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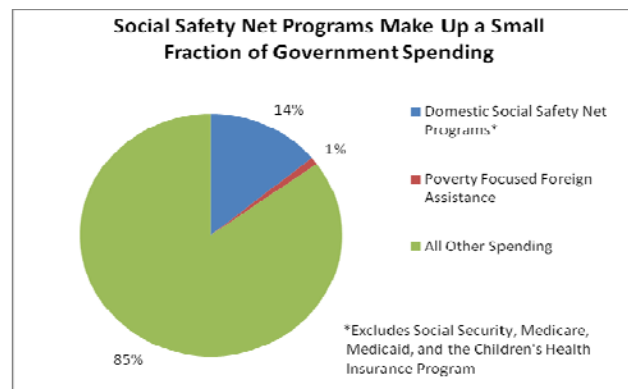
2011 Ecumenical Advocacy Days: Development, Security & Economic Justice: What's Gender Got to Do with It?

As people of faith who believe that society and government have a divinely-mandated responsibility to care for and lift up people struggling to overcome poverty, protect the vulnerable, and promote health and security for all, we call on Congress and the Administration to address U.S. fiscal problems wisely and responsibly by protecting the services and programs that enable all women and families to live safely, securely, and with dignity.

We urge the United States Congress and the Administration to:

- **Address U.S. fiscal problems in a way that safeguards assistance for impoverished and hungry families and does not abandon them to further hardship.**

- The government's current budget deficits are due to large tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003 and then extended in 2010, the cost of fighting two wars, and the economic recession. In addition, our longer-term deficits



and debt also derive from rising healthcare costs, an aging population, and insufficient revenues. Ensuring good jobs for unemployed Americans and addressing these longer-term concerns -- not cutting help for the poorest among us -- is needed to resolve U.S. fiscal problems.

- Domestic discretionary social safety net programs make up just 14 percent of the federal budget. Poverty focused foreign assistance is less than 1 percent. Foreign aid and non-defense discretionary spending (where most low-income programs lie in the budget) has had virtually no role in creating the large deficits we see today. Cutting these programs will have little impact in curbing the deficit.
- **Protect and adequately fund programs that serve women and families - especially those struggling to overcome poverty - domestically and around the world.**

Because of their often subjugated or marginalized status, women are generally more vulnerable than men when it comes to poverty. Women and their families can succeed and generate multiplying impacts in society when they have the right tools and resources available to them - economic opportunity, basic health

care and education, the ability to participate in decisions that affect them and recognition of their basic rights and dignity

- Especially in these tough economic times, we should not try to solve budget reduction efforts by cutting programs and services for those who can least afford it—low-income working families with children, often headed by women, the impoverished and elderly.
 - Programs and services for low-income families, often headed by women, provide some of the most effective ways to grow the economy and create jobs, thus reducing the deficit. Low-income families spend these benefits quickly and in their local communities. For example, every dollar of food stamps generates \$1.73 in economic growth.
 - Cutting charitable programs will devastate those living in poverty, cost jobs, disrupt the fragile recovery, and in the long run will harm, not help, our fiscal situation.
 - Cutting poverty-focused foreign aid will result in a less secure world, undermine U.S. national interest and generate greater costs in the future.
- **Exempt domestic anti-poverty programs and poverty-focused humanitarian and development aid from cuts and multi-year spending caps. A strong precedent exists for protecting the poor in the context of deficit reduction by exempting such programs from cuts.**

The three major deficit-reduction packages of the last two decades (1990, 1993, and 1997) actually reduced poverty by including substantial increases in the Earned Income Tax Credit, food stamps, and by creating the Children's Health Insurance Program.

- **Reject the House of Representatives' recent 2011 spending bill cutting \$61 billion, which would drastically hurt impoverished and vulnerable women and families. A few examples of the incredible harm from these cuts include, among others:**
- Women and small children who receive benefits through the **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**, will be at risk of losing benefits as food costs and the costs of operating the program increase this year.
 - Over 200,000 low-income children under the age of five would lose the education, health, nutrition, and other services provided by **Head Start**;
 - 81,000 people, mostly low-income elders, would no longer receive food baskets due to cuts in the **Commodity Supplemental Food Program**.
 - Of the 14,000 people relying on **section 811 vouchers** that enable low-income individuals with disabilities to afford housing, 10,000 would lose their vouchers;
 - At a time of rising global food prices, cuts to food aid and to global agriculture programs funded in the **Development Assistance** account which especially benefit women farmers will leave millions of hungry children, women and men dying and desperate.
 - Refugees and survivors of conflicts, human rights abuses and natural disasters receiving **International Disaster Assistance and Migration and Refugee** funding will go without emergency food, health care, safe shelter, and clean water.
 - Vulnerable families in poor countries whose homes have become endangered, whose water supply is diminished and whose farms are less productive because of the impact of **climate change**, will not receive **help to adapt** to their new circumstances and rebuild their livelihoods.
 - Cuts to **PEPFAR (the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief)** would result in 100,000 women not receiving medication to prevent the transmission of HIV to their newborn children and tens of thousands of babies would be born HIV positive; 400,000 people not receiving life-saving anti-retroviral treatment and 300,000 orphans and children being denied care and support.
 - The world's poorest nations who have benefited from the ongoing **debt cancellation** mechanism will have many fewer resources freed up from debt service relief to invest in health care, education and clean water.