

CATHOLICS

CONFRONT

GLOBAL

POVERTY

# WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

**ADVOCACY IS THE ACT OR PROCESS OF SUPPORTING A CAUSE OR PROPOSAL**



Photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS

It includes various strategies that influence decision making at local, national and international levels. It is generally organized around the resolution of a problem. Advocacy can include using multimedia to form public opinion, educating decision makers, organizing public events, researching issues and creating coalitions. Effective advocacy requires an understanding of the problem or issue, solid analysis of the political environment and a coherent proposal for its solution.

Advocacy encompasses the education and mobilization of citizens, so they can become involved in developing and promoting policies they care about. Through Catholics Confront Global Poverty, we encourage Catholics in the United States and others of good will to learn more about policy issues affecting our brothers and sisters around the world. This means advocating for changes in existing unjust policies and the creation of new policies that benefit the common good.

## **PROMOTING JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY THROUGH ADVOCACY**

Our understanding of justice is integral to the Church's teachings on solidarity. Justice incorporates our rights as well as our responsibilities. Solidarity, or our persevering commitment to be responsible for the well-being of our neighbors, is therefore an important precondition of our work. Solidarity involves individuals and communities, and is an ethical imperative in Catholic social teaching, or CST. Genuine solidarity requires us to remove barriers and create an environment in which relationships can flourish. Our relationships with our brothers and sisters, particularly those who are poor and marginalized, are mediated through a variety of interconnected structures and systems. CST calls us to assume responsibility with others by shaping a more just and compassionate social order.

The principles of CST provide a vision for what a just world could look like. To achieve justice and solidarity, we must strive to uphold systems that promote justice and peace—and likewise change systems and practices that do not respect the rights of everyone. We must encourage full participation in economic, social and political life.



Photo by Philip Laubner/CRS

## YOUR VOICE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Advocacy is one of the most effective ways to ease human suffering. When an unjust policy or system is changed because of our advocacy efforts, millions of people win. Join us as we seek to confront global poverty through the power of our voices!

In 2009, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services launched a new advocacy initiative called Catholics Confront Global Poverty, or CCGP, to engage Catholics and others of good will in the United States in shaping U.S. policies that affect our brothers and sisters who are poor and vulnerable through prayer, education and advocacy. Working together amplifies our voice and influence in the halls of power!

Today, CCGP has tens of thousands of advocates around the United States that are committed to global solidarity and justice. As an initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services, it represents the official voice of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States on policy issues related to easing human suffering worldwide. Our members receive special alerts about important action in Congress, invitations for upcoming events such as conferences and workshops, and access to the latest news and resources via weekly updates and quarterly newsletters.

## THE 'HOW' OF ADVOCACY

Every 2 years we identify and select policy issues on which to advocate in the United States. Based on the expertise of CRS staff, our partners and the U.S. bishops, we then determine priority issues for advocacy. We analyze global and regional trends to select issues that are impacting multiple areas around the world as well as how they can best be addressed.

### SHAPING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Policymaking on international issues involves many different actors:

- Citizens
- Federal elected officials in the White House and Congress
- Administration staff
- Advocacy groups representing a range of interests, relief and development agencies like CRS, and many other organizations with a stake in policy outcomes

In order to effectively influence and shape policymaking on international issues, we must reach out to all major actors listed above. Therefore, CRS and USCCB have staff working in Washington, DC, that research and analyze policy issues, and develop public policy. Our team forges relationships with members of Congress and their staffs and advocates directly before them with policy recommendations that benefit the common good.

Citizen involvement—that means you!—is essential. Your elected officials work for you! While they might not always take positions on issues we desire, they're supposed to listen to their constituents. If they don't hear from you, how can they represent you in Congress?

Through Catholics Confront Global Poverty, Catholics across the country in dioceses, parishes, universities and religious communities are able to raise awareness about international policy issues and engage in the policymaking process.

The powerful combination of your voice plus our team in Washington, DC, means that we're able to change systems and structures that perpetuate poverty and injustice.





Photo by Francois Therrien  
for CRS

## JOIN US

1-866-608-5978  
info@confrontglobalpoverty.org  
confrontglobalpoverty.org

### AMPLIFY YOUR VOICE

The simple fact that you care about an issue and the people impacted carries a lot of weight with your members of Congress. But don't stop there! Let that passion and concern lead you to get others involved.

1. Don't be shy. Encourage your friends and family to get involved! Make it personal by explaining why the issue(s) matters to you. Use social media to attract others.
2. Cast the net wider.

- Look into whether your school/campus or parish has a group working on the issue. Another great place to check out online is your state Catholic conference.
- Consider forming a small group/team to work on the issue(s). Some all-star members could include:
  - Parish priests
  - Members of other parish organizations
  - Diocesan staff
  - Bishops
  - Friends and colleagues
  - Members of other Catholic organizations
  - Your CRS regional office
  - Your CRS diocesan director
  - Members of community groups

### SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS

**ACTION ALERTS** — Make sure you're signed up to receive CCGP Action Alerts. We'll let you know when your voice is needed on important legislation and policy initiatives moving through Congress and the administration.

**SOCIAL MEDIA** — Keep up to date with the latest news and resources by following the USCCB and CRS on Facebook and Twitter. Also, consider following Pope Francis and your members of Congress.

**WEBCASTS** — Watch our webcasts providing firsthand reports from experts and leaders about the Church's efforts to address global poverty, and actions that can be taken to participate in these efforts.

**TRAINING** — Our staff is available to help your team enhance your advocacy skills through the following:

- Seminars on advocacy, international policy issues, building legislative networks and networking
- Workshops on effective advocacy, community organizing, and connecting local and global issues
- Expert speakers from the United States and overseas who can present on important international issues

A partnership between the  
United States Conference  
of Catholic Bishops  
and Catholic Relief Services

