

**Two AID-related items re Rubio.** Devex, 8 Apr 2025

## Rubio??

The signs, from an establishment perspective, were good: Republican Sen. Marco Rubio was a safe, stable choice to lead the [State Department](#). Unlike some of U.S. President Donald Trump's other Cabinet picks, Rubio was a known quantity. He was so known, in fact, that [his nomination sailed through the Senate](#) by a vote of 99-0.

Then, he became virtually unrecognizable to the aid community that [once saw him as a fairly dependable ally](#).

**“Rubio threw in the towel on USAID,”** says one recently terminated humanitarian staffer at the agency. “It’s clear he wasn’t consulted on any of these decisions being made, and he still seems entirely out of the loop with neither the personal nor political will to intervene.”

[Others take a more nuanced view](#), Christine Ro writes for Devex. “Once you’re secretary of state, you serve at the pleasure of the president,” says Doug Anderson, former general counsel of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and now senior director of U.S. government relations at the [ONE Campaign](#).

“Some of Secretary Rubio's own stated new emphases are very welcome, for example, approaching foreign partners as real partners, rather than presumptuously dictating to them as outsiders what we think their assistance needs are, is a welcome shift in emphasis,” he adds.

However, Anderson says, the challenge “has been **reconciling Secretary Rubio's aspirational statements with the fairly disruptive reality** of what's often happening on the ground.”

And even though the administration has laid out plans for [merging USAID into the State Department](#), it remains to be seen if the disruption will settle down — or **how much Rubio will take the reins** of the massive transition ahead.

For his part, Rubio has been clear that something needed to change.

“Foreign aid is the least popular thing government spends money on,” Rubio said during a trip to Guatemala early in his tenure. “I spent a lot of time in my career defending it and explaining it, but it’s harder and harder to do across the board — it really is.”

But he added: “The United States is not walking away from foreign aid. It’s not. We’re going to continue to provide foreign aid and to be involved in programs, but it has to be programs that we can defend. It has to be programs that we can explain.”

**Read:** [What part is Marco Rubio actually playing in USAID's dismantling?](#)

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### **Cut to the bone**

One area that Rubio has consistently said would be (largely) spared is lifesaving aid such as emergency food assistance. But like the man, the picture is nuanced.

My colleague Ayenat Mersie [reviewed the data to assess the implications](#) for emergency food aid, nutrition, food systems, and agriculture programming more broadly. The result offers a **snapshot of some of the organizations most affected by the terminations**, grouped into three categories: multilateral institutions, NGOs, and contractors. But given the [inconsistencies and gaps in the leaked data](#), the aim is not to provide an exhaustive accounting, but rather to offer **a look at where the cuts have landed hardest**.

For example, programs linked to the [Famine Early Warning Systems Network](#), or FEWS NET, appeared on both the terminated and retained lists, making its future unclear. And the [World Food Programme](#) was both among the most impacted by [USAID](#)’s terminations and among those with the most funding preserved — a reflection of its size as one of USAID’s largest implementing partners.

**Read:** [Which USAID-funded food and agriculture programs were cut? Which remain?](#)