

**Inside the Zambia Health Funding Agreement.** By Anna Gawel, *Devex*, 22 June 2026

### **Hints from the inside**

For months, controversy has swirled over whether the Trump administration is demanding access to Zambia’s critical minerals in return for health funding — which for many, even by the transactional standards of this White House, seemed to go too far.

Now we have a definitive answer. No, the memorandum of understanding with Zambia does not tie health funding to the country’s lucrative trove of minerals.

“If you had every MOU in front of you and you did a word search on critical minerals, you would not find those words. It’s not in any MOU, and **there’s no explicit ask for those** anywhere,” **Jeffrey Graham**, senior official for the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy at the [State Department](#), said during the SID-US annual conference on Thursday in Washington, D.C.

That was one of many intriguing insights that Graham — who’s also America’s acting AIDS coordinator — [revealed about the health agreements](#) that have generated excitement, frustration, and perhaps above all, questions given how tightly guarded their contents have been.

But **Graham rebuffed criticism that the MOUs have been too secretive**, explaining that countries can make their MOUs public whenever they want, and that the U.S. has not done so yet because it’s “strategically not good” to reveal details of deals while others are still being negotiated.

He also **defended U.S. demands that partner countries share health data**, noting that Washington is requesting no more information than it has through past assistance programs and, in some cases, less than what was collected under [PEPFAR](#).

And he praised the stipulations in the bilateral health compacts that countries put up a certain share of money to receive the larger bulk of U.S. funding as a long overdue promise.

“I say this unapologetically — this is **pushing better choices, better behavior on governments** by making them put some skin in the game,” he said.

“If governments don’t put their own skin in the game, are they going to be motivated to ever be self-sustaining?” he added, **arguing the U.S. can’t fund health programs forever**.

Check out Devex Senior Reporter Jenny Lei Ravelo’s story for more on what Graham said about pathogen sharing, the [World Health Organization](#), and what happens if countries don’t pay their share of the co-investment targets.