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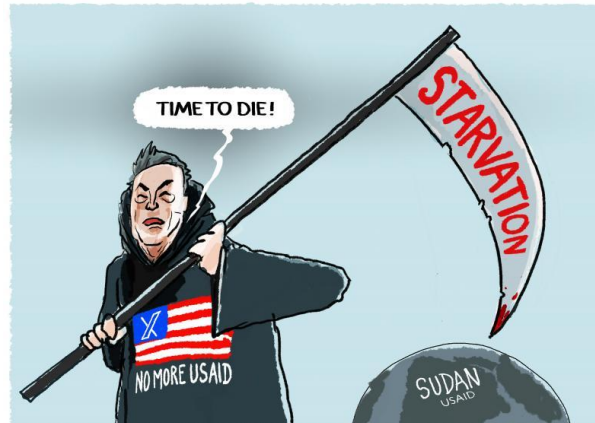
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Aid in Retreat: Impact of US and European Aid Cuts on Sub-Saharan Africa

Dirk Kohnert ¹

Cartoon: “Time to die” ... Trump shuts down USAID



Source: © [Grolik](#), CartoonMovement, 2025

Abstract: On 28 March 2025, the Trump administration formally notified Congress of its intent to dismantle nearly all remaining positions within the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), including the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). This decision effectively terminates the operations of a key foreign aid institution, concluding over six decades of purported humanitarian and development engagement. USAID has long been a focal point of criticism for both the Trump administration and Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). However, the role of US and European aid in Africa has been fraught with contradictions. While framed as a mechanism for development, such assistance has frequently served geopolitical and neo-colonial interests rather than fostering sustainable, autonomous growth. Under the guise of economic liberalisation, aid has been instrumentalised to impose privatisation and deregulation policies, often to the detriment of local economies. USAID, in concert with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB), has prioritised large-scale agribusiness and monoculture production systems, undermining indigenous food sovereignty and displacing traditional agrarian practices. Consequently, African farmers have become increasingly dependent on imported seeds, chemical fertilisers, and industrial farming techniques, a paradigm that disproportionately benefits Western agribusiness conglomerates while exacerbating food insecurity across the continent. Compounding these challenges, concurrent reductions in aid budgets by the UK and EU, driven by militarisation priorities, threaten to inflict severe humanitarian consequences, particularly upon Africa’s most marginalised populations. Since 2015, international donors have accounted for approximately 40% of HIV funding in low- and middle-income countries, with the US serving as the largest historical contributor. Sub-Saharan Africa stands to bear the brunt of these cuts, as critical prevention initiatives, including condom distribution and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) programs, face imminent discontinuation. The repercussions could reverse decades of progress, particularly in curbing mother-to-child HIV transmission and reducing paediatric HIV mortality. Yet, this crisis also presents a pivotal opportunity: the potential for Africa to reclaim agency over its developmental trajectory, unshackled from external conditionalities and structural dependencies. This juncture could catalyse an era of self-reliance, marked by regional collaboration, endogenous innovation, and economic sovereignty—principles embodied by initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). To navigate this transition, African governments could reorient policy toward home-grown solutions, empowering local entrepreneurs, smallholder farmers, and domestic industries as engines of equitable growth. However, the feasibility of such measures remains precarious, given entrenched elite capture and systemic corruption within many SSA governance structures. The subsequent analysis will demonstrate, drawing upon case studies from South Africa, Nigeria, Zambia, and Ethiopia, the political economy of aid withdrawal often renders transformative alternatives unviable, as ruling elites prioritise self-enrichment over structural reform.

Keywords: [ODA](#), [Development aid](#), [USAID](#), [NGOs](#), [sub-Sahara Africa](#), [trade policy](#), [health policy](#), [HIV](#), [tuberculosis](#), [protectionism](#), [nationalism](#), [self-reliance](#), [import substitution](#), [AfCFTA](#), [Uganda](#), [South Africa](#), [Nigeria](#), [Zambia](#), [Ethiopia](#)

JEL-Code: D04, D12, D18, D31, D43, D62, D73, E26, F13, F35, F52, F54, H42, H51, I14, I15, J16, N37, O55, Z13

¹ Dirk Kohnert, associated expert, [GIGA-Institute for African Affairs, Hamburg](#). Draft: 21 April 2025

1. Introduction

Graph 1: *logo of USAID* ²



Source: © [USAID](#), Wikipedia

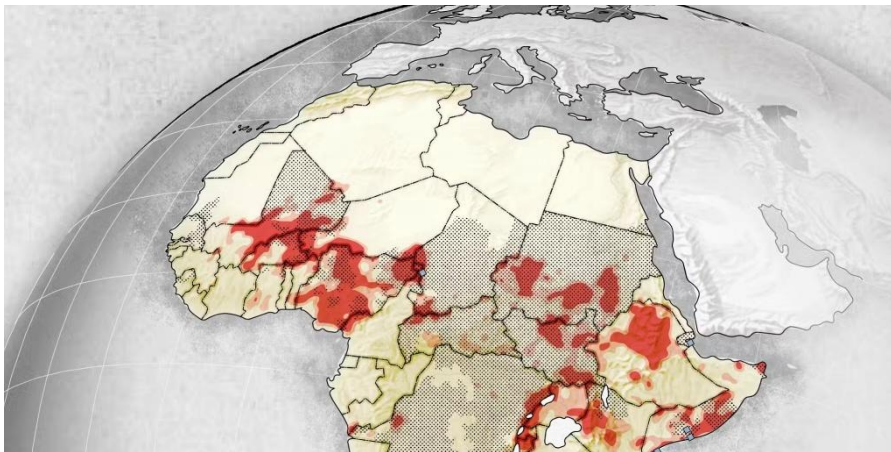
On 28 March 2025, the [Trump administration](#) notified [Congress](#) that it plans to eliminate nearly all remaining positions at the United States Agency for International Development ([USAID](#)). The move would effectively shut down the foreign aid agency, ending more than 60 years of humanitarian and development work (Whisnant, 2025). USAID was set up in 1961 to administer humanitarian aid programmes on behalf of the US government. It is by far the largest humanitarian and development arm of the US government and employs not less than 10,000 people, two-thirds of whom work overseas, according to the [Congressional Research Service](#) (Chima, 2025).

[USAID](#) has been a prime target of the Trump administration and [Elon Musk's](#) Department of Government Efficiency ([DOGE](#)) since President Donald Trump took office (Whisnant, 2025). USAID spent about \$12 billion in [sub-Saharan Africa](#) (SSA) in 2024, mostly on humanitarian and health aid. Most of that now appears to be gone. Among the programmes that have been axed are the President's Malaria Initiative ([PMI](#)), which fights malaria in dozens of African countries, and projects to provide vaccines against polio, rotavirus and COVID-19. But the biggest hit is to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)), which supports HIV treatment and prevention programmes in more than 20 African countries. PEPFAR's largest beneficiary, [South Africa](#), which has more people living with [HIV](#) than any other country, will lose \$439.5 million this fiscal year (Tsanni, 2025). [Africa](#) is also heavily dependent on other types of foreign health aid. The [Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#) with headquarters in Geneva spends about 70% of its \$5 billion annual budget providing African countries with drugs, bed nets, diagnostics and training. [GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance](#), also based in Geneva, spent about \$1.2 billion in 2023 to provide Africa with vaccines for 20 infectious diseases. Both receive funding from the US government, which has so far been unaffected. Africa's dependence on such aid has deep roots. Many countries inherited health systems that primarily served their former colonisers. But the priorities of global health donors do not always match African needs. Many donor countries also expect political favours in return for their largesse. Despite a 2001 pledge by [African Union](#) member states to spend at least 15% of their annual budgets on health, the average in 2021 was only 5.7%. And too often, money is lost to waste and corruption. In [Uganda](#), for example, where 1.4 million people are living with HIV/AIDS, USAID funds 60% of control programmes (Tsanni, 2025).

² 'The logo of the United States Agency for International Development has been in use since 2004, when it replaced the earlier version (still used as the agency seal). Most of the time, the agency identity (which contains this logo) is usually used to represent the agency, but sometimes the logo is used standalone (United States Agency for International Development)' ([USAID](#), Wikipedia).

[USAID](#) has also been the subject of multiple lawsuits alleging that [Musk's DOGE](#), and the [Trump administration's](#) efforts to shut it down, are illegal and unconstitutional. Earlier in March, the [Supreme Court](#), which has a 6-3 conservative majority, ordered the administration to unfreeze \$2 billion in foreign aid. The aid was blocked after Trump signed an executive order on his first day in office ordering the freeze while his administration scours US spending for what Trump and his allies call "waste, fraud and abuse". The executive director of USAID's COVID-19 task force, Jeremy Konyndyk, complained on [X \(Twitter\)](#) that at the same time as a massive and deadly [earthquake struck Myanmar](#) on 28 March 2025, US Secretary of State [Marco Rubio](#) and [Elon Musk](#) fired the last remnants of the team that would have mobilised a USAID disaster response. According to Konyndyk, this represented a total abdication of decades of US leadership in the world (Whisnant, 2025).

Graph 2: *US funding freeze targets poorest countries in SSA*

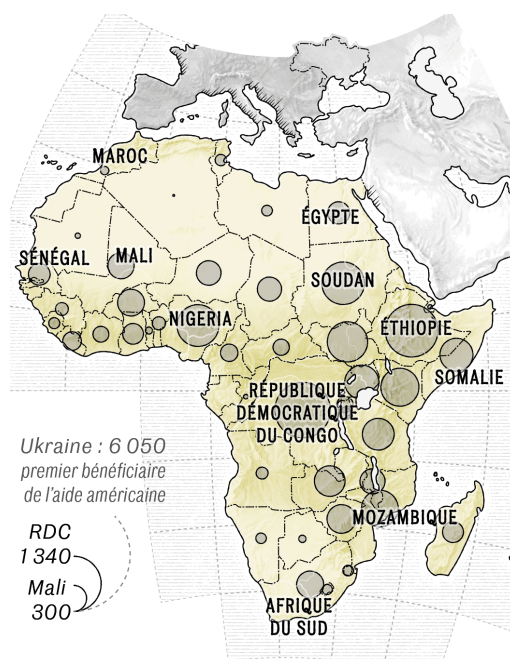


Source: © Holzinger, et al, 2025

The dissolution of the United States Agency for International Development ([USAID](#)) is anticipated to have ramifications for Washington's [soft power](#), i.e. it's the ability to co-opt rather than coerce, and to compromise the efficacy of mechanisms designed to prevent [famine](#) (Holzinger et al., 2025). The African continent is the primary recipient of the substantial reductions to USAID's budget. Six countries, [Ethiopia](#), [South Sudan](#), [Nigeria](#), [Uganda](#), [Kenya](#), and the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) (DRC), are among the top ten recipients of US subsidies. For each of these countries, US aid constitutes more than half of the foreign assistance received, compared to an average of 35% for the continent as a whole, according to the latest available figures published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)).

In addition to USAID cuts, it is important to note the disengagement of the United States and the cuts to aid by other foreign donors, particularly those of the [European Union](#) (EU) and the [United Kingdom](#) because of increased defence spending. While the withdrawal may not be as precipitous in nature, its repercussions are nevertheless substantial, particularly for numerous African governments that rely on these funds for crucial sectors such as health and education. The freeze on US funding is particularly impactful on the poorest countries. The trade war initiated by US President Donald Trump has also had an impact on the continent, whose share in global trade remains negligible (approximately 4%) (Kohnert, 2025). This has manifested in the form of additional taxes imposed on exports in countries such as [Lesotho](#), [Madagascar](#), [Mauritius](#), [South Africa](#), and [Botswana](#) (Holzinger et al., 2025).

Graph 3: Aid distributed by USAID in 2024 (US\$ million)



Source: © Holzinger, et al, 2025

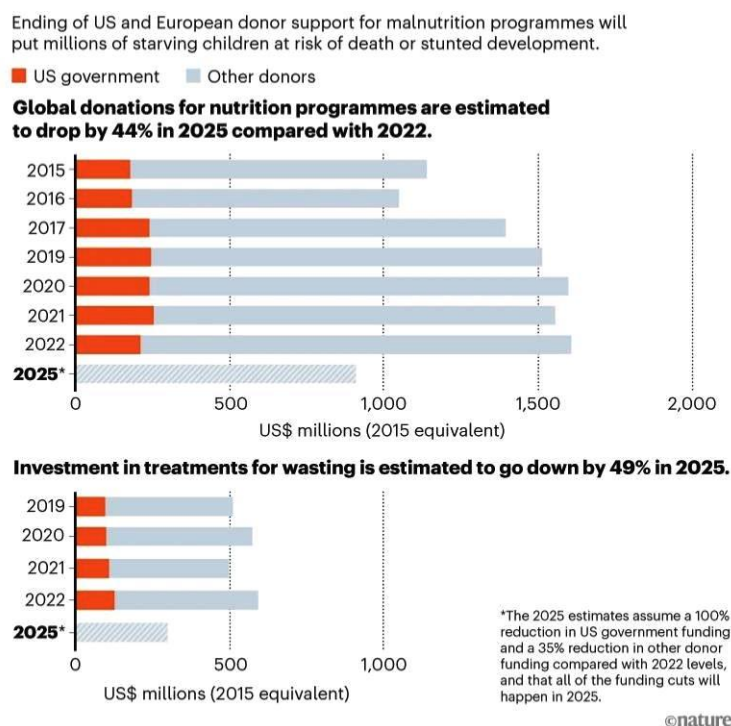
The dismantling of [USAID](#) will also have a profound impact on [public health](#), [inclusive growth](#) and [political and social stability](#). For example, in 2022, the United States and other donors reporting to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)) spent \$591 million on severe wasting treatment, which was matched by recipient countries (Osendarp, et al., 2025). The abrupt withdrawal of donor support leaves millions of critically ill children without access to these life-saving programmes. It is already undermining the institutional capacity, expertise and data infrastructure needed to deliver essential nutrition services. In [Nigeria](#), for example, the withdrawal of USAID funding for Advancing Nutrition meant that the US-based charity [Helen Keller International](#) had to stop a programme providing nutrition services to 5.6 million children. In [Sudan](#), nearly 80 % of emergency food kitchens have closed. In [Ethiopia](#), supplies of nutritious food used to treat about one million severely malnourished children a year will run out by May 2025 (Osendarp, et al, 2025). And if the global Famine Early Warning Systems Network ([FEWS-NET](#)), a leading source of data on famine risk, created in 1985 by USAID, is shut down, this will disrupt early warning systems for humanitarian planning and emergency resource allocation. The loss of donor funding also threatens the procurement and distribution of ready-to-use therapeutic food, a life-saving treatment for severe acute malnutrition. The product is a dense micronutrient paste containing groundnuts, powdered milk, sugar, oils, vitamins and minerals. USAID supported half of the global supply. Overall, it is estimated that the \$290 million cut in donor funding for severe acute malnutrition will leave 2.3 million children in low- and middle-income countries ([LMICs](#)) without treatment. This would result in an additional 369,000 child deaths per year that would otherwise have been prevented (Osendarp, et al, 2025).

The nutrition funding collapse is illustrated in *Graph 4*. The first horizontal oriented stacked bar chart shows global donations for nutrition programmes dropping by 44 % between 2022 and 2025 with US funding cut entirely. The second shows investment in treatment for [wasting](#)³ dropping between 2022 and 2025 by 94%, again with US funding cut completely

³ ‘wasting’ is the process by which a debilitating disease causes muscle and fat tissue to "waste" away.

(Osendarp, et al., 2025). Of those, the termination of US-funded programmes (worth \$128 million in 2022) alone will keep one million children from accessing such treatments, causing an extra 163,500 child deaths yearly. The worst-case scenarios are based on 2022 donor disbursement data for severe wasting treatment, drawn from the Creditor Reporting System of the [OECD](#) and analysed by [Results for Development](#), a global non-profit organization based in Washington D.C. These treatments are included in community-based management of severe acute malnutrition programmes, which screen and treat children with severe acute malnutrition and follow them to prevent relapse after recovery. Cutting all US financing and on average 35% of aid from other donors results in \$704 million less funding for nutrition programmes overall, and \$290 million less for severe acute malnutrition treatment. These numbers assume that disbursements would have otherwise been similar to those in 2022, that the 35% average cuts to aid that were announced by European donor countries will reduce funding for nutrition by 35%, and that donor funding is matched by contributions from [LMIC](#) governments, as is often the case. The number of deaths may even be underestimated, as aid cuts threaten a wide range of programmes that support nutrition, including health, agriculture, school feeding, and water and sanitation (Osendarp, et al., 2025).

Graph 4: Nutrition funding collapse



Source: © Osendarp et al. 2025

[Tropical diseases](#) are a leading cause of death each year. For example, in 2019, neglected tropical diseases ([NTDs](#)) will cause 150,000 deaths and 19 million disability-adjusted life years ([DALYs](#)), with [sub-Saharan Africa](#) bearing more than half of the burden (Ogieuhi, et al., 2025). The World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) plays a crucial role in combating these tropical diseases through surveillance, information campaigns and health promotion. The potential withdrawal of a major player such as the [United States](#), the WHO's largest donor, which contributed \$1.284 billion (20% of its budget) in 2022-2023, surpassing the [Gates Foundation](#) (\$689 million), [GAVI](#) (\$500 million) and the [EU](#) (\$412 million), and its possible withdrawal threatens WHO's financial stability, jeopardising emergency response, disease prevention and global health initiatives, urging stakeholders to strengthen global health systems. By promoting collaboration, transparency and mutual accountability, the global

health community can continue to make progress in eliminating the burden of major tropical diseases such as [malaria](#) and [dengue fever](#). Failure to do so could reverse hard-won gains such as the 99% reduction in [polio](#) cases since 1988, the near eradication of [Guinea worm disease](#) (from 3.5 million cases in 1986 to 14 in 2023), and the declining burden of NTDs, leading to resurgence and increased mortality among vulnerable populations worldwide, with devastating consequences for millions of people around the world (Ogieuhi, et al., 2025).

On [World Tuberculosis Day](#), 24 March 2025, global health authorities found themselves at a critical juncture in their efforts to tackle the continuing global emergency of [tuberculosis](#). By 2023, there will be up to 10 million new TB cases and 1-25 million deaths, including 161 000 deaths among people living with [HIV](#) (Zumla, et al, 2025). The decision by the US Government to abruptly freeze the activities of [USAID](#) has been seen as endangering progress made in achieving WHO and UN targets of ending tuberculosis by 2030. USAID has been a cornerstone in funding national tuberculosis programmes across Africa and Asia. In 2024, USAID provided US\$ 406 million in funding for tuberculosis care and prevention efforts through networks of non-governmental organisations, faith-based groups, and other partners. In [sub-Saharan Africa](#), USAID supported tuberculosis and HIV programmes for case detection, treatment, and follow-up care. Importantly, the USAID freeze further exacerbated the existing \$11 billion shortfall for the tuberculosis response, worsening an already dire situation with far-reaching consequences (Zumla, et al., 2025).

Last but not least, the massive cuts to [USAID](#) are beginning to dangerously destabilise [refugee assistance](#) (Kessous, 2025). The daily lives of millions of refugees and internally displaced people ([IDPs](#)) in Africa are being severely affected by the massive American withdrawal from humanitarian aid. In early March, Trump ordered an 83% cut to USAID programmes. This abrupt halt has begun to dangerously destabilise humanitarian assistance, particularly for refugees. This drying up of funding will force humanitarian workers to choose between the plague and cholera, warned Helena Ranchal, director of international operations for Médecins du Monde ([MDM](#)). The victims of the continent's most acute crises are directly affected, such as in the east of the [DR Congo](#), in [Goma](#), with the damned of the war between the [Rwandan](#)-backed rebel paramilitary group [M23](#) and the DR Congo army, where the M23 offensive has forced more than 100,000 people to flee since the end of January 2025, including 70,000 to [Burundi](#), according to the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights ([UNCHR](#)) (Kessous, 2025).

The sudden withdrawal of USAID from several African countries has raised concerns about economic instability, disrupted development programmes and weakened institutional support in these countries. But according to radical African writers, the cuts could be a blessing in disguise for Africa in the medium and long term. It should be a wake-up call that Africans cannot rely on other countries to fund the things they need to do. The centre of gravity for Africa's health development should be in Africa (Tsanni, 2025). It could also be an opportunity, a chance for Africa to take control of its development path, free from external dictates and dependencies, and a turning point that could usher in a new era of self-reliance, innovation, regional cooperation and economic sovereignty (Mokgonyana, 2025). Without external funding, some of these initiatives could face cutbacks or even collapse, affecting vulnerable populations. But, they say, history has shown that true independence often requires sacrifice. Short-term pain would be an inevitable part of breaking the cycle of dependence on foreign aid (Mokgonyana, 2025). Yet, in the past, most of these appeals for self-reliance have remained pious wishes.

For decades, [foreign aid](#) has come with strings attached. [USAID](#) has helped to advance US geopolitical interests rather than genuine African development (Ruth, 2025). For example, the

Center for Privatization (CFP), a consortium of six different private consulting agencies funded by USAID, was set up in 1985 to promote neoliberalism and facilitate a private sector bonanza in the [Global South](#). The CFP worked with governments of least developed countries ([LDCs](#)), including African countries such as [Zaire](#) and [Egypt](#), and USAID to provide analyses of privatisation projects designed to break up state-owned enterprises ranging from banana farming to cement mixing. For example, USAID pushed for lower taxes as a condition for agricultural aid (Ruth, 2025). Another example is the role of foreign aid in shaping African agricultural policies. USAID has promoted policies that favour [large-scale agribusiness](#) and [monoculture farming](#), often at the expense of [local food sovereignty](#) and traditional farming methods. This has resulted in African farmers becoming dependent on imported seeds, fertilisers and industrial farming techniques that primarily benefit Western [agribusiness](#) corporations rather than African food security (Mokgonyana, 2025). The withdrawal of USAID would provide an opportunity for African countries to refocus on indigenous agricultural practices and self-sustaining food production systems. Similarly, foreign aid, including decades of patronizing and controlling by the [Bretton Woods Institutions](#), [IMF](#) and [World Bank](#), has been used to promote [privatisation](#) and [deregulation](#) policies under the guise of [economic liberalization](#). In several African countries, USAID-supported programmes have facilitated the privatisation of essential services such as water and health care, making them less accessible to citizens while increasing corporate control (Mokgonyana, 2025).

[Africa](#) received more than \$6.5 billion in [humanitarian aid](#) in 2024 (Chima, 2025). However, most of this money allegedly ended up in private pockets or bank accounts. Critics argue that foreign aid over the years has failed to deliver [sustainable development](#), and has even perpetuated [dependency](#) and hindered progress in the region. Reports also suggest that foreign aid over the years has fuelled [corruption](#) and made the region poorer with little impact. There are also allegations that some of the aid the continent receives each year is used to fund wars and terrorism. Over-dependence on aid has largely discouraged local initiatives, as some individuals and governments on the continent divert resources from their intended purposes. In addition, aid often comes with conditions that are not in line with local priorities, beliefs or culture. Kenya's former president, [Uhuru Kenyatta](#), also criticised African leaders who complained after Trump temporarily withdrew aid to the continent. Kenyatta urged African leaders to stop crying foul and instead rethink how to secure funds to meet their needs (Chima, 2025).

Cartoon 2: *'Correcting aid allocation'*



Source: © [Telangana Today](#), 20 November 2023

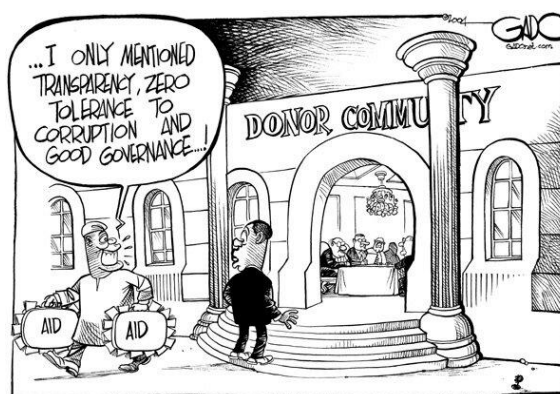
According to these critics, African governments should take [proactive measures](#) to fill the gaps left by foreign aid. Strengthening domestic revenues would be a crucial first step. This

would include, for example, improving tax collection mechanisms so that taxes work for the people, reducing [illicit financial flows](#), and encouraging local investment to provide alternative sources of financing for development projects. Africa loses billions annually to [tax evasion](#) and illicit financial flows. African countries should prioritise home-grown solutions and support local entrepreneurs, small-scale farmers and manufacturers to drive economic growth. Regional cooperation should also be strengthened. By deepening intra-African trade and investment through mechanisms such as the African Continental Free Trade Area ([AfCFTA](#)), nations could reduce dependence on external actors and build regional resilience (Mokgonyana, 2025).

This view is in line with a broader shift taking place on the continent, particularly in [West Africa](#). The Alliance of Sahel States ([AES](#)), founded in September 2023 by the three military governments of [Mali](#), [Niger](#) and [Burkina Faso](#) as a counterweight to [ECOWAS](#) and the post-colonial influence of [France](#) and other Western countries, announced the creation of a confederation of its three countries in July 2024 (Kohnert, 2024). Military leaders such as Burkina Faso's President [Ibrahim Traoré](#), Mali's [Assimi Goïta](#), Niger's [Abdourahamane Tchiani](#) and Guinea's Lieutenant General [Mamady Doumbouya](#) have championed narratives of self-determination and sovereignty, arguing that Africa's over-dependence on external actors has hindered progress (Mokgonyana, 2025). [Aid for trade](#) negatively affects the export flows and positively affects the import flows of Sub-Saharan African countries in the trade relationship with OECD countries. [Aid for trade](#) is therefore ineffective because it contributes to maintaining a trade deficit for sub-Saharan African countries (Dongue, 2025).

Even with the controversial slogan '[aid for trade](#)' of the [WTO](#)⁴, which encapsulates one of the main principles of [fair trade](#) - trade rather than charity - advocated by a number of developing countries since the 1960s, there are strong indicators that point to greater self-reliance in the medical sector as well. African economists examining the effect of trade aid on trade flows between [Sub-Saharan African](#) countries and the [OECD](#) have found that 'aid for trade' has a negative effect on sub-Saharan Africa's export flows and a positive effect on its import flows in trade relations with OECD countries. 'Aid for trade' is therefore ineffective because it contributes to maintaining a trade deficit for sub-Saharan African countries. Instead, it is recommended that development partners focus 'aid for trade' on the [import substitution](#) strategy of recipient countries (Dongue, 2025).

Cartoon 3: 'the impact of double-talk on development aid'

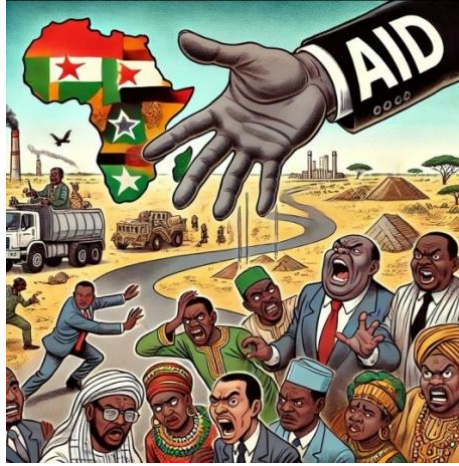


Source: © [Gado](#), Godfrey Mwampembwa, 2006

⁴ 'Aid for trade' was based on the similar demand of the 1960, 'trade, not aid', i. e. the call of industrial countries to facilitate the progress of least developed countries (LDCs) more by liberalizing their treatment of LDC exports than by aid ([Oxford Reference](#); 2025).

2. Effects of US and EU aid cuts on sub-Saharan Africa

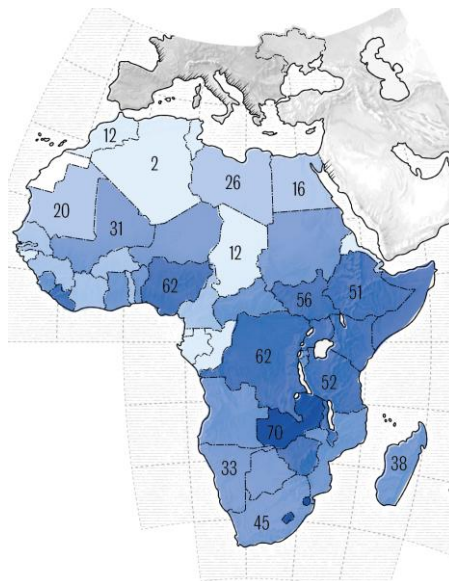
Cartoon 4: *When aid goes astray:
How the USAID ban exposed Africa's fight for accountability,
and why entitlement is killing progress*



Source: © [Roberta•Namakula](#), 31 January 2025

The devastating impact of the suspension of [USAID](#) on the health of the poor and disadvantaged in Africa and elsewhere in the world's least developed countries has been compounded by cuts to overseas budgets by the [UK](#) and [EU](#) countries because of military expenditure related to Trump's protectionist and nationalist policy (Lay, 2025; Kohnert, 2025; 2018). For example, the UK government has reduced its foreign aid budget from 0.5% of its gross national income to 0.3%. This ratio is similar to the overall [ODA/GNI ratio of developed countries](#), already well below to the [United Nations target of 0.7%](#) of GNI (Tran, 2025).

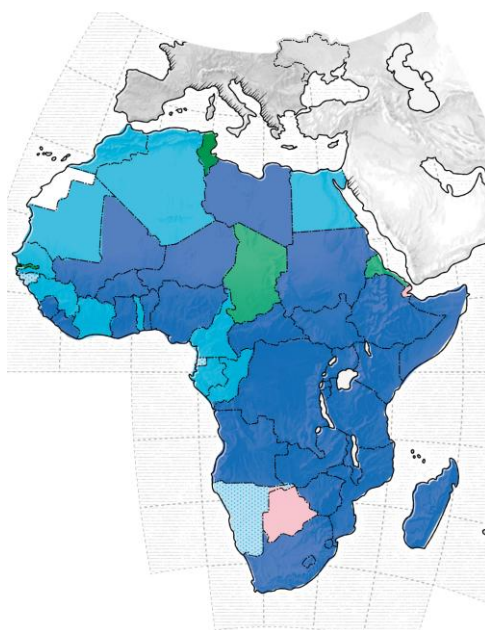
Graph 5: *Share of the US in each country's ODA, in %, in 2023*



Source: © Holzinger, et al, 2025

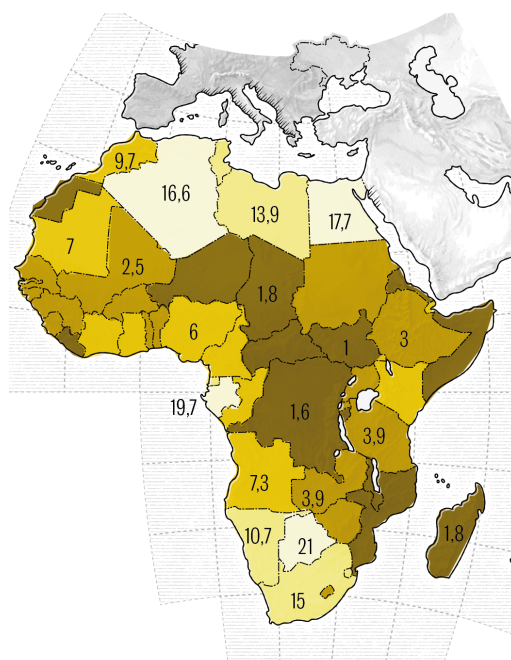
Graph 6: Main donor of ODA for each country, in 2023

■ Etats-Unis ■ France ■ Reste de l'Europe ■ Japon ■ Emirats arabes unis
■ Arabie saoudite



Source: © Holzinger, et al, 2025

Graph 7: GDP per capita, in thousands of dollars, in 2023 ⁵



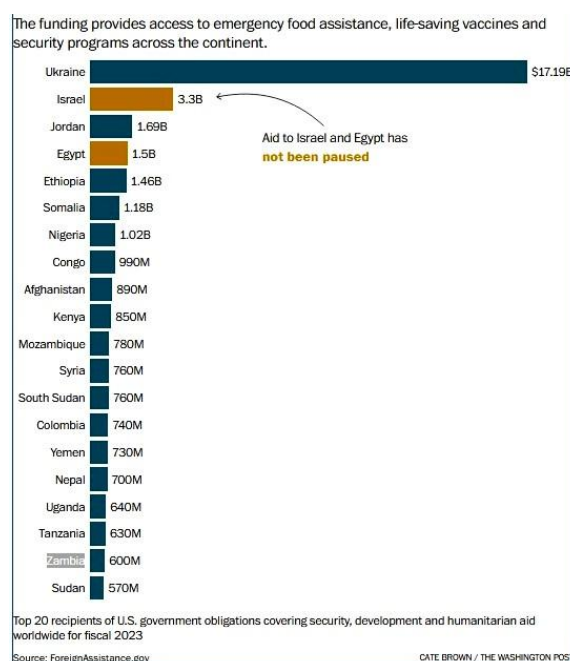
Source: © Holzinger, et al, 2025

⁵ Sources : [ForeignAssistance.gov](https://www.foreignassistance.gov/) ; [Center for Global Development](https://www.cgdev.org/) ; [UNCTAD](https://unctad.org/) ; [ACLED](https://data.africadev.org/) ; [OECD](https://www.oecd.org/) ; [IPC Portal](https://data.worldbank.org/) ; [Congressional Research Service](https://www.crs.gov/); [US Overseas Basing](https://www.usoverseasbasing.com/) ; [Background and Issues for Congress](https://www.congress.gov/background-and-issues-for-congress/), 2024 ; Le Monde

Experts predict that up to 2.9 million more children and adults will die from [HIV](#)-related causes by 2030 as a result of aid cuts by countries such as the US and UK, according to a new study published in the [Lancet HIV](#) (Brink, et al. (2025)). According to the study's modelling, the cuts would result in between 4.4 and 10.8 million additional new infections over the next five years. This would mean up to a six fold increase in new infections among vulnerable groups, compared to a scenario where funding levels remain the same. The potential combined impact of funding cuts by leading donors would result in a 24% reduction in global international HIV funding by 2026. The [US](#), [UK](#), [France](#), [Germany](#) and the [Netherlands](#) together provide around 90% of international funding for HIV, but have all announced or implemented plans to reduce foreign aid spending. Since 2015, overseas donors have been responsible for around 40% of HIV funding in low- and middle-income countries, with the US historically the largest donor (Brink, et al. (2025)).

It is evident that over the past five years, a significant proportion of [U.S. foreign assistance](#) spending has been allocated to countries in [sub-Saharan Africa](#), accounting for more than a third of the total (Hourel & Chason 2025). Across the African continent, the policies of the [Trump administration](#) are already having profound consequences for some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations. Consequently, the functionality of [soup kitchens](#) in [Kenya](#) has been severely curtailed, rendering them incapable of addressing the fundamental need to feed the undernourished. First responders are unable to reach the deceased and injured. Parents are unable to source essential medications for their children. Across the African continent, in war-stricken [Sudanese](#) cities, [Kenyan](#) clinics and [Mauritanian](#) refugee camps, the policies of the Trump administration are already having profound consequences for some of the world's most vulnerable people. The president's decision to cancel or suspend billions of dollars' worth of foreign aid, followed by ill-defined exemptions, is having a detrimental effect on humanitarian crises and putting an untold number of lives at risk, according to front-line aid workers and civilians who rely on American-funded programmes (Hourel & Chason, 2025).

Graph 8: 'Ten countries in Africa receive more than 9 billion in U.S. foreign aid'



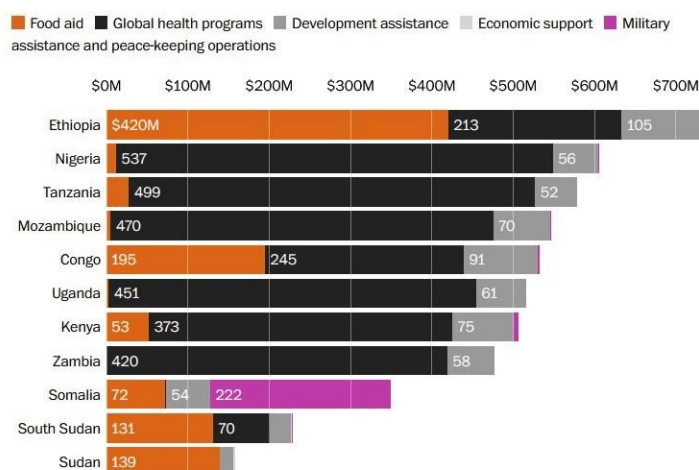
Source: © Hourel & Chason 2025

Trump’s buddy, billionaire [Elon Musk](#), whom Trump had put in charge of a new pseudo-government office [DOGE](#) boasted on [X](#): “We spent the weekend feeding USAID into the wood chipper”, calling the agency a “radical-left political psy op (Psychological warfare, D.K.)” and “a criminal organization”, that, according to Musk, was “time for it to die” (Hourel & Chason 2025; Kohnert, 2025a).

In the past, [USAID](#) has usually been supported by both [Republicans](#) and [Democrats](#) in the US government (Hourel & Chason 2025). As well as saving lives, its supporters say it helps make some of the world's poorest and most unstable regions more stable. They also say it stops [Russia](#) and [China](#) having too much influence (Hourel & Chason 2025). In places where people are suffering the most, like [war-torn Sudan](#), the effects have been felt right away. Half the population of 50 million needs food aid, and famine is spreading as [Islamist militias](#) and their allies in the military fight a paramilitary group accused by Washington of genocide. USAID has stopped its support for national food programmes that provide meals for millions of people. It has also closed hundreds of community kitchens that operate in areas that are too dangerous for big agencies to go. In the capital city of [Khartoum](#), where there is a lot of fighting, more than two-thirds of soup kitchens have closed. People were already very hungry. They cannot last three days or a week without food (Hourel & Chason 2025).

[USAID](#) had also provided security funds to the [Emergency Response Rooms](#), cells of pro-democracy demonstrators that have worked to alleviate the suffering of the civil war (Hourel & Chason 2025). It is estimated that in excess of 60 volunteers have lost their lives since the onset of hostilities nearly two years ago, and those engaged in the perilous task of delivering food and medical supplies across the front lines are frequently detained and mistreated by combatants on both sides, who suspect them of being spies. As stated in an internal report compiled by aid groups providing health services in Sudan, it is anticipated that more than half of the 10 million individuals designated to receive healthcare will be deprived of access as a consequence of the budgetary reductions. A medical group that had previously treated over 19,000 civilians, predominantly women, within the preceding two months in [Darfur](#), stated that it was no longer feasible to provide services without alternative funding (Hourel & Chason, 2025).

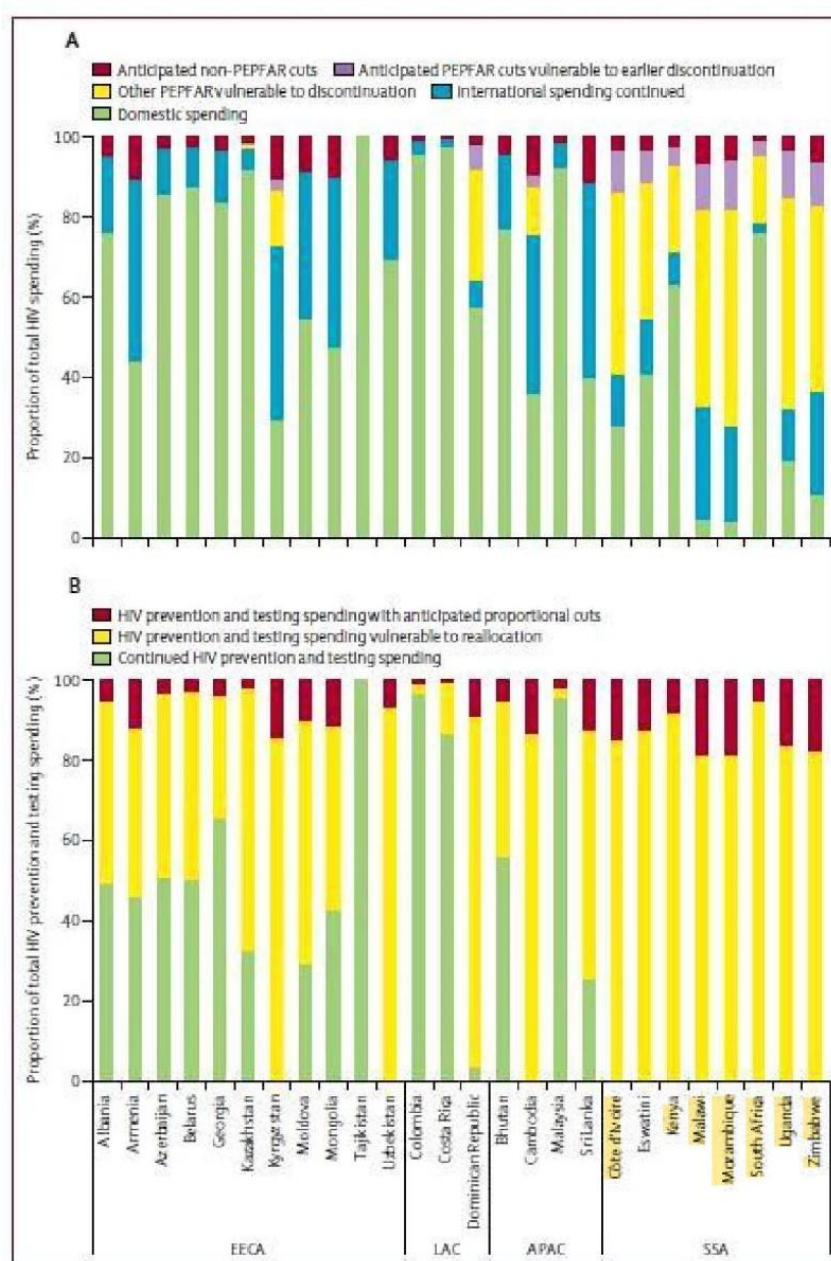
Graph 9: Foreign aid to Africa in 2023



Source: © Hourel & Chason 2025

The diminution of financial assistance for health-related programmes has already had a deleterious effect on the provision of essential HIV prevention, testing and treatment services on a global scale (Hourel & Chason, 2025). The repercussions could be even more significant in [sub-Saharan Africa](#), where prevention activities such as the distribution of condoms and the provision of antiretroviral drugs could be the first to be disrupted. It is important to note that this is in addition to the aforementioned disruptions in testing and treatment programmes. These disruptions have the potential to result in an increase in new HIV infections, particularly in areas where significant progress has been made, such as the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and childhood deaths from HIV (Hourel & Chason, 2025).

Graph 10: % distribution of spending, potentially subject to budget cuts, for 26 countries
 (A) total and HIV spending (including 8 SSA countries)
 (B) spending on HIV prevention and testing interventions



Source: © Brink, Debra ten et al. 2025

If funding for the global HIV response falls to the levels suggested in the [Lancet HIV report](#), millions more people will become sick and health budgets will simply not be able to cope. (Brink, et al. (2025). Thus, the renowned international NGO [Save the Children](#), founded in the UK in 1919, warned that UK aid cuts would see deaths linked to malnutrition rise worldwide (Lay, 2025). The UK government, for example, announced plans to cut overseas aid spending from 0.5% to 0.3% of GDP to fund an increase in defence spending, sparking fears among global health organisations of a domino effect in overseas aid funding. For example, HIV/AIDS services in [Uganda](#) were on the brink of collapse as the UK cut dealt another blow to the aid sector, sparking fears of a 'domino effect' (El-Ali, et al., 2025). SSA is highly vulnerable to the cuts and lacks the resources to fill the gap, according to analysis by the [Center for Global Development](#). In [Ethiopia](#), for example, nearly 50,000 women and girls will be at risk of potentially fatal malnutrition. In the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 4.5 million children under the age of five face acute malnutrition without access to therapeutic feeding centres and support for breastfeeding mothers (El-Ali, et al., 2025).

Through the U.S. Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)), launched in 2003, the U.S. government has invested more than \$110 billion in the global response to HIV/AIDS, the largest commitment by any nation to fight a single disease (El-Ali, et al., 2025). PEPFAR paid for 19% of antiretroviral and other HIV medicines in 36 low- and middle-income countries. However, [South African](#) organisations funded by PEPFAR through USAID have been instructed to cease operations permanently. Termination letters inform recipients that their grants are no longer in line with USAID priorities and are not considered to be in the national interest. In [Uganda](#), one of the countries most affected by the US cuts, HIV/AIDS programmes are on the brink of collapse, with thousands of lives at stake. About 1.5 million people in the country are living with HIV. HIV communities fear that stocks of preventative drugs and treatment are running low (El-Ali, et al., 2025). Also, the impact on [malaria prevention](#) is already being felt. Insecticide spraying will be halted in [Kenya](#), [Uganda](#) and [Ghana](#), affecting nearly 6 million people, according to the [Global Health Council](#). In [Ethiopia](#), 2.6 million people will miss out on bed nets. Cancer, diabetes and heart disease will have a ripple effect as a result of USAID cuts across health issues, including the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in sub-Saharan Africa (El-Ali, et al., 2025).

Cartoon 5: ‘Elon Musk butchering USAID’



Source: © [Ella Baron](#), *The Guardian*, 9 February 2025

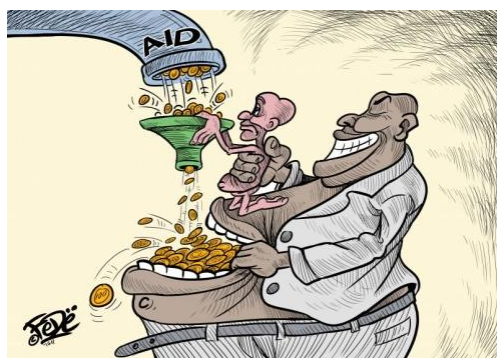
A recent scientific study, also published in [Lancet HIV](#), of the impact of the international HIV funding crisis on HIV infection and mortality in low- and middle-income countries, including 8 African countries ([Côte d'Ivoire](#), [Kenya](#), [Malawi](#), [Mozambique](#), [South Africa](#), [Eswatini](#) (former Swaziland), [Uganda](#) and [Zimbabwe](#)), found that unmitigated funding cuts could significantly reverse progress in the HIV response by 2030, with a disproportionate impact on [sub-Saharan African](#) countries and key and vulnerable populations (Brink, et al., 2025). For

each of the 26 countries (including SSA countries), the proportion of total HIV spending potentially subject to cuts is shown in Graph 10. According to 2019-23 Global AIDS Monitoring (GAM) data, international funding as a proportion of total national HIV funding ranged from 0% in Tajikistan to 96% in [Mozambique](#). PEPFAR funding contributed between 0-2% and 66% of total national HIV funding in 12 countries: Cambodia, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. PEPFAR funding accounts for more than 40% of total HIV funding in six of the eight modelled PEPFAR-supported countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and more than 60% of total HIV funding in Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Without PEPFAR (scenarios 4 and 5), 45% of total HIV spending in 26 countries could face budget cuts. This is mainly due to projected increases in Mozambique, South Africa and Uganda (Brink et al., 2025).

When President Donald Trump announced a temporary ban on all foreign aid to sub-Saharan Africa, the official reason was to conduct a thorough investigation into rampant corruption and [misuse of funds](#) (Namakula, 2025). Aid has become a safety net for African leaders, shielding them from the consequences of their own poor governance. Why should they build functioning health systems when USAID is funding HIV treatment? Why should they worry about food security when the UN will send emergency rations? Aid shouldn't replace [governance](#), but that's exactly what it does. Worse, much of it doesn't even reach the people who need it. Instead, billions are siphoned off by corrupt officials partying in Dubai while their citizens die of preventable diseases (Namakula, 2025).

[Corruption](#) doesn't just steal money, it steals Africa's future. [Nigeria](#), for example, spent \$1.3 billion in 2024, enough to build 500 fully equipped hospitals. But in 2022, \$300 million in health aid disappeared into thin air. Apparently it was invested in pantomime hospitals. On paper, Nigeria was funding new maternal health clinics. In reality, politicians bought private jets and beachfront properties. Meanwhile, Nigeria's maternal mortality rate remained one of the worst in the world (Namakula, 2025). During [South Africa's COVID pandemic](#), \$400 million in aid money disappeared. One official squandered \$10,000 on designer sunglasses. Hospitals ran out of oxygen while patients died waiting. In [Uganda's 2023 HIV scandal](#), \$5 million earmarked for HIV drugs was funnelled into bogus NGOs. As a result, thousands of Ugandans went without life-saving treatment. Corruption isn't a victimless crime. It's a silent epidemic, more deadly than malaria. What makes it even more infuriating is the attitude of entitlement displayed by some African leaders. They act as if aid is a right, not a privilege, as if citizens of donor countries owe them something (Namakula, 2025).

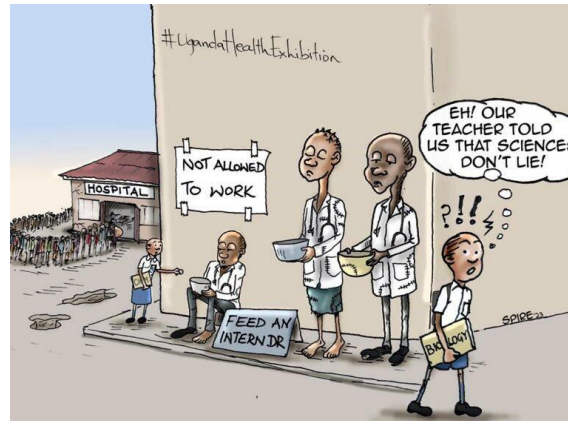
Cartoon 6: *'Aid to Africa', misappropriated by corrupt African governments*



Source: © [Nestory Fedeliko](#) (FEDE), 22 April 2015, [cartoonmovement](#)

3.1 Impact of health aid cuts on Uganda

Cartoon 7: 'Alerte Ouganda'⁶



Source: © [Jimmy Spire Ssentongo](#), 26 Mai 2023

[USAID](#) has announced the suspension of US\$ 950 million in funding for [Uganda](#). This decision has the potential to have far-reaching consequences for vital health and research programmes in the country, with the funding freeze set to impact crucial initiatives that are aimed at saving lives (Musenze, 2025). [Malaria vaccination](#) and [HIV treatment](#) represent just two of the numerous health programmes in Uganda that are at risk, as the country's science research centres suffer the impact of a US freeze on overseas aid. [Makerere University](#), a prominent research institution in Uganda, has been compelled to reduce its workforce by 200 staff members and has been forced to suspend multiple research programmes. Concurrently, over 2,000 health workers have reported losing their livelihoods. Of particular concern was the planned malaria vaccination programme. The 3 million doses of the vaccine that were scheduled to be administered in April 2025 were donated by USAID. According to official statistics, the programme has been instrumental in achieving a 75% reduction in malaria prevalence among children under five (Musenze, 2025). The withdrawal of this support is said to have catastrophic consequences for the 1.3 million individuals currently receiving antiretroviral therapy. USAID has provided substantial support to Uganda. In 2024, it allocated more than US\$471 million to health and development programmes in Uganda, including those addressing HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. In addition, it provided nearly US\$182 million in humanitarian aid, as reported by the US Bureau of African Affairs. The present funding pause therefore coincides with a critical time for Uganda's health sector, which relies heavily on external support, especially from USAID and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)). Unless the Ugandan government reconsiders its budget allocations, hard-fought gains in areas such as child mortality and HIV will be lost. For instance, the resuscitation of nearly 10,000 new-borns in US-supported facilities, along with the provision of antiretrovirals to nearly 1.4 million Ugandans through PEPFAR, underscores the significance of these programmes (Musenze, 2025).

The massive cuts in [USAID](#) funding have had a severe impact on health programmes, particularly HIV programmes in [Uganda](#) (UNAIDS-Uganda, 2025). According to the policy

⁶ Legend: On the wall: “No work” – On the sign on the floor: “Feed a medical intern” – In the speech bubble: “Hey! Our teacher taught us that science doesn’t lie!” © [Jimmy Spire Ssentongo](#),

brief to parliament prepared by the [Uganda AIDS Commission](#) with support from [UNAIDS](#), stocks of [ARVs](#), [HIV](#), viral load and other laboratory test kits were still available in March 2025. However, distribution from district hubs to lower level health facilities was disrupted due to reliance on US-funded implementing partners. Facilities have adequate stocks until June 2025, but the impact will be felt from the second quarter of 2025 unless mitigated. [Condom](#) stock-outs are expected within the next 3-6 months due to last-mile distribution challenges (UNAIDS-Uganda, 2025). Some community-led, peer-led, NGO-run and private facilities have stopped providing services. HIV prevention services for key populations at drop-in centres, including access to [PrEP](#), HIV testing and antiretroviral treatment adherence counselling for sex workers, men who have sex with [men](#), [transgender](#) people, [people who use drugs](#) and [prisoners](#), have been disrupted. It is unclear whether US-funded health workers will be placed on the government payroll. Data clerks in USAID-funded facilities have not yet returned to work, affecting data collection and quality control. As a mitigating measure, the [President of Uganda](#), [Yoweri Museveni](#), directed the release of [UGX](#) 6 billion (USD 1,625,779) for the introduction of electronic medical records ([EMR](#)) in government health facilities to improve service delivery, and reallocated domestic resources to priority HIV programmes and the integration of HIV services into other health services (UNAIDS-Uganda, 2025). The human rights of key populations were at risk. U.S. funding for stigma, discrimination and enabling legal environments has stopped and no alternative funding has been found. Communities are not collecting data on human rights issues, including increased stigma and discrimination. Key population groups have conducted a rapid assessment of the impact of the US funding cuts. Work is also underway to conduct an assessment with people living with HIV and key population services at drop-in centres (UNAIDS-Uganda, 2025).

Cartoon 8: ‘US aid cut puts trans lives at risk’



Source: © Ansari, 2025

Prime Minister [Robinah Nabbanja](#) has stated that the government is currently in dialogue with both international and local stakeholders with a view to mobilising resources to ensure the continuity of HIV/AIDS interventions (PM, 2025). However, it was noted that an additional Ugandan Shs 480 billion (equivalent to USD 61,000,000) was required to address the funding shortfall and ensure the ongoing provision of essential services. A total of Shs163 billion (USD 20,950,545) has been allocated to cover capitation grants to government grant-aided schools for the initial term of the 2025 calendar year. The ongoing aid freeze has led to the potential jeopardy of employment for 12,551 community health workers in Uganda. It is a matter of concern that Uganda currently allocates only 6.5% of its national budget to health, despite its [Abuja Declaration](#) of 2001 commitment to increase health spending to 15% (PM, 2025).

Programmes such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)) provide antiretroviral therapy (ART) to thousands of HIV-positive individuals (Joy For Children Uganda, 2025). The withdrawal of funding will result in treatment interruptions, which will consequently increase the risk of drug resistance and mortality among patients. It is estimated

that more than 1,416,800 individuals are currently receiving antiretroviral therapy ([ART](#)) at 2,051 healthcare facilities. The suspension of these services will result in immediate and significant disruptions to the treatment of thousands of individuals who are reliant on consistent medication for their health. [Pregnancy](#), HIV infection and the need for treatment to prevent [mother-to-child transmission](#) are key factors in the vulnerability of the affected population. In Uganda alone, it is estimated that 41 new-borns will be infected with HIV every day during the shutdown. Over a 90-day period, this could result in more than 3,690 babies being born with HIV, many of whom will also go undiagnosed due to the suspension of infant HIV testing services. This has significant implications for [infant survival](#), as studies have shown that these babies are at a higher risk of death if they do not receive immediate treatment (Joy For Children Uganda, 2025).

The health workforce in Uganda has been severely impacted (Joy For Children Uganda, 2025). The country currently has 20,809 [PEPFAR](#)-supported health workers, including 923 doctors, 1,622 nurses and midwives, 756 laboratory staff and 12,551 [community health workers](#). With the implementation of stop-work orders, numerous health facilities will face a shortage of personnel, thereby hindering the provision of even fundamental healthcare services. This situation is likely to have repercussions for HIV services and, moreover, to cause disruption to the broader health system with the result that already limited resources will be placed under even greater strain. USAID has provided support for vaccination programmes, malaria control initiatives, and [tuberculosis \(TB\) prevention](#) and treatment campaigns. [Rural clinics](#) are likely to face shortages of vaccines, essential medicines, and health workers, leading to a resurgence of preventable diseases (Joy For Children Uganda, 2025). The withdrawal of USAID funding is likely to have a significant impact on the education sector too (Joy For Children Uganda, 2025). The agency has historically supported the construction of educational facilities, the provision of learning materials, and teacher training programmes. The provision of digital learning tools to schools in remote areas has been identified as a key factor in enhancing access to education for numerous children. However, the cessation of operations will result in schools facing resource constraints, hindering their ability to address the mounting demand for quality education. Programmes addressing barriers to girls' education, such as [early marriage](#) and [menstrual health](#), are also at risk, and hard-won efforts to improve [gender equity in education](#) will be lost (Joy For Children Uganda, 2025).

Finally, [food security](#) is a critical concern, especially for [Uganda's refugee population](#) of over 1.3 million people (Joy For Children Uganda, 2025). USAID has provided financial support to [food aid programmes](#), which have in turn facilitated the provision of life-saving assistance to refugees residing in settlements such as [Bidi Bidi](#) and [Nakivale](#). The cessation of funding for these programmes poses a significant threat, resulting in increased hunger and malnutrition. Conversely, USAID's agricultural development initiatives, including the [Feed the Future Initiative](#), have facilitated the enhancement of [productivity](#) among [smallholder farmers](#) and the adoption of [climate-resilient practices](#). In the absence of these interventions, agricultural communities will face considerable challenges in maintaining their livelihoods, particularly in the context of climate-related issues (Joy For Children Uganda, 2025). In instances of [natural disasters](#), such as the [floods in Kasese](#) or the [droughts in Karamoja](#), USAID has been instrumental in providing emergency relief, food, shelter, and medical supplies. USAID projects, including [borehole drilling](#) and hygiene campaigns, have been instrumental in enhancing access to essential amenities such as clean water and sanitation, with a particular focus on rural areas and refugee settlements. However, the withdrawal of funding has the potential to exacerbate the risk of [waterborne disease](#) outbreaks. This has a detrimental effect on [civil society](#) and government initiatives. In Uganda, many local

organisations depend on USAID funding to advocate for child protection, gender equality, and education (Joy For Children Uganda, 2025).

Of primary significance is the domino effect that ensues, whereby the entire ecosystem of support and service delivery for vulnerable communities becomes weaker, leaving the highest risk populations with fewer lifelines and options for support. The withdrawal of USAID funding has profound consequences for those directly benefiting from aid programmes, as well as for individuals at the very bottom of the social ladder and organisations indirectly connected to these initiatives. The lowest-income individuals in Uganda, such as daily wage earners, subsistence farmers, and marginalized groups, often rely on ripple effects from aid-funded programs for survival. The withdrawal of funding therefore has the potential to exacerbate the already dire socio-economic conditions experienced by these populations, as evidenced by the research conducted by Joy For Children Uganda in 2025.

The government of Uganda has initiated the integration of [mental healthcare](#) services into its HIV care infrastructure (Schwartz, 2025). This development is of particular significance given the higher prevalence of mental health conditions among individuals living with HIV. However, the implementation of mental health screening, diagnosis, and treatment in busy clinical settings remains challenging. This is primarily due to concerns regarding privacy and the [social stigma](#) associated with mental health conditions. In addressing these challenges, the government is collaborating closely with patients and clinicians to adapt an innovative [digital health tool](#) that will enable patients to respond to sensitive questions in a confidential manner via their [mobile phones](#). The cessation of financial support for USAID initiatives in Uganda has engendered considerable uncertainty among patients, resulting in job insecurity for healthcare professionals and disruption to the supply of medicines to treat HIV and prevent its transmission (Schwartz, 2025).

Cartoon 9: *'The Human Cost: Life-Saving Programs at Risk: USAID Suspension Hits Uganda Hard', including the LGBTQ+*



Source: © East Africa Visual Artists, Stephan Jaekel, [@JaekelStephan](#)

The month of February 2025 has been characterised by a significant number of funerary events in Uganda (Miolene, 2025). This sentiment is echoed by Moses Isooba of the Uganda National NGO Forum, who asserts that the impact of this event resonates both domestically and internationally. The USAID's role as a catalyst for locally led development has been instrumental in shaping the discourse. However, with its recent strategic shift, there is a growing concern that the momentum behind localization efforts and funding may experience a notable decline. This transition, from a leading to a supporting role, has raised apprehensions about the future of localization initiatives. The prevailing sentiment suggests a potential retraction in budgetary support and a re-evaluation of the localization concept itself (Miolene, 2025).

The U.S. had previously been a key supporter of [LGBTQ+](#) human rights in Uganda (Jiwe, 2025). Several leading non-governmental organisations ([NGO's](#)) serving Uganda's LGBTQ+ communities collectively condemned discriminatory and [homophobic policies](#) emanating from [President Trump](#), including the decision to freeze nearly all foreign aid, noting that the move could destroy the long-standing kinship between the two countries (Jiwe, 2025). In response, a coalition of prominent nongovernmental organizations, including the [Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum](#) (HRAPF), [Children of the Sun Foundation](#), [Uganda Key Populations Consortium](#), [Freedom and Roam Uganda](#), [Uganda Network of Sex-Worker-Led Organizations](#), and the [Center for Health, Human Rights and Development](#), convened in [Kampala](#) on 3 February 2025 to strategize their adaptation to the loss of U.S. support (Jiwe, 2025). The sudden termination of programmes such as USAID/[Uganda Voices for Change](#) and the suspension of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)) initiatives have already resulted in devastating consequences. The human rights landscape in Uganda is on the verge of an unparalleled crisis, as the repercussions of sudden funding pauses and a range of discriminatory policies by the Trump administration are being transmitted to communities. Beyond the financial strain, the funding disruptions have triggered severe mental health challenges, heightened uncertainty around medication access, and exacerbated structural inequalities that disproportionately impact marginalised communities, especially the LGBTQ+ communities (Jiwe, 2025). The withdrawal of USAID has been a catalyst for the rise in discrimination and hostility directed towards the LGBTQ+ and key populations communities, thereby jeopardising legal safeguards and access to services, as asserted by [Richard Lusimbo](#), the Director General of the Uganda Key Populations Consortium (UKPC). The report, titled '*No Time To Wait*' (Jiwe, 2025), published by the UKPC, documents targeted attacks on the transgender and LGBTQ+ community. In the aftermath of the 2024 US presidential election, individuals harbouring homophobic sentiments in Uganda, under the leadership of the Speaker of Parliament [Anita Among](#), were among the first to express jubilation at the victory of Donald Trump. They went so far as to accuse the [Biden administration](#) of allocating funds to the promotion of homosexuality in Uganda. It is anticipated that there will be an escalation in the number of attacks on the LGBTQ+ community, as Washington no longer appears to be defending human rights. Flavia Zalwango, a Programs Director at [HRAPF](#), expresses similar concerns regarding the role of European nations, stating that they have adopted a similar stance to that of America. She stated that the budget of HRAPF has been reduced by over 40% due to budgetary cuts imposed by the US government. HRAPF is a prominent organisation in the documentation of violations against the LGBTQ+ community in Uganda and the provision of complimentary legal assistance to victims of homophobic assaults (Jiwe, 2025).

Cartoon 10: 'NWSC has cut off water supply to four institutions which include Mulago hospital, UPDF, police and prisons barracks'



Source: © [Mr. RAS, The New Vision](#), 7 February 2017

⁷ 'In 2017, Uganda's National Water and Sewerage Corporation ([NWSC](#)) has cut off water supply to four institutions which include Mulago hospital, UPDF, Police and Prisons barracks'. [The New Vision](#) claims to be Uganda's leading daily newspaper.

3.2 Impact of health aid cuts on South Africa

Cartoon 11: *Impact of Trump's USAID cuts for sick and vulnerable people*⁸



Source: © [2LANI](#), [DailyMaverick](#), 7 March 2025

According to Emmy Sasipornkarn (2025), the number of individuals living with [HIV in South Africa](#) is approximately 7.8 million. The potential consequences of the United States' decision to reduce funding for HIV/AIDS programmes in South Africa could lead to a staggering loss of over 500,000 lives over the course of the next decade. In excess of half a million unnecessary deaths will occur because of the loss of the funding, and up to a half a million new infections, according to [Linda-Gail Bekker](#), head of the [Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation](#). She further elaborated by referencing studies that assess the potential impact of the funding cuts. Approximately 13%, or 7.8 million, of South Africa's population is HIV positive, a figure that places the country as one of the highest rates of HIV in the world, according to government data. Therefore, South Africa is among the top recipients of funds from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)), a programme initiated by former US President [George W. Bush](#) in 2003 with the aim of combating global HIV/AIDS. [USAID](#) plays a pivotal role in providing financial support to various initiatives through the PEPFAR framework. However, the cuts risk undoing years of progress. PEPFAR, which provides approximately 17% of South Africa's HIV budget, ensures that some 5.5 million people are on anti-retroviral medication for HIV, according to the Health Ministry. In light of the USAID budgetary reductions, activists have underscored the pressing necessity to identify alternative avenues for financing HIV/AIDS programmes (Sasipornkarn, 2025). US funding had allowed projects to fill gaps in government provision, such as clinics where transgender people or sex workers can seek care without stigma or legal concerns. Ms Bekker had initially expected the US to target programmes working with key groups of people such as the LGBT+ community, because of the Trump administration's attacks on diversity initiatives, but in fact, this has been across the board: "This is children, this is orphans, vulnerable children, young women and girl programmes. It is generic and across the board." It also halts ongoing research, including trials into potential HIV vaccines and new prevention drugs, Bekker said (Lay, 2025).

On 26 February, approximately 40 USAID-funded health projects in South Africa received termination letters, resulting in the cessation of these projects (UNAIDS – South Africa,

⁸ SOUTH AFRICA: 2LANI illustrates the consequences of Donald Trump's USAID cuts for so many sick and vulnerable people. Thulani #Ubuntoons, #DailyMaverick

2025). Some of these organizations said they had received letters from USAID, saying that "[Secretary Rubio](#) and PTDO Deputy Administrator [\[Peter\] Marocco](#) have determined your award is not aligned with Agency priorities and made a determination that continuing this program is not in the national interest" (Kaledzi, 2025).

The cuts have resulted in the cessation of services provided by approximately 8,493 [PEPFAR](#)-funded staff who were involved in HIV response activities (UNAIDS – South Africa, 2025). This cessation of funding has had a substantial impact on the healthcare sector, resulting in the closure of numerous clinics and a considerable reduction in services, including HIV testing, care, and treatment. Key populations, including adolescent girls, young women, and pregnant women, are at risk of losing access to critical HIV prevention tools like [PrEP](#). Furthermore, the disruption to data management systems, mobile clinics, and drop-in centres has had a significant impact on the effectiveness of HIV prevention and treatment programmes (UNAIDS – South Africa, 2025). The aforementioned funding cuts are set to have a detrimental effect on specific healthcare services, including but not limited to the following: reduced support for advanced HIV disease services, diminished HIV testing, and increased stigma and discrimination for key populations. In an effort to address these concerns, the South African Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the South African National AIDS Council ([SANAC](#)), [UNAIDS](#), [WHO](#), and other stakeholders, has launched a national campaign with the objective of closing the 1.1 million HIV treatment gap by December 2025. This campaign is designed to substantially augment the uptake of life-saving HIV treatment and includes a call to action for South African men to access healthcare services. In parallel, the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has issued a call to the private sector to assist in addressing the funding shortfall resulting from the cessation of US funding. During the launch of the 1.1m campaign, the UNAIDS Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, [Anne Githuku-Shongwe](#), made an appeal to the private sector in South Africa, requesting assistance in addressing the 17% funding shortfall resulting from the US funding freeze. She also proposed the establishment of a South African Solidarity Fund to combat HIV, modelled on the initiative established during the response to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). At present, the private sector contributes approximately 2% towards the HIV response. She further emphasised that a 10% increase in funding from the private sector would have a substantial impact on the HIV response (UNAIDS – South Africa, 2025).

Cartoon 12: 'A D.O.S.E of Hope? for South Africa' ⁹



Source: © [2Lani and UBUNTOONS](#), [Daily Maverik](#), 18 March 2025

⁹ 'South African BUDGET 2025 [Godongwana](#)'s Budget promises improved funding for the health sector — but is it enough?'

In early February 2025, [Donald Trump](#) declared his intention to withhold all future funding for South Africa until an investigation into the [Land Expropriation Act](#) was concluded. (Stone, 2025; Kohnert, 2025). He characterised the act as 'a massive human rights violation' and falsely accused the South African government of 'confiscating land and treating certain classes of people very badly.' However, these claims have since been widely refuted by government leaders and civil society organisations countrywide, with the notable exception of [AfriForum](#), which has been accused of perpetuating Trump's misinformation campaign against South Africa. In response, South African President [Cyril Ramaphosa](#) adopted a measured stance. He stated that South Africa is a 'constitutional democracy deeply committed to the rule of law, justice and equality'. He further stated that apart from [PEPFAR](#) (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), which accounts for 17% of the country's HIV/AIDS programme, the United States does not provide any other significant funding to South Africa (Stone, 2025).

Leading recipients of US non-humanitarian aid were [Nigeria](#) (US\$622 million), [Mozambique](#) (US\$564 million), [Tanzania](#) (US\$560 million), [Uganda](#) (US\$559 million), and [Kenya](#) (US\$512 million). The cessation of such funding has the potential to engender an escalation in human rights abuses and a diminution of public trust in their respective governments, rendering these countries susceptible to an escalation in violent extremism. [Terrorist groups](#) often exploit low levels of citizen trust, abuses by security forces, and underlying poverty and exclusion as their primary recruitment tools. The potential consequences of this phenomenon are particularly alarming in [West African](#) nations, as well as in [Somalia](#) and [Mozambique](#), where violent extremist groups have been responsible for widespread violence (Stone, 2025). A partial or total withdrawal from Africa would create a significant void, allowing authoritarian powers such as [China](#) and [Russia](#) – which are already increasing their influence on the continent – to extend their reach. This could restrict the United States' access to emerging markets, leading to missed trade opportunities in a region brimming with potential and fostering the development of policies that counter US interests. Furthermore, a withdrawal from the African continent could lead to an escalation in security risks for the United States, creating a potential vacuum that insurgents could exploit and compromising the safety of Americans worldwide. Furthermore, the withdrawal would likely result in a diminution of public health and humanitarian assistance to Africa, which could reinforce the perception of abandonment and potentially exacerbate long-term diplomatic relations (Stone, 2025).

[Cyril Ramaphosa](#)'s hopes that President Trump will retract his threats, which include those regarding racial redress, the management of the [G20](#), and the designation of [Israel](#) as an aggressor, may be realised in the context of a golfing event and a bilateral trade agreement (Bond, 2025). The survival of the diplomatic storm between [Washington](#) and [Pretoria](#), which is increasingly beyond the protagonists on each side to manage given the lack of cool heads in U.S. President Donald Trump's maniacal regime, will entail one of three routes forward: Firstly, there is the option of immediate surrender, which would involve acquiescing to the demands of the more dominant parties. Second, individual states and societies can act in a manner that expresses disapproval of the perceived ignorance, misinformation and overt [racism](#) of the American regime, albeit with limited impact. Thirdly, a concerted effort to mobilize other states and societies is crucial to orchestrate a robust counteraction against Trump and his primary corporate backers in the domains of technology, finance, and fossil fuel. In this endeavour, the provision of grassroots solidarity to social forces in the U.S. and globally, who are genuinely committed to principles of equality and sustainability, is paramount. The South African government finds itself at a critical juncture, uncertain whether to align with the second or third trajectory. However, the government is under significant

pressure from influential domestic and international actors who are promoting the first option (Bond, 2025).

It is evident that [Trump](#), [Musk](#) and [Rubio](#) exhibit a high degree of hostility, which can be attributed to their disdain for [DEI](#) (diversity, equity and inclusion) and climate change (Bond, 2025). The particular form of DEI that Trump's chief budget-cutter Elon Musk disapproves of most strongly is legislation aimed at redressing apartheid-era affirmative action for South African corporations, which, according to [PwC](#), are the most unethical in the world. The term 'Black Economic Empowerment' ([BEE](#)) refers to the policy objective of establishing a black bourgeoisie, a concept that has been critiqued by observers. Two prominent beneficiaries of BEE are President Cyril Ramaphosa and his brother-in-law, fellow coal mining tycoon [Patrice Motsepe](#) (Bond, 2025).

Cartoon 13: 'Starve them out ...'.¹⁰



Source: © [Zapiro](#), 17 February 2025, Bond, 2025

In the event of Musk introducing [Starlink](#) satellite internet connections to South Africa, as Ramaphosa had requested in September 2024 during a meeting in New York, the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment ([BEE](#)) policy would require Musk to find a 30% co-ownership partner. Musk has characterized these as 'openly racist ownership laws', a sentiment that may be influenced by his upbringing in a family with emotional abuse and his training in a South Africa during the [apartheid](#) era (Bond, 2025). In response to Ramaphosa's ambiguous "we will not be bullied" State of the Nation Address statement delivered the previous evening, Trump delivered a subsequent diatribe. He went on to state that South Africa had adopted an aggressive stance towards the United States and its allies, even accusing [Israel](#), rather than [Hammas](#), of genocide in the [International Court of Justice](#). In a subsequent development, President Trump issued a decree that the United States would no longer provide financial or logistical support to South Africa. Furthermore, the president instructed that measures be taken to facilitate the repatriation of [Afrikaner](#) refugees seeking refuge from alleged government-sponsored racial discrimination, including instances of racially discriminatory property expropriation (Bond, 2025).

However, on 15 February 2025, [Bloomberg](#) reported that Pretoria's neoliberal Trade Minister, [Parks Tau](#), was offering concessions to Washington in search of a bilateral free trade deal (Bond, 2025). The potential consequences of this arrangement would be to ensure the

¹⁰ 'Police Minister [Senzo Mchunu](#) and Mining Minister [Gwede Mantashe](#). Courtesy of [Zapiro](#)'.

continued profitability of the South African branch plants of several corporations that have been widely criticised for their environmental impact, as well as their major exports to the United States. The list of corporations implicated includes prominent names such as [BHP Billiton](#), [ArcelorMittal](#), New York-listed [Sasol](#) (a former South African oil parastatal), leading German and Japanese automotive manufacturers, and a number of agro-corporations. The potential trade options with South Africa are as follows: Firstly, the status quo could be maintained. Secondly, South Africa could be withdrawn from the African Growth and Opportunity Act ([AGOA](#)). Thirdly, AGOA could be eliminated entirely. Of these options, the latter appears to be the most probable, given the evident animosity towards Africa that has been observed. The AGOA status quo provides substantial tariff benefits to [multinational corporations](#) and to [white plantation owners](#) in the automobile, steel, aluminum, petrochemical and vineyards industries. However, concerns have been raised regarding the sustainability of these benefits, with allegations of significant [environmental impact](#), including the [depletion of non-renewable resources](#), [illicit financial flows](#), and substantial [greenhouse gas emissions](#), which are believed to contribute to the impoverishment of the nation (Bond, 2025).

Furthermore, [Ramaphosa](#) should take immediate action to halt the provision of support for Israel's 17.5% coal-fired power grid by mining companies (Bond, 2025). On 11 February 2025, a substantial bulk-cargo vessel, the 'Cape Friendship', arrived at Israel's [Hadera Port](#) directly from Richards Bay in South Africa, transporting 170,000 tons of coal. While profits are derived from such shipments (approximately \$8 million each), South Africa's Foreign Minister, [Ronald Lamola](#), meanwhile, authorised his Director General, [Zane Dangor](#), to assist in organising the [Hague Group](#), a coalition of nine countries that defend the leading international courts against the lawlessness and sanctions of the Trump administration (Bond, 2025). On 31 January 2025, the opening statement committed that South Africa, Colombia and other signatories would "prevent the docking of vessels at any port... in all cases where there is a clear risk of the vessel being used to carry military fuel and weaponry to Israel, which might be used to commit or facilitate violations of humanitarian law, of international human rights law, and of the prohibition on genocide in Palestine" (Bond, 2025). However, the claims of Ramaphosa's [G20](#) solidarity-equality-sustainability hosting have been undermined by local coal exporters like [Motsepe](#), who are driven by profit motives. This has led to a scenario in which Pretoria's support for [Palestine](#) appears to be ineffectual (Bond, 2025).

Should Trump, Musk and Rubio fail to retract their criticism of South Africa without delay, Ramaphosa may give due consideration to the potential repercussions of such a decision in conjunction with the G19 foreign ministers on 20 February. He could propose the expulsion of the U.S. from the G20, in light of Rubio's tweet, which was clearly oriented towards sabotage (Bond, 2025). This sanction was initially proposed by [G7](#) leaders for [Moscow](#) in 2014 following [Russia's invasion of Ukraine's Crimea](#); however, the G20 did not implement it due to opposition from [BRICS](#) nations (Bond, 2025). In view of the United States' decision to withdraw from the [World Health Organization](#), a move that has given rise to concerns regarding the global effort to combat pandemics, as well as the potential impact on climate research and emissions reduction commitments, it is logical to hypothesize that the G20 and other multilateral institutions may consider taking retaliatory measures, including the possibility of expelling the United States from the United Nations, particularly its [Security Council](#), which some observers have dubbed the "[neo-colonial](#)" in nature (Bond, 2025).

The South African context is characterised by a pronounced fragmentation of politics due to ideological divergences. In 2024, the nation witnessed a pivotal juncture where the centre sought to consolidate its position within the country's centre-right elites (Bond, 2025). This

centre has thus far remained stable within the context of a Government of National Unity ([GNU](#)), which has exhibited a degree of fragmentation analogous to that observed in the period following the apartheid regime (1994-1996). At the global level, it is noteworthy that leaders of the G20 member countries continue to face challenges in terms of their political legitimacy. This challenges the ability to predict whether a bloc of influential leaders can effectively address the principles of solidarity, equality, and sustainability (Bond, 2025).

Cartoon 14: *'Job cuts — Ramaphosa's Excalibur'*



Source: © Brandan Reynolds, [Business Day](#), 8 August 2019

In 2024 alone, the US provided US\$453 million (R8.5 billion) in direct funding to South Africa under [PEPFAR](#), with a projected US\$439 million (R8.2 billion) in 2025 (Stone, 2025). In 2024, USAID programmes invested almost US\$60 million in initiatives to address climate change, promote gender equality, support community-based violence prevention, and uphold democratic principles. This is particularly noteworthy given the significant reliance of numerous non-governmental organisations ([NGOs](#)) in South Africa on international donors, with USAID having consistently been a prominent contributor. The crisis was further compounded by the rapid dismantling of USAID. Despite a temporary injunction by a US federal court against the freeze, it appears that [Trump](#) is reluctant to respect the limits of his executive power. He has enlisted the services of [Elon Musk](#) to identify and eliminate what he deems to be 'wasteful' expenditure' by the federal government (Stone, 2025). This has resulted in the closure of USAID headquarters in Washington, D.C., and Musk's characterisation of the agency as 'beyond repair' and a 'criminal organisation' that should be 'shut down' (CNN, 2023). It appears that both Trump and Musk regard aid for lifesaving purposes, both domestically and internationally, as a superfluous expense (Stone, 2025).

It is noteworthy that during his initial term, Trump made no visits to the African continent and expressed [derogatory remarks](#) regarding the continent (Kohnert, 2018). Consequently, his apparent lack of awareness concerning South Africa and the African continent in general is unsurprising. This disinterest was further highlighted by the new Secretary of State, [Marco Rubio](#). Rubio's (2025) discourse on the subject emphasised the prioritisation of US relations in Central and South America over those in Africa and the rest of the world, with the objective of achieving a 'prosperous Western Hemisphere' (Stone, 2025).

The repercussions of the USA's foreign aid reductions and their ramifications for healthcare in South Africa can be illuminated by the insights offered by the province, particularly those derived from the Khayelitsha District Hospital Oversight, Health and Wellness (WCPP) of the [Western Cape](#) Committee (Booyesen, 2025). The Standing Committee convened to address the

impact of U.S. foreign aid cuts on the Western Cape's healthcare services. The Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) provided insights into the funding crisis, its effect on key health programmes, and the Department's response strategies. The financial ramifications of the aforementioned circumstances included the forfeiture of R365 million in donor funding, including a five-year \$10.5 million USAID grant, which had engendered significant challenges. The repercussions of these reductions encompassed the domains of HIV and TB programmes, immunisation campaigns, and community-based healthcare services, affecting 698 healthcare workers, predominantly from non-profit organisations (Booyesen, 2025).

The legal ramifications of the contract in question have the potential to provide a foundation for subsequent action. It is also important to note that legal considerations were involved. The Committee engaged in deliberations concerning the question of whether the withdrawal of U.S. funding constituted a breach of contract, which could potentially provide a legal basis for action (Booyesen, 2025). In this regard, alternative funding sources were suggested, including seeking assistance from the Provincial Treasury, the Global Fund, and the National Lotteries Commission. Finally, members emphasised the importance of clear public messaging to prevent unnecessary panic and to maintain confidence in the availability of anti-retroviral (ARV) and TB treatment (Booyesen, 2025). The Committee intended to invite representatives from affected NGOs to discuss challenges and mitigation efforts. The Committee said it remained committed to mitigating the impact of these funding cuts and ensuring continuity in essential healthcare services. The next steps involved engaging Treasury, exploring legal avenues, and securing additional funding sources while keeping the public and stakeholders informed (Booyesen, 2025).

Cartoon 15: *Trump's comment on ending USAID HIV funding in South Africa*



Source: © [Zapiro](#), Daily Maverick, 1 March 2025

3.3 Impact of health aid cuts on Zambia

Cartoon 16: *'USAID-Zambia is partnering with Sesame Street to help educate children and promote effective ways to fight the spread of COVID19'*¹¹



Source: © USAID Zambia, 30 Mai 2020

The [Zambian government](#) has expressed its intention to enhance the efficiency of mining revenues, trade, and investments in order to address budgetary shortfalls resulting from the [Trump administration's](#) abrupt reduction in US aid (Kamwengo, 2025). During the tenure of [Joe Biden](#), Zambia maintained favourable relations with the United States, receiving development assistance amounting to nearly US\$ 600 million annually. A substantial proportion of these funds, amounting to nearly three quarters, has been allocated to the public health sector through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)) and multilateral initiatives such as [The Global Fund](#). These funds have facilitated the provision of community-based services aimed at the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, cervical cancer and sexually transmitted diseases by government and non-governmental organisations. The Trump administration's decision to discontinue funding for these initiatives has resulted in the termination of numerous projects across the country, leading to the loss of employment for nearly 23,000 individuals and causing emotional distress. The termination of these projects has had grave consequences for the 1.2 million Zambians who have relied on them for antiretroviral (ARV) medications, with rumours circulating that government services are running out of medicines (Kamwengo, 2025).

Among others, the sharp decline in US funding support has already resulted in the reversal of significant progress in the domains of children's health and nutrition. However, it is imperative to consider factors beyond the mere quantity of the reductions. The issue at hand pertains to the manner in which these developments have been executed. In certain instances, these advancements have materialised abruptly and without prior notice, thereby affording us no opportunity to devise measures to mitigate their ramifications on our initiatives for children (Ferguson, 2025).

Furthermore, women and girls in Zambia are vulnerable to being coerced into exploitative "[sex for fish](#)" practices due to substantial reductions in U.S. foreign aid, as highlighted by [ActionAid](#) in early March 2025 (ActionAid, 2025). The sudden termination of [USAID](#) funding compelled ActionAid to cease its efforts to protect women in Zambia's isolated fishing communities, thereby depriving these communities of essential resources for combating gender-based violence. It has been alleged that, in these camps, men do not request

¹¹ USAID Zambia: In response to #COVID19, @USAIDZambia is partnering with [Sesame Street](#) to help educate children and promote effective ways to fight the spread of #COVID19, 30 Mai 2020.

financial compensation; rather, they insist on sexual activity in exchange for fish at a reduced price. This practice of "sex-for-fish" has become increasingly prevalent in Zambia. Prolonged drought and failed crops have driven an increasing number of women into the fishing industry in search of an income. Nevertheless, for a considerable number of individuals, the phenomenon rapidly evolves into a recurrent pattern of mistreatment and intimidation (ActionAid, 2025).

Thus, the crisis in Zambia is intensifying. It is evident that drought-related food and water shortages have had a profound impact on millions of individuals, with women and girls being disproportionately affected (ActionAid, 2025). In the first quarter of 2024, the [Zambia Police Service](#) reported that more than 9,300 cases of [gender-related violence](#) had been recorded across the country. However, given the fact that many cases go unreported, it is reasonable to conclude that this figure represents only a proportion of the total. Since 2023, ActionAid's programme, funded by [USAID](#), has been making a tangible difference. Community-led Women's Watch Groups were instrumental in assisting women to escape exploitation and to report abuse, and [safe houses](#) and medical care were available to survivors. Awareness campaigns were instrumental in disrupting the prevailing silence surrounding the practice of sex-for-fish (ActionAid, 2025). The termination of the project can be attributed to the decision of the United States to reduce its foreign assistance, in addition to the implementation of substantial aid cuts by other governments, including those of the [United Kingdom](#), [France](#), [Belgium](#) and [Switzerland](#). This has resulted in the project's termination, consequently leaving women and girls vulnerable to risk. ActionAid has expressed concerns that such reductions in funding may have severe consequences for vital services, including maternal health programmes and educational initiatives. It is anticipated that the consequences of this phenomenon will be felt by millions of people, thus hindering the progress that has been made towards achieving global gender equality (ActionAid, 2025).

Also, there are concerns over return of a [superbug](#), e.g concerning tuberculosis survivors living with HIV cared for by [CITAMplus](#), a community health organization in Zambia (Al-Waheidi & Advani & Martin, 2025). Many patients received free medical treatment under George W. Bush's [PEPFAR](#). CITAMplus used U.S. aid to train volunteers who worked in six provinces, encouraging people to seek treatment and adhere to their medications. But in February 2025 the organization received a termination letter, forcing it to end the outreach undertaken by 500 volunteers (Al-Waheidi & Advani & Martin, 2025).

Recent estimates have indicated that the USAID reductions have had a substantial impact at the national level, particularly in Zambia. These reductions account for a significant portion of the country's budget, constituting 59% of the country programme and 0.48% of Gross National Income ([GNI](#)). Additionally, the total magnitude of these reductions amounts to US\$126 million in absolute terms (Sandefur & Kenny, 2025).

Washington's decision to withdraw funding for public health initiatives in Zambia and the closure of the USAID offices have led to concerns about the potential negative consequences of USAID budget cuts (Kamwengo, 2025). This was further compounded by Trump's remarks during a joint session of the [US Congress](#), where he characterised the allocation of \$250,000 to a Vegan Local Climate Action Innovation project in Zambia as an "appalling waste". He based this assertion on the premise that the project's objectives did not align with his administration's stance on global climate action. The project promoted regulatory reforms and community-based initiatives that encourage plant-based food production as a strategy for reducing the environmental damage caused by intensive animal farming (Kamwengo, 2025).

The withdrawal of United States development assistance to Zambia coincides with the nation's economic recovery from the repercussions of a severe drought and protracted debt restructuring negotiations (Kamwengo, 2025). This development has prompted a unification of Zambians from diverse political backgrounds in recognising the significance of augmenting domestic resource mobilisation and fiscal discipline within government agencies. There is a prevailing sentiment that the implementation of these strategies will enable Zambia to achieve its long-standing objective of achieving [self-reliance](#) and enhancing its [resilience to external shocks](#) (Kamwengo, 2025).

Furthermore, [Zambian social media](#) users contended that President Trump's actions present Zambia with an opportunity to reflect on the reasons why Africa is still dependent on external financial assistance. Instead, the government should devise innovative solutions to fund its basic needs for services such as [healthcare](#) (Kamwengo, 2025). [President Hichilema](#) also expressed gratitude for the Trump administration's stringent measures, which have been interpreted as a wake-up call for the Zambian government and private-sector actors to assume responsibility for the provision of local services. Hichilema characterised the withdrawal of US development assistance as a clarion call for African countries to utilise their financial institutions, regional trade and investments to accelerate their socio-economic development (Hichilema, 2025). The call for increased [domestic resource mobilisation](#), however, is not a novel concept. This is further compounded by the sentiment among opposition politicians who lament widespread corruption and advocate for the government to foster self-reliance by enhancing the efficiency of revenue collection from the mining industry and implementing reforms to address corruption and the misappropriation of public funds (Kamwengo, 2025). However, so far, there is no evidence to suggest that Zambia's leaders have heeded these calls and will continue to act better.

Cartoon 17: *'twanwa (thunderstorm) again' –misappropriation of school fees in Zambia*



Source: © [Choklet](#), Roy Kazembe, [Diggers](#)¹², 8 January 2024

The shift in US foreign policy has the potential to influence the Zambian government's approach towards pursuing trade and investment partnerships with non-Western countries, particularly [China](#) and [Russia](#) (Kamwengo, 2025). In addition to the aforementioned aid cuts, several [European governments](#) have signalled their intention to phase out or reduce the scale of their bilateral development assistance to Zambia, citing budgetary pressures engendered by the [war in Ukraine](#). These funding reductions, which mirror decisions taken in the aftermath of the [2008–2009 global financial crisis](#), may potentially diminish trust or interest in future prospects for engagement in [Africa-EU partnerships](#) (EPA's) (Kamwengo, 2025).

¹² [Diggers](#) is by own account, Zambia's first multimedia publication with a focus on investigative journalism.

3.4 Impact of health aid cuts on Ethiopia

Cartoon 18: ‘Fact what's happening in #Tigray , Ethiopia in the name of aid‘



Source: © [Addis Mekonnen on X](#) , 25 August 2021

[Ethiopia](#), a country with 120 million inhabitants, was long seen by the US as its key partner in the [Horn of Africa](#), a volatile region abutting the [Red Sea’s strategic shipping lanes](#). It was the largest recipient of US aid assistance in [sub-Saharan Africa](#) before Donald Trump froze funding in February 2025 (Harter, 2025).

Graph 11: *The US gave more than \$1bn in aid to Ethiopia in 2023*
Top 10 sources of reported humanitarian funding, 2023



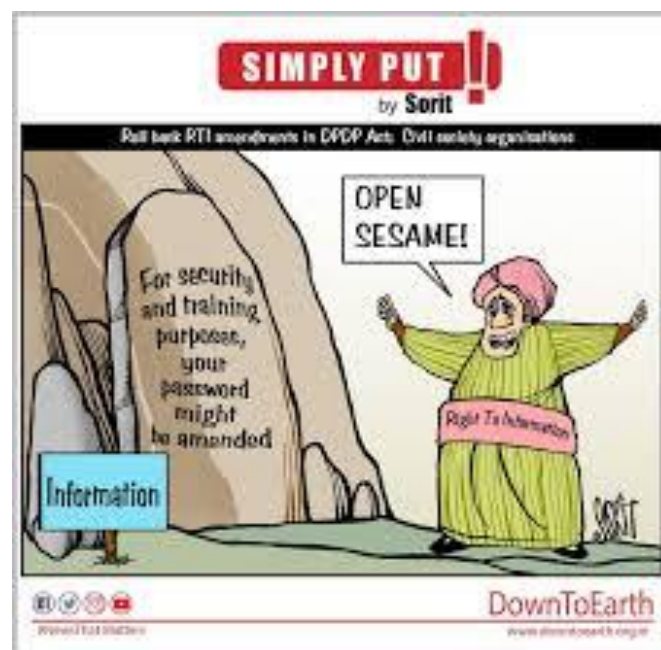
Source: © RedAppleEF, 2025; Guardian graphic. Sources: OCHA, Financial Tracking Service.

Note: *Central Emergency Response Fund. All figures have been rounded

In 2023, Ethiopia received US\$1.676 billion, the largest African aid package, second only to [Ukraine](#) (Fumagalli, 2025). This funding targeted severe drought, conflict-induced displacement and acute food insecurity, stabilising a region critical to Horn of Africa [geopolitics](#). Ethiopia, recovering from a two-year [civil war in Tigray](#), remains dependent on foreign assistance to rebuild infrastructure and address widespread [food insecurity](#). The World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) estimates that more than 20 million Ethiopians currently need humanitarian aid. A funding reduction could lead to famine and renewed instability, threatening regional security. The geopolitical implications are equally significant. USAID has countered growing [Chinese](#) and [Russian](#) influence in Africa by providing transparent, development-focused assistance (Fumagalli, 2025).

Already before Trump's [USAID](#) cuts the organization had paused food assistance to [Tigray Region](#) of Ethiopia (AriseNews, 4 May 2023). It was asserted that food aid, designated for individuals experiencing famine-like conditions, was being diverted and subsequently sold on the local market. The US government had communicated its concerns to representatives of the Ethiopian federal government and the [Tigray Interim Regional Administration](#). In response, the officials expressed their readiness to collaborate with the US in order to identify and hold those responsible for the alleged transgressions accountable. It is imperative to recall that a two-year armed conflict had ensued in November 2020 between the federal government and the forces led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front ([TPLF](#)), the political party that wielded considerable influence over the region. This conflict resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands, the creation of famine-like conditions for hundreds of thousands, and the displacement of millions. Subsequent to this, the government and the Tigray forces reached a consensus to terminate the hostilities in November 2023. This development enabled the delivery of additional aid to the region and the restoration of certain services (AriseNews, 4 May 2023).

Cartoon 19: *'USAID Cuts: A Humanitarian Crisis unfolding in Ethiopia and beyond'*



Source: © [Down to Earth](#), Youtube, Instagram, 2025

Yet, the executive order issued by President Trump in 2025, which has led to a 90-day freeze on USAID funding, has had significant ramifications for ongoing activities in Ethiopia.

Although certain life-saving programmes have been granted waivers, the majority have not, and USAID officials in the country are endeavouring to secure exemptions for their work, despite facing the prospect of dismissal by [Elon Musk's](#) "government efficiency" agency. The decision has had far-reaching consequences for aid organisations, affecting their ability to provide support in areas as diverse as food and health, as well as supporting refugees and sexual abuse survivors. A considerable shipment of foodstuffs has been left to languish in containers, with the inevitable result that they are at risk of spoilage before reaching the millions of people who are currently experiencing food insecurity. The distribution of essential pharmaceuticals to out-of-area rural medical facilities has been temporarily suspended. As Harter (2025) point out, thousands of individuals living with HIV and survivors of sexual violence are abruptly cut off from the support networks that are so crucial to their well-being. In 2023 Ethiopia received American aid worth more than \$1bn as it grappled with drought and civil conflict, making it the largest recipient of US assistance in sub-Saharan Africa and the fifth biggest in the world. Most of this money went on emergency humanitarian aid, from bags of grain, medications and high-energy biscuits for malnourished children, to water and tents for displaced people. USAID also invested hundreds of millions in strengthening Ethiopia's hospitals, creating jobs and boosting literacy. All these projects were meant to support the long-term development and stability of the country (Harter, 2025).

In 2024, Ethiopia's economy was severely impacted by climate change shocks and civil strife, with the country facing a food security crisis and malnutrition affecting nearly 16 million people, including half of its children (Harter, 2025). [USAID](#) was the single most significant donor of food, which was distributed through the UN's World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) and NGOs such as [Catholic Relief Services](#). The majority of these goods were procured from American farmers and subsequently transported to Ethiopia via [Djibouti](#), with the packaging bearing the American flag (Harter, 2025).

Even prior to the USAID freeze, Ethiopian agencies were already facing an unprecedented funding gap. In 2023, for instance, they received only 29% of the \$3.2 billion required. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has been compelled to reduce the rations allocated to nearly 800,000 refugees by 40%. In 2025, the number of individuals receiving food assistance was reduced to 5 million. This phenomenon may be attributed to a decline in need, as well as to shortages that have compelled aid organisations to reduce their assistance to all but the most impoverished individuals (Harter, 2025). Despite the exemption of life-saving food from Trump's executive order, the WFP was still required to obtain a waiver in order to continue the distribution of American grain, which resulted in a one-week delay in deliveries to millions of beneficiaries. These have now resumed. However, USAID's payments system was offline, which meant that the agency was unable to procure further supplies of food once its existing reserves in Ethiopia had been exhausted. This phenomenon was already exerting its influence. In March 2025, 34,880 metric tonnes of [sorghum](#), [pulses](#) and [vegetable oil](#), sufficient to provide sustenance for 2.1 million people for a period of one month, are stranded in Djibouti's port. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the necessary financial resources are lacking to remunerate contractors to facilitate the transportation of these goods into Ethiopia. As a result, the cargo is at risk of spoilage before it can reach those who require it (Harter, 2025).

[Healthcare](#) was [USAID's](#) second most significant priority in Ethiopia, following the provision of emergency food, with the agency allocating \$200 million annually to the country's health system (Harter, 2025). These funds were allocated to the Ministry of Health, which subsequently distributed them to regional health bureaus. USAID also funded projects by aid agencies that tackled infectious diseases and malnutrition. Ethiopia is experiencing resurgence in disease burden following years of successful eradication efforts. Consequently, the timing

of the freeze could not have been more disadvantageous. A substantial increase in [malaria](#) cases was observed, with the number rising from 900,000 in 2019 to 7.3 million in 2024. This escalation can be attributed to a combination of conflict, [climate change](#), and funding shortfalls. The number of cases of [measles](#) increased from 1,941 in 2021 to 28,129 in 2023. USAID funding was allocated to a range of health-related initiatives, including disease surveillance, the treatment of [fistulas](#), malaria prevention, the establishment of [cold storage units for medicines](#), the reduction of child and [maternal health](#), and the procurement of essential items such as [surgical gloves](#). It has been documented that a significant proportion of these activities have been suspended (Harter, 2025). Another significant area of US investment was the response to [HIV/AIDS](#). As of 2023, the total amount of financial resources allocated to Ethiopia to support its response to the disease amounted to nearly \$3 billion. It is anticipated that Ethiopia's Ministry of Health may be compelled to terminate the employment of more than 5,000 individuals who were recruited with the assistance of the United States. The project, which was initiated five years prior and aimed at training medical professionals such as doctors, nurses, midwives and surgeons, has now been suspended. Concurrently, the [polio vaccination](#) programme has also been put on hold, which has resulted in a potential shortage of doses that may expire before they can be administered to children. USAID-funded programmes that were responsible for the delivery of medications for HIV, [tuberculosis](#) and malaria to rural clinics were also subject to interruption (Harter, 2025). The Tesfa Social and Development Association (TSDA) was one of thousands of Ethiopian NGOs that received a stop-work order in January. The 17-strong staff of its US-funded project in the [Amhara region](#) assisted 40,000 people with HIV, providing them with food, clothing and school equipment for their children. These measures were effective in alleviating poverty and preventing the spread of HIV through prostitution among individuals experiencing destitution. These practices have now been brought to a halt (Harter, 2025).

The impact of the aid cut was also felt in Ethiopia's support for [refugees](#) (Harter, 2025). Ethiopia has become a significant destination for refugees seeking safety from armed conflicts and political persecution in countries such as [South Sudan](#), [Somalia](#), [Eritrea](#), and [Sudan](#). This phenomenon has led to Ethiopia emerging as the third-largest host country for refugees in Africa, following [Uganda](#) and [Chad](#). In 2022 and 2023, the United States of America provided financial assistance to the Ethiopian government amounting to \$240 million, with the aim of supporting the country in its role as a host nation for refugees. The disbursement of these funds was facilitated by the [US Department of State](#), which has recently implemented a moratorium on the majority of foreign assistance, with a concurrent suspension of new aid initiatives. The United States' provision of assistance to refugees in Ethiopia extended beyond the provision of food, tents, vaccinations, water, and cooking equipment. It has been reported that one aid agency has been compelled to cease operations that are not considered to be of a "life-saving" nature. These operations include, but are not limited to, counselling for survivors of sexual violence, the promotion of hygiene practices to prevent the spread of [cholera](#), the provision of cash support to facilitate the establishment of small businesses, and the upgrading of water points to ensure their safety for human and livestock use (Harter, 2025).

Finally, support services for survivors of [sexual abuse](#) were also impacted. It is evident that a number of initiatives offering therapy, accommodation and other assistance to individuals who have experienced sexual violence have been terminated (Harter, 2025). The US-based Centre for Victims of Torture (CVT), which operates five sites in Ethiopia's Tigray region, has been compelled to discontinue counselling and physiotherapy sessions for women who have been subjected to sexual violence during the devastating conflict that engulfed northern Ethiopia between 2020 and 2022. On 27 January, the programme that trained healthcare workers to recognise rape cases so survivors could receive proper treatment was also halted. It is imperative that a structured exit strategy is in place for mental health professionals. This

involves effective communication with patients and ensuring the safe termination of work. The abrupt cessation of movement was a sudden and unexpected occurrence. As posited by Harter (2025), this merely serves to exacerbate the trauma experienced by the survivor.

In November 2024, [USAID](#) initiated the US\$31 million [Markets for Sanitation \(M4S\)](#) project, a five-year initiative designed to enhance access to sanitation and hygiene services across Ethiopia (Harter, 2025). The project, which builds on the success of the previous [USAID Transform WASH initiative](#), aims to provide 5.4 million Ethiopians with access to basic sanitation and enable 180,000 women and girls to obtain menstrual health and hygiene products. The M4S project is set to operate in multiple regions, including [Tigray](#), [Amhara](#), [Oromia](#), [Sidama](#), [Somali](#), [South Ethiopia](#), [Central Ethiopia](#) and [Southwest Ethiopia](#). The objective of the initiative is to promote the development of a competitive sanitation market, thereby ensuring that products and services are both affordable and accessible, while concurrently promoting market-based solutions for the purpose of achieving long-term sustainability (Harter, 2025). The objective of the mission was to "unlock the power of markets to drive change and give Ethiopian citizens ownership of that change" (Harter, 2025). The M4S initiative constitutes a component of USAID's expanding Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) portfolio, which currently involves an investment of US\$190 million with the objective of improving access to safe water supplies and basic sanitation in both rural and urban areas (Harter, 2025). The interruption to aid to Ethiopia has the potential to reverse years of progress. Humanitarian organisations operating within the country are heavily reliant on US funding for critical services such as healthcare, education and agricultural support. Furthermore, Ethiopia's strategic location renders its stability of paramount importance to the broader Horn of Africa region. The country's prevailing political and social instability has the potential to provide a fertile breeding ground for the emergence of [extremist groups](#), thereby engendering an escalation in security threats that extend beyond its national borders (Harter, 2025).

The impact of the United States' cuts to international aid on Ethiopia's unstable [Tigray region](#) has been significant, particularly for its 2.4 million inhabitants who are reliant on humanitarian grain, the majority of which is supplied by the United States (Getachew & Harter, 2025). During the armed conflict between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front ([TPLF](#)) that engulfed the region from 2020 to 2022, restrictions imposed by the Ethiopian government on the rebellious region resulted in a significant reduction in aid flows, which became virtually undetectable. Subsequently, in 2023, the [United States](#) and the [United Nations](#) suspended their grain aid distributions to the country for a period of several months, citing an ongoing corruption scandal. A recent development has seen USAID once again implement a cessation of food deliveries to a substantial camp, with a population in excess of 20,000 individuals, situated in the environs of [Mekelle](#), the regional capital of Tigray (Getachew & Harter, 2025). Consequently, a consortium of aid agencies operating within Tigray has been compelled to cease its distribution activities. The entity in question has no financial resources to procure fuel, trucks, and drivers to facilitate the distribution of existing food stockpiles. The total quantity of sorghum in question amounts to 5,000 metric tons. This is sufficient to feed 300,000 people for a period of one month. However, the sorghum is currently stored in a facility in Mekele, and it is at risk of spoilage before it can be distributed to those in need (Getachew & Harter, 2025).

However, the aforementioned aid cuts could also contribute to Ethiopia's economic reboot, thereby transforming USAID cuts into a catalyst for change (Muleta & Gebre, 2025). Ethiopia's economic reform agenda places significant emphasis on the role of public-private partnerships ([PPPs](#)) as a strategy for financial opening up and enhancing private sector involvement in the economy (Muleta & Gebre, 2025). The reform seeks to integrate private

sector resources and expertise into critical sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure by incentivising both local and foreign investments. The liberalisation of [financial markets](#) engenders an environment conducive to private investment, thus fostering new opportunities for collaboration between the government and private companies. In the context of social services that have historically been the beneficiary of USAID support, the utilisation of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models has emerged as a potential solution to ensure the continuity of essential services in Ethiopia, even in the face of reductions in foreign aid funding (Muleta & Gebre, 2025).

Muleta and Gebre (2025) assert that Ethiopia's domestic economic reform and financial opening are pivotal in enhancing domestic [resource mobilisation](#). The ongoing reform agenda aims to establish a more efficient and [inclusive economic environment](#), characterised by streamlined tax policies and modernised tax administration systems. By broadening the tax base and enhancing the efficiency of public financial management, Ethiopia stands to generate the necessary domestic resources to compensate for reductions in funding. Another component of the reforms is [financial liberalisation](#), the potential of which is such that it could facilitate the development of innovative financing mechanisms, including sovereign wealth funds and diaspora bonds. Such mechanisms have the capacity to attract both local and international capital. The implementation of these reforms has the potential to ensure more sustainable funding and to reduce the country's reliance on foreign aid, thereby supporting its journey towards self-sufficiency (Muleta & Gebre, 2025).

Finally, Ethiopia's domestic economic reform programme has been found to support alternative donor engagement in addressing reductions in foreign aid by fostering financial liberalisation and deeper integration into global markets (Muleta & Gebre, 2025). The involvement of various partners, including the African Development Bank ([AfDB](#)), the [BRICS](#), and the Gulf Cooperation Council ([GCC](#)), can provide essential financial and technical assistance. Furthermore, [South-South cooperation](#) has been identified as a conduit for trade, investment, and knowledge exchange with [emerging economies](#) in [Asia](#), [Africa](#), and [Latin America](#). Furthermore, the engagement of [diaspora communities](#) constitutes a pivotal strategy for the mobilisation of resources through the utilisation of diaspora bonds, [remittance](#)-backed projects, and targeted incentives, thereby aiding in the alleviation of funding shortfalls in sectors of particular importance, including infrastructure, healthcare, and education (Muleta & Gebre, 2025). In addition to financial contributions, the Ethiopian diaspora possesses valuable technical expertise, which can be utilised through mentorship networks, virtual consultancy platforms, and joint research collaborations. Furthermore, the enhancement of [regional cooperation](#) has the potential to facilitate trade and investment opportunities, while philanthropic entities and NGOs may offer crucial sector-specific support. Muleta and Gebre (2025) further posit that Ethiopia should explore the possibility of [debt relief](#) and restructuring, with the aim of freeing up resources for development.

3. Conclusion

Cartoon 20: *'Fears of tariffs making America a hostile state among Africans'*



Source: © El-Bendary, 2025 ; Cai Meng/China Daily

Apart from [USAID](#) cuts, the imposition of sweeping tariffs by the US is causing widespread consternation on a global scale (Kohnert, 2025). However, the level of fear experienced in Africa is unparalleled because of the negative impact of both, tariffs and aid cuts (El-Bendary, 2025). The tariff escalation is exerting a deleterious effect on the economies of African countries that are engaged in armed conflict. The tariff blitz poses a significant threat to long-standing trade relations between the United States and [African nations](#) (El-Bendary, 2025). While [Egypt](#) is among the African countries that received the lowest tariff (10 percent), its citizens have been deeply angered by the [US "tariff war"](#) which they lament will harm Africa most (El-Bendary, 2025). The United States of America has imposed tariffs on 50 countries located in Africa. The countries most adversely affected by this decision are [Madagascar](#) (47%), [Mauritius](#) (40%), [Botswana](#) (37%), [Angola](#) (32%), [Libya](#) (31%) and [Algeria](#) and [South Africa](#) (each 30%). The following countries have been identified as recipients of tariffs amounting to less than 30 percent: [Côte d'Ivoire](#) and [Namibia](#) (21 percent each), [Tunisia](#) (28 percent), [Zimbabwe](#) (18 percent), [Malawi](#) (18 percent), [Zambia](#) (17 percent), [Mozambique](#) (16 percent), [Nigeria](#) (14 percent), [Chad](#) and [Guinea](#) (13 percent each), [Cameroon](#) (12 percent), and [DR Congo](#) (11 percent). As El-Bendary (2025) asserts, a 10 percent base tariff is to be implemented in a number of countries, including Benin, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda (El-Bendary, 2025).

UN Secretary-General [António Guterres](#) has warned that aid cuts, including [USAID](#), threaten to reverse development gains (Justino & Saavedra-Lux, 2025). Given that poverty has increased in conflict-affected countries despite a global downward trend, such a reversal could contribute to global instability. Violent conflict is already on the rise in countries that rely heavily on foreign aid. Decades of research show that marginalised populations are the most vulnerable to being (re)mobilised to fight, and tend to be the most affected by armed conflict (even after the violence has ended). Reducing aid to [sub-Saharan countries](#), especially those recovering from violent conflict, could push fragile countries down a path of (renewed) political instability and underdevelopment. Already vulnerable populations will again bear the brunt of new cycles of violence and impoverishment (Justino & Saavedra-Lux, 2025). Cuts in development aid may reduce the limited leverage that Western countries still have to prevent

the rise of opportunistic armed groups such as the Russian [Wagner Group](#), the spread of extremism and the risk of civil conflict. The [Sahel region](#) is emblematic of this dynamic. [Mali](#) and [Burkina Faso](#) have experienced the deadliest year on record as their transitional military governments struggle to contain jihadist insurgencies. Since the recent [military coup in Niger](#), which led to the withdrawal of both aid and international troops, the country has also experienced a surge in militant violence (Justino & Saavedra-Lux, 2025).

The imposition of broad tariffs on the majority of goods imported to the US is likely to compromise the benefits previously accorded to African countries under the African Growth and Opportunity Act ([AGOA](#)), which aims to promote economic development and alleviate poverty in the target countries. The act is scheduled for renewal in September 2025 (El-Bendary, 2025). Passed in 2000, the [African, Caribbean and Pacific Agreement](#) (ACP) offers African producers duty-free access to the American market for specific products. A further detrimental occurrence for the African continent is evidenced by the considerable reductions to the budget of [USAID](#) by the United States. This has culminated in the termination of billions of dollars in humanitarian aid to numerous African nations (El-Bendary, 2025). The imposition of tariffs has given rise to a pervasive sense of disquiet amongst the African populace, who perceive these measures as impeding the capacity of African nations to accrue foreign currency, a necessity for the settlement of [international debt](#) obligations. The potential ramifications of this shift could be significant, with the possibility of it leading to the deterioration in trade relations between the two continents and a shift in perception regarding America's stance towards Africa, potentially leading to a more hostile relationship. The question that now confronts Africans is that of the future of the African continent. The capacity of African countries to navigate the complexities of US trade and aid policy is a matter of significant interest (El-Bendary, 2025).

Trump doesn't know how to deal with a changing world order, and he's trying to work out what America's new role should be on the global stage. He has not connected with the rest of the world and has not thought about how bad tariffs will be for the global economy and how aid cuts would increase the terrorist threat notably in SSA. Risky tariff policies show that the American empire is breaking up and that the country does not want to accept a rising East against a declining West. The slogan "[Make America Great Again](#)" is a call to return to a unipolar world, where America was the dominant power in the post-1945 world order. The American empire, or the '[Pax Americana](#)' (a Latin term meaning 'peace through American power'), is in deep crisis (El-Bendary, 2025).

The USA is losing the trust of the international community in its ability to act as a security guarantor (El-Bendary, 2025). This rising global discontent, most notably in Sub-Saharan Africa, is evidenced by Washington's silence on the ongoing [Israeli genocide of Palestinians](#), the cuts to foreign aid, the withdrawal from the [World Health Organization](#), and the Paris [Climate Agreement](#) (El-Bendary, 2025). As the African continent grapples with the repercussions of Trump's selfish policy, it is imperative for African politicians to recognise that this policy represents a strategic move to counter the emergence of a new global order and to salvage the domestic economy of the United States, which is currently experiencing significant challenges (El-Bendary, 2025).

Nevertheless, it is recommended that African states pursue negotiations with the US as a preferable course of action, as opposed to resorting to retaliatory measures in response to its tariffs and cuts of USAID (El-Bendary, 2025). However, it is imperative to acknowledge that the United States' primary objective is not the acquisition of goods, but rather the facilitation of trade through the sale of its own products. Consequently, it is imperative that Africans fortify their regional markets and intra-African trade, as exemplified by African Continental

Free Trade Agreement ([AfCFTA](#)), the African Economic Community ([AEC](#)) and the African Free Trade Zone ([AFTZ](#)), particularly in the event of the non-renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act ([AGOA](#)) (El-Bendary, 2025).

Cartoon 21: *'the impact of the Trump administration's cuts are felt around the world'*¹³



Source: © [Popa Matumula](#), [Africartoons](#), [facebook](#), 23 March 2025

While the U.S. has cut [foreign aid](#), [China](#) has made progress in building alliances in space activities with Africa, forging nearly two dozen pacts with African nations and responding to the expectations of African leaders on high-tech cooperation. In addition, the U.S. has taken a much more ideological approach to foreign relations, linking other countries' access to U.S. markets, especially its [Generalized System of Preferences](#), as well as foreign aid, to whether their actions have been viewed as being contrary to U.S. interests. Also, Trump has repeatedly threatened to impose 100% tariffs on [BRICS](#) countries that seek to reduce the [dollar's dominant role in global finance](#) (Tran, 2025). The [U.S. tariffs](#) and counter tariffs by other countries have prompted serious concerns about undermining the prospects for growth and inflation not only in the affected countries but for the global economy as a whole. Other countries have been active in building up trade ties with each other to sustain their export industries and de-risk from too much reliance on the American economy. In addition, the [EU](#), although also significantly reducing aid because of [rearmament](#), is likely to seek to strengthen its economic relationship with Africa, being the latter's largest export market. In addition to its [Global Gateway investment](#) package worth €150 billion (\$163.8 billion), the EU will reinforce ties with 15 sub-Saharan African countries through Economic Partnership Agreements ([EPA's](#)) (Kohnert, 2014).

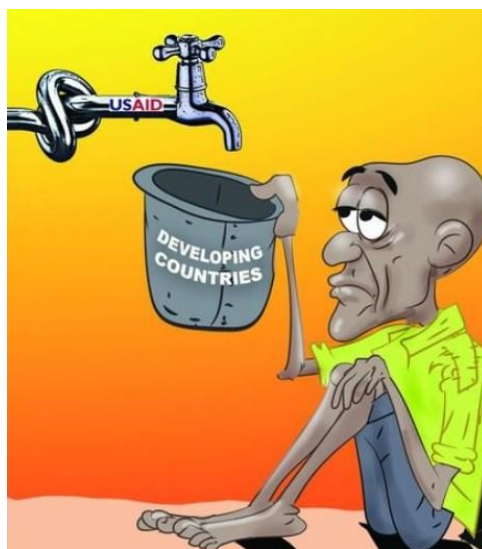
Of particular interest in terms of self-sustaining development is Africa's launch of the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System ([PAPSS](#)), backed by 15 central banks and 500 commercial banks in the region, to enable the direct exchange of local currencies without the need for a vehicle currency such as the dollar (Tran, 2025). This would help boost trade between regional economies, particularly in the context of the implementation of the [AfCFTA](#) (Tran, 2025).

Moreover, the [ASEAN summit of October 2021](#) demonstrated the heightened geopolitical significance of the [Indo-Pacific region](#) for effective Afro-Asiatic economic and cultural

¹³ [MAGA](#) -Make America Great Again: 'Popa shows how the impact of the Trump administration's cuts are felt around the world'. © [Popa Matumula](#), [Africartoons](#), [facebook](#), 23 March 2025

cooperation (Kohnert, 2021). It is evident that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ([ASEAN](#)) has emerged as the most successful regional organisation in Asia, and is second only to the European Union (EU) in terms of its global influence. The establishment of the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership ([NAASP](#)) over 15 years prior (2005) was an initiative that sought to revive the [Bandung spirit](#) of the non-aligned movement of 1955. On this occasion, the emphasis has been placed on the strengthening of economic ties. In 2013, the population of these countries was approximately 620 million, representing 8.8% of the global population. The objective of the movement was to utilise the means of economic and cultural cooperation between Afro-Asian countries in order to combat colonialism and neo-colonialism (Kohnert, 2021). By the 1960s and 1970s, the vast majority of member countries had gained sovereignty and political independence, with the exception of Palestine. Nevertheless, the subsequent period following the Bandung Conference was characterised by a number of unfavourable developments, including the polarisation of Asian countries, the strengthening of political authoritarianism and regional interventions. Moreover, the majority of nations continued to grapple with economic and political challenges, including poverty, debt burdens, underdevelopment, ignorance, disease and environmental degradation. Furthermore, their access to the markets of industrialised countries remained constrained. At the global level, the NAASP has received minimal attention to date. Despite the longstanding rhetoric of Asia-Africa solidarity, formal institutional and trade links between Asia and Africa remain limited. Despite an increase in interregional trade, Africa constituted a relatively minor proportion of ASEAN, accounting for approximately 2% of its total market. The most significant trading countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with the African continent were Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore. Meanwhile, [South Africa](#), [Nigeria](#) and [Egypt](#) constituted the largest African import markets (Kohnert, 2021).

Cartoon 22: *‘Accidental architect: Trump’s aid cuts could redesign Africa in vivid colours’*



Source: © Joseph Nyagah | Nation Media Group,
Onyango-Obbo, 15 February 2025

Yet the call for Africans to rely on their own strength and unite is nothing new, including [self-sustaining growth](#) in the health sector. However, it has generally failed because of the selfish interests of Africa’s respective national [power elites](#), widespread [corruption](#) and [misappropriation of funds](#). [Sub Saharan Africa](#) is widely regarded as one of the most corrupt places in the world, a factor seen as contributing to the stunted development and impoverishment of many African states. According to [Transparency International](#), six of the world’s ten most corrupt countries are in sub-Saharan Africa. Some economists argue that

African governments need to fight corruption rather than rely on foreign aid, but anti-corruption efforts in Africa have so far shown mixed results (Hanson, 2009). Furthermore, corruption is utilised by [FDI investors](#) to circumvent the region's deficiencies in democratic regulatory and institutional infrastructure, thereby providing a 'helping hand'. However, as democratic capital accumulates, this association evolves into a 'grabbing hand' instead (Gossel, 2018). Unfortunately, there is no realistic prospect of this changing in the foreseeable future.

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Résumé : Le 28 mars 2025, l'administration Trump a officiellement notifié au Congrès son intention de démanteler la quasi-totalité des postes restants au sein de l'Agence des États-Unis pour le développement international (USAID), y compris le Plan d'urgence du président américain pour la lutte contre le sida (PEPFAR). Cette décision met fin aux activités d'une institution clé de l'aide étrangère, mettant fin à plus de six décennies d'engagement prétendant humanitaire et de développement. L'USAID a longtemps été au cœur des critiques, tant à l'égard de l'administration Trump qu'à celles du Département de l'efficacité gouvernementale (DOGE) d'Elon Musk. Cependant, le rôle de l'aide américaine et européenne en Afrique est entaché de contradictions. Bien que présentée comme un mécanisme de développement, cette aide a souvent servi des intérêts géopolitiques et néocoloniaux au détriment d'une croissance durable et autonome. Sous couvert de libéralisation économique, elle a été utilisée pour imposer des politiques de privatisation et de déréglementation, souvent au détriment des économies locales. Par conséquent, les agriculteurs africains sont devenus de plus en plus dépendants des semences importées, des engrais chimiques et des techniques agricoles industrielles, un paradigme qui profite de manière disproportionnée aux conglomérats agroalimentaires occidentaux tout en exacerbant l'insécurité alimentaire sur le continent. À ces défis s'ajoutent les réductions concomitantes des budgets d'aide du Royaume-Uni et de l'UE, motivées par des priorités de militarisation, qui menacent d'avoir de graves conséquences humanitaires, en particulier sur les populations les plus marginalisées d'Afrique. L'Afrique subsaharienne (ASS) risque d'être la plus touchée par ces réductions, car des initiatives de prévention essentielles, telles que la distribution de préservatifs et les programmes de prophylaxie pré-exposition (PrEP), risquent d'être interrompues prochainement. Les répercussions pourraient anéantir des décennies de progrès, notamment en matière de lutte contre la transmission du VIH de la mère à l'enfant et de réduction de la mortalité pédiatrique. Pourtant, cette crise offre également une opportunité cruciale : l'Afrique pourrait reprendre le contrôle de sa trajectoire de développement, libérée des conditionnalités externes et des dépendances structurelles. Ce tournant pourrait ouvrir la voie à une ère d'autonomie, marquée par la collaboration régionale, l'innovation endogène et la souveraineté économique – des principes incarnés par des initiatives telles que la Zone de libre-échange continentale africaine (ZLECA). Pour mener à bien cette transition, les gouvernements africains pourraient réorienter leurs politiques vers des solutions locales, en donnant aux entrepreneurs locaux, aux petits exploitants agricoles et aux industries nationales les moyens d'agir comme moteurs d'une croissance équitable. Cependant, la faisabilité de telles mesures reste précaire, compte tenu de l'emprise des élites et de la corruption systémique au sein de nombreuses structures de gouvernance en Afrique subsaharienne. L'analyse qui suit démontrera, en s'appuyant sur des études de cas menées en Afrique du Sud, au Nigéria, en Zambie et en Éthiopie, que l'économie politique du retrait de l'aide rend souvent les alternatives transformatrices non viables, les élites dirigeantes privilégiant l'enrichissement personnel aux réformes structurelles.