

State-Kenya sign five-year health deal. By Anna Gawel, *Devex Newswire*, 8 Dec 2025

Oh say Kenya see

The U.S. State Department kick-started its sweeping, high-speed push to sign dozens of bilateral health agreements with [a \\$1.6 billion, five-year deal with Kenya](#) that will see the **Kenyan government offer up \$850 million in cofinancing**.

It aligns with the ethos behind the “America First” global health strategy, which stresses direct country-to-country relationships over funneling money through NGOs, my colleague Sara Jerving writes. The ultimate aim: position [countries as customers](#), as opposed to aid recipients.

During the signing last week, U.S. Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** was effusive with praise for Kenya, calling it **the “perfect partner” to serve as a proof of concept** for this new mode of American health assistance.

In contrast, Rubio had harsh words for NGOs.

“Why are we hiring American and international NGOs to go into other countries and run health care systems that are parallel and sometimes in conflict with the health care systems of the host country?” he said. **“We are not going to spend billions of dollars funding the NGO industrial complex** while close and important partners like Kenya either have no role to play or have very little influence over how health care money is being spent.”

In addition to working more closely with governments, the “America First” strategy hinges on leveraging the private sector and [faith-based organizations](#). This first agreement features a gradual **shift of procurement management of health commodities from the U.S. to Kenya**, as well as a transition of U.S.-funded frontline worker salaries onto the Kenyan government’s payroll.

“This cooperation framework is quite a departure from the past and will have a lasting impact on health for all,” said Dr. **Ouma Oluga** of Kenya’s Ministry of Health.

While that change in direction has garnered praise, it’s also sparked concerns that the U.S. will force other governments to be locked into [sensitive data-sharing deals](#); that the agreements are too narrowly focused; and that **Africa will lose its leverage** as countries negotiate one-on-one with the U.S. [versus as a continental bloc](#).

But Rubio seems to have zero reservations, declaring Kenya “the perfect place to prove that it’s going to work — because it is going to work.”

Read: [The US signs first bilateral health deal with Kenya for \\$1.6 billion](#)