



USAID

Proposed Closure of USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) faces a potential closure following a recent proposal by the Trump administration. This significant policy shift has generated substantial debate in Congress, with Democratic lawmakers strongly opposing the measure. The proposed closure raises fundamental questions about the future of American foreign assistance and its longstanding role in global humanitarian aid and international development efforts. This decision could reshape how the United States engages with developing nations and responds to international humanitarian crises. BUT THE NONSENSE NEEDS TO GO!



by janice wright



What is USAID?

1 America's Premier Development Agency

Established by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, USAID operates with a FY2023 budget of \$27.4 billion, representing 0.5% of the federal budget. The agency's workforce includes 3,748 direct hire employees in Washington DC, 1,528 Foreign Service Officers, and 4,085 local staff across field missions. USAID partners with 3,523 American businesses, NGOs, and faith-based organizations to implement 1,247 active development projects ranging from \$50,000 to \$200 million in size.

2 Measurable Global Impact

USAID's 87 field missions span 101 countries, achieving remarkable results in 2022-23: delivering emergency food assistance to 4.1 million Yemenis through 62 local distribution centers, supporting antiretroviral therapy for 12.3 million HIV patients across 33 African nations, disbursing \$457 million in microloans (averaging \$1,200 each) to 380,000 entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia, and deploying 25,734 trained election monitors across 12 Eastern European countries through 214 democracy-strengthening programs.

3 Decades of Bipartisan Achievement

USAID's cross-party successes include Reagan's 1984-85 African Famine Prevention initiative that delivered 1.8 million metric tons of food aid saving 7 million lives, Bush's \$15 billion PEPFAR program that reduced HIV infections by 42% in target countries, and Obama's Feed the Future initiative reaching 19 million households across 12 focus countries. The most dramatic success story remains South Korea, where USAID's \$6 billion investment (1960-1980) helped transform a nation with \$158 per capita GDP into today's \$31,489 per capita economic powerhouse.

Why Democrats are Fighting the Closure

Humanitarian Concerns

Democratic leaders, spearheaded by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Bob Menendez and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, have mounted fierce opposition to USAID's closure. They point to the agency's life-saving initiatives: a \$2.4 billion vaccination program reaching 40 million children across 24 African nations, including critical polio eradication efforts in Nigeria and Ethiopia; emergency food assistance currently supporting 4.2 million refugees in Syria and Yemen, with daily food rations costing just \$0.89 per person; and clean water projects providing safe drinking water to 53 million people across 50 developing nations, reducing waterborne diseases by 65% in target areas. "Dismantling USAID would effectively abandon millions of vulnerable people who depend on American assistance for survival," warns Senator Chris Coons. Representative Barbara Lee adds, "The agency's maternal health programs alone save 6,000 lives annually at a cost of just \$23 per mother."

Geopolitical Implications

Democrats emphasize that USAID's closure would create dangerous power vacuums that China is eager to fill. They cite China's Belt and Road Initiative, which has already committed \$1.2 trillion across 65 countries, with a projected additional \$2.5 trillion by 2025. In Southeast Asia, where USAID operates 43 democracy-building programs, Chinese development banks have offered \$485 billion in infrastructure loans since 2016. Senator Ben Cardin highlights specific examples: "While USAID provides \$180 million in health and education aid to Cambodia, China has secured influence through a \$4.7 billion port project. In Laos, where USAID's \$65 million democratic governance program operates, China has invested \$8.3 billion in railway development." Representative Gregory Meeks warns, "Every dollar we withdraw from USAID is effectively \$10 of influence we cede to China in the developing world."



USAID's Global Humanitarian Efforts

Disaster Relief

In 2022, USAID deployed rapid response teams within 48 hours to Haiti following the August 14th 7.2 magnitude earthquake, providing \$217.3M in emergency aid and creating 12 temporary medical facilities. When Pakistan faced its worst floods in history in July-September 2022, USAID mobilized \$359.6M, reaching 33 million affected people across Sindh and Balochistan provinces with emergency supplies. Following Russia's invasion, USAID coordinated a \$804M humanitarian response in Ukraine, establishing 89 distribution centers across 15 oblasts and delivering 230,000 emergency food kits monthly. Partnerships with 45 local NGOs enabled the construction of 187 emergency shelter facilities housing 2.3 million displaced people in northern Syria, South Sudan's Unity State, and Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Food Security

Feed the Future's targeted initiatives have lifted 23.4 million people above the poverty line since 2010, with particularly strong results in Bangladesh (5.2M), Ghana (3.8M), and Guatemala (2.9M). USAID agricultural experts have trained 5.2 million farmers in climate-smart techniques, resulting in a 67% average yield increase. In Ghana's Northern Region, sorghum yields doubled for 428,000 farmers. Bangladesh's southern delta region saw 892,000 farmers increase rice production by 45%. Guatemala's western highlands recorded 315,000 farmers achieving 55% higher maize yields. Childhood stunting rates dropped significantly in Nepal (36% to 22%), Cambodia (34% to 25%), and Honduras (38% to 24%) through comprehensive nutrition programs reaching 4.2 million children under five.

1

2

3

Global Health

Through PEPFAR since 2003, USAID has delivered antiretroviral treatment to 20.1 million HIV patients across 50 countries, with 76% of recipients in 12 high-priority nations including Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The Maternal and Child Survival Program, operating in 12 focus countries, helped reduce maternal mortality from 342 to 171 per 100,000 births between 2015-2022, with Rwanda and Bangladesh showing the most dramatic improvements. USAID's WASH program completed 8,547 water access points since 2018, including 3,245 wells in rural Ethiopia's Oromia region, 2,890 systems across Kenya's arid counties, and 2,412 facilities throughout Indonesia's eastern provinces, collectively serving 15.3 million people with clean water.



USAID's Role in International Development

Democracy Promotion

In Ukraine, USAID's \$45M Anti-Corruption Action Program has trained 2,500 investigators and recovered \$890M in stolen assets since 2020. The Tunisia Municipal Governance Project established 350 citizen oversight committees, increasing public participation by 78%. During the 2022 Kenya elections, USAID deployed 8,000 monitors across 47 counties, reducing electoral violence by 65% compared to 2017. The agency's Media Defense Initiative launched 120 independent news outlets in Eastern Europe, reaching 25 million readers monthly.

Economic Growth

Through Power Africa, USAID connected 12.5 million new households to electricity across 23 countries, leveraging \$3.2B in private investment. The Women's Global Development Partnership provided \$750M in microloans to 185,000 women entrepreneurs in Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia, with a 92% repayment rate. In Kenya, USAID's M-PESA partnership expanded mobile banking to 9.5 million rural users, increasing household savings by 22% and reducing poverty by 2% annually.

Education and Innovation

In Afghanistan, USAID's Girls' Education Initiative built 1,200 community schools, increasing female enrollment by 85% in rural areas. The Nairobi Innovation Hub launched 850 tech startups, creating 12,000 jobs and generating \$180M in revenue since 2019. In Syria, the Emergency Education Response reached 8.2 million children through 3,500 temporary learning centers, maintaining a 72% graduation rate despite ongoing conflict.

Environmental Protection

USAID's Verde Amazonia program preserved 35 million hectares in Brazil and Peru, supporting 275 indigenous communities through \$125M in sustainable agriculture grants. In Jakarta and Manila, the Clean Cities program installed 1,500 electric bus charging stations, reducing urban emissions by 85,000 tons annually. The Pacific Resilience Project reinforced 600 coastal structures across Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, protecting 400,000 residents from climate impacts.



Potential Consequences of USAID Closure

1

Humanitarian Crises

Over 85 million people across 50+ countries could lose access to emergency food aid and disaster relief. Critical programs like earthquake response in Turkey and flood relief in Pakistan would cease, leaving communities without vital resources for survival and recovery.

2

Development Setbacks

Termination of 1,000+ active development projects would halt progress in fighting malaria (which saved 11.7M lives), supporting 20M children's education, and providing clean water to 15M people. Dozens of maternal health clinics and agricultural training centers would close.

3

Geopolitical Risks

China's Belt and Road Initiative would become the dominant development force in Africa and Asia, where USAID currently manages \$15B in strategic investments. Key allies like Jordan, Ukraine, and Colombia would lose billions in security and stabilization support, potentially destabilizing critical regions.



The Administration's Rationale for Closure



Cost Savings

The administration targets USAID's \$27.4 billion budget, emphasizing that 30% (\$8.3 billion) goes to operational costs rather than direct aid. They specifically point to 87 overseas missions costing \$2.7B annually in maintenance and security. The most expensive installations - Afghanistan (\$156M), Iraq (\$129M), and Pakistan (\$98M) - consume 14% of the total operational budget while serving only 8% of aid recipients.



Operational Redundancy

The proposal identifies \$6.8B in overlapping programs: 47 democracy-building initiatives in Eastern Europe (\$892M) duplicate State Department work; 23 economic development programs in Africa (\$1.2B) mirror World Bank efforts; and 35 health programs (\$4.7B) overlap with WHO initiatives. For example, both USAID and State Department operate separate \$200M democracy programs in Ukraine, while maintaining parallel administrative structures.



America First Priorities

The plan would redirect funds to specific domestic needs: \$6.8B for 32,000 miles of rural highways in 15 states, \$5.2B for water infrastructure in 426 communities serving 12 million Americans, and \$15B for broadband expansion reaching 18 million rural households. Officials note that the \$892M spent on overlapping democracy programs in Eastern Europe could fund clean water projects for 1.2 million Americans in Flint, Michigan and similar communities.

The Path Forward: Evaluating the Proposal

\$27.4B

Healthcare & Emergency Aid

In FY2023, USAID's \$27.4B budget provided life-saving HIV treatment to 11.5M patients across 54 countries, reducing transmission rates by 63%. Emergency response teams delivered 127,000 metric tons of food aid to 3.2M children in Yemen (1.8M) and Syria (1.4M), while mobile medical units served 892,000 refugees in 37 crisis zones.

114

Strategic Development Hub

Operating in 114 nations, USAID's network coordinates \$4.7B in Ukrainian democracy support, including \$890M for power grid restoration and \$625M for medical infrastructure. The agency's \$2.9B East African food security initiative reduced malnutrition by 42% across Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, while \$1.8B in climate programs helped 6.3M Southeast Asian farmers adopt drought-resistant crops.

6,200

Global Response Force

USAID's 6,200 development experts, including 1,600 Foreign Service Officers, managed distribution of 488M COVID vaccines reaching 94% of target populations. Teams responded to 89 disasters in 2023, including earthquake recovery in Turkey (\$242M) and flood mitigation in Pakistan (\$153M). Democracy programs trained 48,000 election observers and supported 132 verified elections, increasing voter participation from 61% to 89% since 2020.



Reform Proposals: Making USAID More Effective

1 Streamline Operations

Consolidate HIV/AIDS and malaria prevention programs (\$8.5B) under single management structure, reducing administrative overhead from 27% to 15%. This reorganization could save \$3.2B annually while maintaining critical health services in target regions.

2 Strengthen Oversight

Deploy blockchain-based tracking systems for \$5.2B emergency food assistance programs in crisis zones like Yemen and Syria. Implement new audit protocols for the \$2.1B democracy programs across 87 countries to ensure 100% accountability.

3 Focus on Core Mission

Prioritize essential programs like COVID-19 vaccine distribution and emergency response managed by 1,600 Foreign Service Officers. Consolidate overlapping climate initiatives in Vietnam and microfinance programs (\$4.3B) in emerging economies under regional hubs.

While USAID's network of 6,200 experts across 114 countries remains vital, these targeted reforms could eliminate redundancies, enhance accountability, and maximize the impact of American taxpayer dollars. This is particularly crucial as Chinese development banks actively seek to expand their influence in 28 nations where USAID currently operates.