

# OneUSAID Community Updates

February 19, 2025

## Key Updates

### Growing Job Losses from Musk's Sledgehammer Strategy

- This morning more than one hundred USAID employees woke up to contract termination letters, with no explanation and no notice, and likely more terminations on the way. This cowardly overnight purge leaves many more federal workers facing unemployment, and leaves over \$1 billion of taxpayer dollars without oversight.
- Dismissing staff directly responsible for monitoring USAID funding further proves the disingenuousness of the Musk/Trump administration's claims to care about waste and fraud. It also further discredits the so-called waiver for lifesaving programs that Secretary Rubio insists is in place, as the staff who oversee many of those programs were terminated overnight.
- Other staff dismissed overnight are the same staff who would rush to respond to a natural disaster, a global pandemic, a famine overseas. Through these destructive actions against the federal workforce, the Musk/Trump administration has erased the expertise that helps our fellow humans survive ebola, polio, and other communicable diseases, and in turn protects Americans.
- These dedicated federal staff who have received termination letters are also now having their privacy violated and their safety endangered as their personal information is now on DOGE's website. They may face harassment or worse due to Musk's incendiary comments about USAID and federal workers.

### The Trump Administration puts the lives of Americans serving their country and their families at risk.

- The State Department **denied an urgent medical evacuation** for a pregnant wife of one USAID foreign service officer twice, saying there was no USAID funding for medical evacuations, despite the State Department's obligation to provide this service. Her U.S. Senator had to intervene to get authorization granted—but by that point, she had begun hemorrhaging and could not safely be moved. She is now experiencing a potentially life-threatening situation for herself and her baby, hospitalized in a country where neonatal care is limited. ([ABC](#) coverage of [testimony](#))
- The dangerous actions of President Trump, members of his administration, and Elon Musk are putting **USAID staff and their families in danger** as they work on behalf of the American people around the world.

### HHS Cuts by DOGE and the Trump Administration threaten healthcare at home.

- The Trump administration's actions to lay off thousands of workers at the Department of Health and Human Services, including staff at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), continuing the trend started with destructive actions related to public health at USAID, poses an **immediate and severe threat to public health**. ([Washington Post](#))
  - 1,300 CDC employees we laid off, including all first-year officers of the Epidemic

Intelligence Service (EIS). For 75 years, EIS officers have been the nation's "disease detectives" and are pivotal in swiftly identifying and containing health crises. ([Forbes](#))

- These cuts mirror what's being done to USAID, undermining our capacity to monitor and combat both domestic and global health threats. The world is increasingly hyperconnected, and an inability to monitor for disease outbreaks or investigate and contain them at home and abroad, increases the risk of illness and death at home.
- For example, this severely reduces the CDC's ability to respond to critical public health threats like the flu, bird flu, and Ebola. Bird flu is now spreading uncontrollably in animals and has killed one man in Louisiana. ([CDC](#))
- In addition to causing unnecessary deaths, these hasty actions by the Trump Administration will **hinder early disease detection and preventative measures, and likely lead to higher healthcare costs in the United States over the long term.**

## Consistent Topline Messages (Talking Points)

### Preserving Foreign Assistance as a U.S. Foreign Policy Tool

- An effort from the Trump administration and Congress to reform and streamline U.S. foreign assistance is welcome, but **the current approach is not a serious reform effort**: it is an ineffective, sloppy power grab that is – unintentionally or not – destroying the U.S. foreign assistance apparatus and depriving the U.S. of a critical soft-power tool. Foreign assistance keeps us safer here at home while demonstrating American generosity and saving millions of lives around the world.
- The clearest example of this is the **broken waiver process. Despite the Administration's claims, ven those life-saving and critical national security projects that have been approved by Secretary Rubio are not able to receive funding** because hurried and careless efforts to alter USAID's financial system (Phoenix) have left it non-operational, and unable to process payments. This includes efforts to stem an Ebola outbreak that could infect Americans, HIV prevention and treatment, and sensitive work in conflict zones.
- If the current efforts continue, **the United States will be left without the systems, experienced personnel, or partners necessary to responsibly and strategically implement foreign assistance.**
- Americans agree: foreign assistance is a powerful U.S. soft-power tool and [89 percent](#) of Americans support spending at least 1 percent of our federal budget on foreign aid. For this reason, **Congress must halt these illegal actions by DOGE and instead implement a more strategic, sensible reform effort that restores the legislative branch's important oversight function.**

### USAID: The first, but not the last

- USAID is the playbook for President Trump and Elon Musk's plan for a **rapid and potentially illegal overhaul of the U.S. government.** This is being done without the Congressional approval and oversight required for those agencies codified by statute. Reform is welcome, but what DOGE is doing is not reform, it is taking a sledgehammer to destroy a vital tool of U.S. national security.

- Rep. Bacon (R-NE) underscored this in his comments to the Wall Street Journal: “[USAID was] funding a lot of stupid stuff – that’s a fact. But they’re also doing a lot of good stuff too. So you don’t want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Instead of taking a sledgehammer, let’s get out the scalpel.”
- Instead of undertaking a reform effort – working closely with Congress as is required by law – DOGE has taken a “burn it all down” approach including mass firings and major infringements on Congress’s power of the purse. This may work for tech firms, but it is a **dangerous approach for government institutions that must remain accountable to taxpayers, enforce laws, and deliver public goods.**

## Current Impact

### American Economy and Jobs

- **Confirmed Job Losses:** 12,782 Americans have lost their jobs, been furloughed or placed on administrative leave. 54,575 jobs globally (non-American) jobs have been lost as of February 16, 2025.
- From farmers in Kansas to NGO workers in North Carolina, the Foreign Assistance Stop Work order is hurting American workers and the U.S. economy. The loss of USAID means **U.S. states will lose an estimated \$3.34 billion in direct economic benefit.**
- American farmers supply over 40% of the food aid USAID delivers, and on average, the U.S. government purchases **\$2.1 billion in crops from American farmers** each year. This is now in jeopardy.
- The Trump administration’s illegal USAID funding freeze has triggered a cascade of furloughs and layoffs across the companies that held contracts with the US government.
  - More than 80% of the companies that have contracts with USAID are American. USAID contractors have reported that they **laid off nearly 13,000 American workers**, including at a **veteran-owned business** that measures the effectiveness of USAID’s food aid. ([AP](#))
  - Americans who once worked on USAID-funded projects live not just overseas but all across the United States, from North Carolina to California. They are now facing their own financial uncertainty and household budget cuts. Last week, a former Project Manager at RTI International was added to this group of now-jobless Americans and joined in the chorus of online support for USAID’s work, [writing](#) that **USAID “is national security wrapped in the language of hope, an insurance policy for our collective future.”** ([Example from LinkedIn post](#))

### Health

- **As a result of the foreign aid freeze, USAID cannot coordinate with CDC or the State Department to prevent and respond to outbreaks of infectious diseases, like ebola.** USAID-funded local partners typically conduct surveillance and support outbreak response, including collecting, transporting, and testing disease specimens. This work was often in partnership with the local government and the World Health Organization, which USAID staff are no longer allowed to coordinate with.
  - Without these partnerships, many countries will not be able to detect and contain epidemics on their own. None of this work is covered under a waiver.
  - Without this work and coordination between USAID and the CDC, the CDC will be

less likely to know when an epidemic is at risk of reaching U.S. soil, as the CDC faces enormous cuts itself.

- **Women's Health:** As a result of the stop work order, it is estimated that 130,390 women each day around the world will be denied access to contraception, with 11.7 million women denied after the 90-day pause. That could result in as many as 4.2 million unintended pregnancies and more than 8,340 maternal deaths ([The Guardian](#)).

### **Humanitarian Assistance**

- **If there is a major disaster overseas today, the United States will not be able to respond.** USAID, as the [lead federal coordinator for international disaster assistance](#), cannot deploy disaster response teams due to the Trump Administration's efforts to dismantle the agency.
  - The Disaster Assistance Response Teams, or DARTs, are made up of highly trained staff who specialize in mobilizing within 24 to 48 hours of a disaster to lead the U.S. government's humanitarian response on the ground. DARTs have deployed in the worst emergencies in recent history, including the 2010 earthquake in Haiti that killed 300,000 people, the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan that triggered meltdowns at the Fukushima nuclear plant, and wars in Iraq and [Syria](#). ([Reuters](#))
- **The waivers do not work without funding.** On January 29, Secretary Rubio notified USAID that the stop work order would be waived for lifesaving programs. Despite this notice, implementation of the waiver has been stymied by inconsistent communication, purging of staff who would manage waiver processes, lack of access to systems for staff managing those programs, and a broken payment system after DOGE took over.
- **When programs are told to abruptly stop working, they do not restart easily.** Stop work orders force organizations to make decisions like furloughing and firing staff, breaking leases, and turning away people who rely on them for medicine or food. In many cases, starting again means finding new expert staff and rebuilding trust with communities. And despite Trump Administration officials claims that the waiver process is working, USAID partners with waivers are still not receiving payments.
- In Haiti, nearly [half the population](#)—or approximately 6 million people—requires humanitarian aid. A program that was once stemming the spread of cholera in Haiti has no waiver. A mental health initiative that supported women who were raped while fleeing from the Democratic Republic of Congo: No waiver. A project that once provided food for 135,000 displaced Syrians: One that did receive a waiver, is shutting down due to a lack of funds. ([Devex](#))
- Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. Catholic Church's overseas relief and development agency and USAID partner, warned that **with USAID programs paused, the effect is dire** ([Detroit Catholic](#)):
  - Families in Ukraine will lose safe housing as home repairs and heating will stop amid Russia's continued attacks. Amid freezing winter temperatures, without heat or safe housing, children, older adults and people with disabilities are especially vulnerable to severe illness or even death.
  - In Sudan, a country ravaged by war and ongoing famine, 18,000 families will face

increasing hunger due to losing farming support ahead of the critical planting season.

- In Vietnam, nearly 8,000 people with disabilities and their caregivers will not receive therapy, equipment and support, endangering their health and directly impairing their ability to lead independent lives.
- In Guatemala, the stoppage of aid will prevent 10,000 families in Guatemala from receiving the tools, seeds and cash to prepare crops for the beginning of the April planting season. The effects of the aid suspension are also likely to drive residents to migrate in the face of worsening food security and malnutrition.

### **National Security**

- **With the foreign assistance freeze, in just three weeks, [U.S. adversaries like China have stepped in to fill the void of USAID](#).** this is often done with major strings attached for recipients, or through exploitative and dangerous loans, which can lead to debt distress, causing increased instability and major economic challenges:
  - In Nepal, a \$500M U.S. project is stalled and Chinese officials have reportedly signaled to the Nepalese government that Beijing is willing to step in to replace USAID's void with development funding of its own ([New York Times](#))
  - Despite its strategic importance to the United States in the Indo-Pacific, officials in the Cook Islands have said they expect the withdrawal of USAID from the region to provide an opening for China.
  - In Colombia, which received around \$385 million in USAID funding in 2024, non-governmental organizations that received USAID funding say the Chinese government is interested in putting up money to help fill the void.
  - China provided a grant to help a Cambodian project clearing unexploded bombs days after the freeze on payments by USAID had forced it to suspend work, per the head of Cambodian Mine Action Centre. ([Newsweek](#))

### **Media Review**

- Telegraph: [Dispatch: Children reduced to skin and bones in war-torn Sudan's forgotten famine](#)
- Washington Post: [In Haiti, Trump's assault on foreign aid is 'a gift to the gangs'](#)
- The Bulwark: [How USAID Helped Us Defeat the Iraqi Insurgency](#)
- New York Times: [Trump's USAID Cuts Halt Agent Orange Victims Program in Vietnam](#)
- ABC: [USAID worker sues Trump administration over wife's pregnancy scare abroad](#)
- Business Insider: [Trump and Musk froze USAID funding to put Americans first. US citizens are feeling the impact](#)
- The Oklahoman: [OKC family calls on Lankford, Mullin to stop misguided USAID cuts | Letter](#)
- Raleigh News and Observer: ['Lost all of our revenue': How Trump's plans to shutter USAID impact Triangle business](#)
- WPSU: [Some global Penn State research is on hold after USAID funding freeze](#)

### **Additional Resources for Information and Messaging**

- [USAIDStopWork](#)