

Impact of AID cuts on disaster preparedness in Afghanistan post-earthquake. By Anna Gawel, *Devex Newswire*, 16 Sep 2025

Afghanistan briefly made it back in the headlines two weeks ago when a magnitude 6 earthquake struck, killing thousands and displacing many more. But the story is notable not only for what happened in the aftermath, but also for what didn't happen beforehand that could've lessened the fallout.

An ounce of prevention

America's ability to respond to humanitarian disasters overseas has arguably been shattered in the wake of the dissolution of USAID. But the agency also played a significant role in building up resilience that helped cushion the blow of disasters in vulnerable communities such as the eastern provinces of Afghanistan that are **still reeling from a powerful earthquake on Aug. 31**.

For decades, USAID didn't just focus on immediate emergencies; it expended tremendous effort on prevention. From funding rural health clinics and food security programs to supporting logistics operations that could reach remote mountain villages, **USAID helped countries prepare for inevitable shocks**.

Then all of that abruptly stopped — and the results are becoming visible when those inevitable shocks hit.

Since U.S. funding cuts earlier this year, **more than 420 health facilities across Afghanistan have closed**, [including 80 in the eastern region where the earthquake struck](#), my colleague Jesse Chase-Lubitz writes.

Meanwhile, the U.N.'s humanitarian air service, once bolstered by international donors, was forced to cut back its helicopter fleet earlier this year, **making it nearly impossible to reach stranded Afghans**. Even mine clearance, another sector [USAID](#) had long invested in, has slowed, leaving earthquake-displaced families at risk of stepping on newly exposed ordnance.

“When funding runs dry, or there are significant cuts like the ones that we've seen, **the first thing to go is prevention**,” Kate Carey, the humanitarian affairs officer at the [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#), tells Jesse. “The preventative measures that we would like to implement in order to prevent a situation like this got cut. We are forced to triage — to save lives today, while knowing **the lack of preparedness will cost lives tomorrow**.”

Read: [Aftermath of Afghan quake shows fallout of USAID withdrawal](#)