

Rubio at House Committee. By Helen Murphy, *Devex*, 4 June 2026

Stock Marco

U.S. Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** spent yesterday trying to persuade lawmakers [that the United States has not abandoned foreign aid](#). Democrats spent nearly six hours arguing the opposite.

The sharpest exchanges **focused on the human cost of aid cuts**. Rep. **Gabe Amo**, a Democrat from Rhode Island, held up a poster of a Kenyan child he alleged had died as a result of [USAID](#) cuts and challenged Rubio directly: “Were you lying to Congress when you claimed no children were dying on your watch, or did you simply never bother to calculate the human cost of your decision?”

“**That number you’re throwing around is a false number,**” Rubio shot back. “It’s a false number. And not only that, you’re equivocating that the death of an individual is the responsibility of the United States.”

Rubio repeatedly brought up the administration’s **shift toward bilateral health agreements**, describing the compacts signed with 32 countries as “promising and exciting.”

“**We are not abandoning these countries or these programs,** we’re entering into compacts,” he said, arguing that government-to-government partnerships would do more for countries than the system they are replacing.

Democrats remained unconvinced, my colleague Elissa Miolene writes. Rep. **Jonathan Jackson** pointed to 34 vacant U.S. ambassadorships across Africa, while Sen. **Patty Murray** accused the administration of **undermining the Ebola response**. “The delay in mobilizing those resources has cost us valuable time, and let this disease kill more people,” she said.

There was also some movement on [Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance](#). Rubio said a dispute over a vaccine preservative had delayed \$600 million in appropriated funding, but suggested a resolution may be close. Asked by Sen. **Brian Schatz**, a Democrat from Hawaii, when the money would move, Rubio’s answer was brief: “Shortly,” he said. “How’s that?”