Philippines, Tanzania, and in Nicaragua. Like with the other food aid programs we implement, Catholic Relief Services has seen great success with Food for Progress. For instance, in the Philippines we worked with 33,000 farm families involved in rice and coffee production who had limited market experience, no access to end buyers, and limited farmland. We helped these farmers improve yields and product quality, learn essential business skills, and organize in cooperatives so they could collectively ask for higher prices. As a result, rice production rose 57% and coffee production rose 27%. Farmers also saw better prices for their crops, with an average increase of 17% for rice and 31% for coffee.

## **Farmer-to-Farmer Program**

The Farmer-to-Farmer program has been matching U.S. farmers and other agricultural professionals with projects and communities in need of expert help around the world for 30 years. Beginning last year, Catholic Relief Services has matched over 100 U.S. citizens with projects in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia. The skill sets of these volunteers include basic farming skills, to soil quality and management, marketing, and a host of other areas. Volunteers have offered their expertise in stand-alone projects, and in support of other existing and ongoing projects funded by Food for Peace, Food for Progress, Feed the Future, and other U.S. funded programs.

## **Improving Food Aid Programs**

As outlined above, Catholic Relief Services is a major implementer of food aid programs and as such we have a clear and deep perspective of how these programs operate. This affords us a unique perspective in how food aid programs can be improved. Below we provide three broad categories for our many recommendations for improvement; Shipping and Cargo Preference, Monetization, and Flexibility.

## **Shipping and Cargo Preference**

Catholic Relief Services recommends that Congress explore changes to existing cargo preference laws and practices that have had a negative impact on food aid programs. Cargo preference is the policy that requires the shipping of U.S. funded cargo, in this case food aid, on U.S. flagged vessels. The basis for this requirement is to help maintain private, sealift capacity – in terms of both cargo vessels and U.S. crews – in order to transport military supplies should it be required. While there is debate over whether cargo preference is an effective way of achieving this objective, it is clear that using U.S. flagged vessels to ship food aid is more expensive than using foreign flagged vessels. According to a study commissioned by the Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration (MARAD), U.S. flagged vessels cost 2.7 times more to operate than vessels flagged in other countries.<sup>1</sup> Our own experience in the price differential between U.S. and other vessels closely resembles this assessment.

The cargo preference law applicable to food aid programs is found in 46 USC 55305(b), and states that:

“at least 50 percent of the gross tonnage of the . . . commodities (computed separately for dry bulk carriers, dry cargo liners, and tankers) which may be transported on ocean vessels is transported on privately-owned commercial vessels of the United States, to the extent those vessels are available at fair and reasonable rates for commercial vessels of the United States, in a manner that will ensure a fair and reasonable participation of commercial vessels of the United States in those cargoes by geographic areas.”

There are several things Congress can do to reduce the impact cargo preference has on food aid programs. First, **we encourage Congress to consider eliminating or reducing the minimum**

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<sup>1</sup> Maritime Administration, US Dept. of Trans., Comparison of U.S. and Foreign-Flag Operating Costs, Sept. 2011, available at [http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/Comparison\\_of\\_US\\_and\\_Foreign\\_Flag\\_Operating\\_Costs.pdf](http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/Comparison_of_US_and_Foreign_Flag_Operating_Costs.pdf).

**tonnage required to be shipped on U.S. flagged vessels.** Depending on the reduction, this change could have significant and direct savings for food aid programs, leading to the purchase of more U.S. food and helping more hungry people. Alternatively, we ask Congress to consider making changes beyond the minimum tonnage requirement to current cargo preference law that would also result in significant savings for food aid programs.

One change going beyond reducing the minimum tonnage that we recommend is **eliminating the distinction between classes of vessels.** The Maritime Administration, supported by the Department of Justice, has determined “that at least [50] percent of agricultural commodities be shipped by U.S. flag vessels ‘computed separately for dry bulk carriers, dry cargo liners and tankers’ requires that the U.S. vessels be divided into those three categories and further, that the [50] percent minimum be computed separately for each category of vessel.”<sup>2</sup> In today’s ships is very little functional difference between these vessel types, yet we have seen U.S. carriers use this provision to force the rebidding of awards that were initially to less expensive carriers (both U.S. and foreign) because the quota for the vessel type they were offering had not been met.

Also, the reference to “geographic areas” in the cargo preference law has led to the requirement that USDA food aid programs must meet the 50% requirement by country, per year.<sup>3</sup> Under this constraint, small country programs with only one or two shipments in a year usually have to use the more expensive U.S. carriers for all their commodity shipments in order to ensure they meet the 50% minimum. **We recommend doing away with the requirement that minimum tonnage be calculated based on country, or any other geographic region.**

Problems with the shipment of food aid go beyond the cargo preference law. Recently in Madagascar, we saw a foreign flag carrier split what should have been eight shipments of food into 23 different shipments, spread out over several months. This led to delays in program implementation, and higher than expected costs associated with receiving, handling and storage of the food. In another recent instance, a shipment of food on a U.S. carrier destined for Ethiopia was challenged by another U.S. carrier who felt the winning transport company did not meet all relevant statutory requirements. We ultimately decided to go ahead with the original carrier as planned because any delays could have put lives in jeopardy, but in so doing we had to assume the risk of potential legal action for this decision. **We believe there is also a role for Congress to help address food aid shipping problems that are outside of the cargo preference law through greater oversight, and if need be through legislative changes that prioritize timely shipment of food aid.**

Lastly, Food for Progress has been particularly hard hit by cargo preference requirements in recent years. The authorization for Food for Progress allows the program to spend up to \$40 million a year on transportation costs. Prior to 2012, food aid programs were being reimbursed for using higher costs associated with shipping food on U.S. flagged vessels. It was Food for Progress’ practice to reinvest these reimbursed funds into additional transportation for its projects. We estimate this effectively gave Food for Progress \$5-10 million more each year to spend on overseas shipping of U.S. commodities. Now that reimbursements have been eliminated, Food for Progress has had to cut back on the number of programs it funds, reducing

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<sup>2</sup> Maritime Administration, US Dept. of Trans. Notice: Procedures for Determining Vessel Service Categories for Purposes of the Cargo Preference Act, Fed. Reg. Vol. 74, No. 177, Sept. 15, 2009 , p. 47309, available at <http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/MAR730.AG-2009-03.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Government Accountability Office, Cargo Preference Requirements: Objectives Not Significantly Advanced When Used in U.S. Food Aid Programs, Sept. 1994, available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/160/154635.pdf>.

the number of people the program once reached. **We ask Congress to consider ways to address this reduction in programming – in the short-term by considering additional appropriations to supplement the program’s cap on shipping, and in the long-term, providing a higher authorized level of funding for transportation costs.**

Catholic Relief Services also wants to make clear that we admire and respect the contributions made by U.S. merchant mariners, who for over 60 years have delivered U.S. food to millions of hungry people around the world. We recognize their efforts and sacrifices in food aid programs, and consider them valuable partners in the fight against hunger. We, however, believe that the cost of achieving the objective of maintaining a U.S. flagged merchant fleet, and U.S. mariners to crew those vessels, should not at the expense of programs intended to help the hungry overseas. **We encourage Congress to consider measures to support merchant marines in ways that do not place an undue burden on food aid funding.**

### **Monetization**

Monetization is the practice of shipping U.S. commodities overseas, to be sold abroad, in order to raise funds to cover non-food program costs. Usually the markets in which these goods must be sold cannot bear the full cost of purchasing U.S. commodities and shipping them overseas – especially when U.S. carriers are used. In almost every single case, sales are at a loss. The Government Accountability Office has looked at this and has concluded that monetization is an inefficient means of raising funds to cover non-food program costs, noting that Food for Peace monetization on average achieved a 76% cost recovery – that is, the sale of commodities netted only 76% of the cost to buy and transport the food in the first place.<sup>4</sup> Our own experience closely resembles these results.

The Agriculture Committees recognized that monetization was an inefficient practice and in the 2014 Farm Bill increased the amount of Food for Peace funding available to 202e, a provision in the Food for Peace Act that provides cash funding for administrative purposes. Additionally, the scope of activities that 202e could fund was broadened to include development activities and the enhancement of existing programs. These changes, along with additional cash funding provided to Food for Peace from USAID’s Community Development Fund, has allowed most Food for Peace programs to avoid the use of monetization, including all Food for Peace development programs Catholic Relief Services is currently implementing. For this we are incredibly grateful.

While we consider this substantial progress, we also note that the 2014 Farm Bill still requires that at least 15% of Food for Peace development program resources be used towards monetization. We are concerned that this enduring 15% requirement could force our programs in the future to monetize again. **We ask that you consider measures that would eliminate the requirement to monetize in Food for Peace programs altogether.** Additionally, we note that Food for Progress programs remain entirely funded though monetization. **We request the Agriculture Committee consider ways to make cash funding available in the Food for Progress program as well.**

Another way the 2014 Farm Bill sought to address monetization was to institute a special reporting requirement when a monetization project failed to achieve at least a 70% cost recovery.

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<sup>4</sup> Government Accountability Office, Funding Development Projects through the Purchase, Shipment, and Sale of U.S. Commodities Is Inefficient and Can Cause Adverse Market Impacts, June 2012, available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/330/320013.pdf>.

It is our understanding that the intention behind this provision was to document the reasons why there was such a low cost recovery. In practice, this provision was seen as a signal from Congress that no project should ever have a cost recovery lower than 70%. This has led to substantial reluctance by Food for Progress to engage in any projects that do not guarantee at least 70% cost recovery. In the long term, this could mean Food for Progress may scale back operations to only those few countries where higher than 70% cost recovery can reliably be achieved – most likely only countries that are a short distance from the U.S. To be clear, our goal is to achieve as high a cost recovery as possible in each monetization. However, we have no control over the prices of the commodities that are bought for the project; we have no control over how much we will be charged to transport the commodities overseas; and we have no control over the market conditions in the countries in which we are required to monetize. In short, our ability to achieve cost recovery is limited, and we are concerned otherwise worthy projects will not commence because they could not guarantee a 70% cost recovery. As such, **we ask that the Agriculture Committee provide clear guidance to USDA that it will not be penalized in any way if Food for Progress monetization does not meet the 70% cost recovery target.**

### **Flexibility**

The 2014 Farm Bill also provided additional flexibility in how food aid funding could be used. Most notably, it made permanent a pilot Local and Regional Procurement (LRP) program, and authorized \$80 million in funding for this program. The Farm Bill also established a preference that this funding be used in conjunction with McGovern-Dole projects. We were very pleased with this outcome in the Farm Bill and believe that this funding could help encourage local governments to ultimately assume responsibility for school lunch programs. Specifically, we hope to implement programming that will build the capacity of local farmers to supply the food need to carry out school lunch programs, and the capacity of school officials and parent associations to manage the purchase, storage and preparation of school lunches. In this way, we will be able to create local systems to supply and carry out school feeding that can ultimately be turned over to local and national governments to fund. Since these systems will have already been adopted by the local community, and the benefits of the system all feedback to the local community, governments will have strong incentives to take over program funding when the McGovern-Dole funding runs out. **We strongly encourage Congress to provide funding for the USDA LRP program in the final FY2016 appropriations bill.**

Another area of flexibility that we appreciate is the ability to temporarily transition existing Food for Peace development programs into emergency programs when on-the-ground circumstances make it impossible to continue development programs as planned. This flexibility has been provided by the Office of Food for Peace in two recent cases – Mali and South Sudan. In both cases we had begun implementation of Food for Peace development projects when internal civil conflict flared. In both cases we were able to use program commodities to provide emergency food relief to affected civilian populations, and in both cases we were able to transition back to development programming to populations outside combat areas. What is most critical about this kind of flexibility is that these projects have been very responsive to immediate and changing needs, and we believe they can provide a level of stability that will support the ultimate resolution of these conflicts.

**Catholic Relief Services also urges Congress to provide food aid implementers as much discretion as possible in how food aid funds are used, including whether they can be used for the purchase of U.S. commodities, locally produced/purchased commodities, vouchers, or cash transfers in their projects.** We have used each of these modalities of assistance and we know they all can be valuable in the fight against hunger and it is the specific circumstances of the project that will determine which is the right tool to use. In some cases using U.S. commodities will be the best choice – because it’s less expensive, it can be provided in the necessary quality or quantities, or buying locally in the needed volumes will negatively impact local markets. Alternatively, in some cases using an LRP modality will be the best choice – because it’s less expensive, can get to the target population faster, is more amenable to local diets, or because bringing in U.S. commodities would be disruptive to the local market. Given the dynamic circumstances in which food aid operates, food aid programs should be responsive, nimble, and adaptable to current conditions. Ideally, implementers would have complete discretion in how food aid funding is used through the life of a program.

### **Conclusion**

U.S. food aid programs – Food for Peace, Food for Education, Food for Progress and Farmer-to-Farmer – have been incredibly successful at feeding the hungry and helping the poor become more self-sufficient. It is through these programs that the U.S. is making a significant contribution to lifting people out of poverty, and their success gives us great hope that our collective goal of ending extreme poverty is attainable. At the same time, we know these programs can be improved, and we ask the Agriculture Committee and all of Congress to consider adopting the recommendations we provide in this testimony.

Thank you for this opportunity to share with the Committee our perspectives on food aid and we stand ready to work with you on making the programs even better in the future.