

Catholic Relief Services Receives \$2.9 Million Emergency Food Crisis Grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Baltimore, MD, August 14, 2008- Catholic Relief Services and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation today announced a \$2.9 million grant to CRS that will help people most affected by the global food crisis and support small-scale farmers in developing countries.

The grant is part of a \$17.6 million package to humanitarian agencies responding to the global food crisis, including the World Food Programme (WFP), Mercy Corps and Oxfam America.

Rising food and fuel prices have put 950 million people worldwide at risk of hunger and malnutrition, according to the United Nations. Young children, whose early nutritional needs are critical to ensure long-term health, and women are at the greatest risk. Increases in farming costs, such as transportation and fertilizer, are adding to the burden of small farmers.

“Thanks to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CRS will be able to ramp up our efforts to serve those suffering from the effects of the global food crisis in these three countries,” said CRS President Ken Hackett. “Our partnership with the foundation will help us to meet the immediate needs of hungry families, while investing in greater agricultural production to provide more food in the future.”

This grant to CRS will fund global food crisis projects in three countries:

1. In Afghanistan, provide employment opportunities on community infrastructure and other projects; provide direct emergency assistance to households unable to participate in cash-for-work programs; and help small-scale farmers buy seeds, tools, and other farm necessities.
2. In Burkina Faso, provide food vouchers for urban families and increase the incomes of poor farm families by increasing the production and sale of rice.
3. In Haiti, provide vouchers to help small-scale farmers obtain seeds, tools, and other farm necessities.

These three projects complement other global food crisis response activities CRS has funded in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia and Moldova.

The largest foundation grant-\$10 million to the World Food Programme (WFP)-will continue the organization's efforts to feed young children and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers in Niger, Cote D'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso, where malnutrition rates are staggering.

In addition to CRS' \$2.9 million grant, the foundation is providing \$2.7 million to Mercy Corps and \$2 million to Oxfam America. These grants will support efforts that include providing food for those most in need; helping families earn money for food through employment opportunities or cash-for-work programs; and helping farmers continue and improve their production in times of crisis.

While these grants address some of the most urgent consequences of the global food crisis, the foundation is also deeply committed to funding nutritional programs that promote lasting health and supporting long-term, sustainable efforts to help hundreds of millions of small farmers boost their productivity so they can feed their families and overcome poverty.

"The current global food crisis requires immediate action to feed people most at risk," said Sylvia Mathews Burwell, president of the foundation's Global Development Program. "In the longer term, since agriculture and the needs of small-scale farmers in the developing world have been increasingly neglected in recent decades, we need a significant reinvestment in agricultural development-from donors and developing countries-that focuses on helping small farmers boost their yields and increase their incomes."

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people-especially those with the fewest resources- have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Patty Stonesifer and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. For more information, visit www.gatesfoundation.org.