

November 11, 2008
Catholic Campaign for Human Development
Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Catholic Campaign for Human Development?

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) is the anti-poverty effort of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. CCHD's mission is to address the root causes of poverty in America through promotion and support of community-controlled, self-help organizations and through transformative education. Many of these organizations do their work through community organizing and economic development efforts.

CCHD fully upholds the Church's teaching on the sanctity of human life from conception through natural death. The Campaign funds projects that empower the poor and help them organize themselves to move out of poverty. All grant applications are carefully screened and funds are provided only to projects with objectives and actions that are fully in accord with the moral teachings of the Catholic Church. Partisan activity is strictly prohibited. The local CCHD director and CCHD field representative evaluate every proposal. Endorsement by the local bishop is required for every project recommended for funding.

2. What is community organizing?

Community organizing is the bringing together of people and often churches and other groups in a geographic area to address concerns affecting the common good such as safe and affordable housing, access to services and businesses, educational systems, access to jobs with living wages, and other issues of economic development and justice.

3. Why is the Catholic Church supportive of community organizing efforts?

Community organizing is one way that Catholics can exercise their moral responsibility to participate in public life. "It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1913) Addressing systemic injustice in society can be achieved by voting, legislative advocacy, and public witness. Community organizing can include these methods as well as other activities that address injustice and poverty.

Additionally, community organizing puts Catholic social teaching principles into action. It brings together people of varied socio-economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds to work together in solidarity for the common good. Community organizing allows people who are poor and not poor to work together to solve problems. When people who are poor take leadership and work to address their own situations, their human dignity is affirmed.

Pope John Paul II said "The [Catholic] Campaign for Human Development has been a witness to the Church's living presence in the world among the most needy, and to

her commitment to continuing the mission of Christ, who was sent ‘to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives...and release to the prisoners’ (Luke 4: 18-19). I commend the bishops of the United States for their wisdom and compassion in establishing the [Catholic] Campaign for Human Development...and I thank the whole Catholic community for the generous support given to this initiative during all these years.” (Providence of God Church, Chicago, Illinois, October 1979)

4. Who approves funding for these projects?

Each project is prescreened by CCHD national staff, reviewed by the local diocesan CCHD director, endorsed by the local bishop and presented to the CCHD Subcommittee, a group of bishops selected to oversee the grants.

5. Does CCHD fund partisan efforts?

No, CCHD does not fund partisan political activities. Partisan activities are strictly prohibited. Partisan projects are not eligible for consideration and upon discovery of partisan activity, funding is revoked.

6. What is the current status of ACORN’s CCHD funding?

Last June, CCHD cut off funding of grants to ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) groups because of questions that had arisen about financial management, fiscal transparency and organizational accountability of the national ACORN structures.

During the CCHD Bishops Subcommittee meeting November 8-9, 2008, the Subcommittee voted unanimously to extend and formalize ending CCHD funding of ACORN organizations. This decision was made because of serious concerns regarding ACORN’s lack of financial transparency, organizational performance and questions surrounding political partisanship.