

Impact of AID Cuts on Media Programs. *Devex*, 29 April 2026

When the funding vanishes

Harry, a Burmese journalist, fled Myanmar in 2023 as the military intensified its crackdown on journalists. He had already been arrested once for photographing soldiers – and when he was released, he knew he might not be so lucky again. For a while, a U.S.-funded grant meant a steady wage, and he even began making plans to bring his mother across the border to safety in Thailand.

Then the funding vanished, writes *Devex* contributing reporter Rebecca Root, after the Trump administration dismantled [USAID](#) and **pulled support from U.S.-backed media programs** — wiping out roughly \$150 million a year.

“When the U.S. funding was cut, my career faded,” Harry says. His salary disappeared overnight, along with his ability to renew his paperwork. Now he’s scraping by on freelance work, at risk of deportation. “I think the future will not be better,” he says. “I think it will be worse than ever.”

Across Asia, the cuts have hollowed out newsrooms and [stripped away a layer of protection](#) that, in some places, meant survival. U.S. funding had been a lifeline — or as Cambodian investigative journalist **Mech Dara** puts it, “**a shield from the enemy.**”

Even where some funding is trickling back, in some cases following legal victories for the outlets involved, the damage is done. “It’s very difficult ... to access the same amount of people, to get back on the same waves, to use the same satellite frequencies,” says **Aleksandra Bielakowska**, advocacy officer of the Asia-Pacific bureau at [Reporters Without Borders](#). “There are territories which are basically almost information black holes,” Bielakowska says, adding that this **creates space for China to expand its influence.**

Read: [In exile and at risk, journalists navigate life after US funding cuts](#)