



FESTMIH's Position Statement and Call for Action on USA's suspension of USAID Funding and WHO Exit

The Federation of European Societies for Tropical Medicine and International Health (FESTMIH) strongly condemns the suspension of USAID funding and any moves toward the United States of America's withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO), UNFPA and other international organisations. These actions pose a severe threat to global health, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and undermine decades of progress in disease control, health system strengthening, and global cooperation.

Impact of USAID Funding Suspension

USAID is a crucial player in global health, supporting initiatives in maternal and child health, infectious disease control, and emergency responses. The suspension of funding jeopardises:

- **HIV/AIDS Programmes:** The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has saved millions of lives and cutting funding risks reversing gains in HIV treatment and prevention.
- **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Gender Equality:** In the domain of SRHR, the US administration's decision goes beyond cutting funding - it actively seeks to erase SRHR and gender from the global health agenda. By specifically targeting programmes that provide access to contraception, safe abortion, and maternal healthcare, this policy will result in higher maternal mortality, unsafe abortions, and the systematic dismantling of gender-focused health initiatives including those tackling gender-based violence. The rollback of funding and political support for gender equality and reproductive rights threatens to undo decades of progress, disproportionately harming women, girls, and marginalized communities worldwide.
- **Malaria, Tuberculosis and Neglected Tropical Diseases Control:** USAID plays a leading role in the Global Fund's fight against malaria and tuberculosis, and in controlling Neglected Tropical Diseases, and the funding gap could cause a resurgence of these diseases.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:** The responses to health crises (man-made or because of natural disasters), such as cholera outbreaks and malnutrition in conflict zones, rely on USAID support for rapid response and relief.
- **Health System Strengthening:** Investments in national health infrastructure and capacity building and the securement of human resource for health are at risk, leading to long-term negative consequences for healthcare access and equity.

Consequences of USA's exit of the WHO

The WHO is the cornerstone of global health governance, providing technical expertise, coordinating emergency responses, and setting international health standards. USA's withdrawal will:

- **Weaken Global Coordination:** The WHO plays a crucial role in managing pandemics, vaccine distribution, and outbreak response. The departure of the US, one of the founding fathers of the organisation, weakens global preparedness.
- **Undermine Funding Mechanisms:** The US is one of the largest contributors to WHO. Its withdrawal will create a funding vacuum at country level which is a serious threat to many countries' financing and programming capacity for health and wellbeing.
- **Delay Medical Research and Innovation:** WHO-led initiatives, including the development of vaccines and treatments for many infectious and emerging diseases, would face setbacks without USA's engagement.
- **Reduce Trust in Multilateral Health Efforts:** The disengagement of the US sends a damaging signal to other nations, potentially leading to further erosion of global health cooperation.

Call for Action

FESTMIH urges the following immediate actions:

1. **Reinstatement of USAID Funding:** The US government must restore full funding to USAID's health programmes to prevent catastrophic setbacks in global health progress.
2. **Commitment to WHO Membership:** The US must remain a WHO member and engage constructively to strengthen global health initiatives.
3. **Mobilisation of International Support:** European and other global partners should step up efforts to fill financial gaps and reinforce their commitment to multilateral health cooperation.
4. **Advocacy and Diplomacy:** Civil society, academia, and healthcare organisations must advocate against the withdrawal and highlight the risks associated with these actions. Reactions and comments from FESTMIH's member Societies and from individual scientists can be collected via the FESTMIH LinkedIn account.
5. **Individual support to WHO:** The "One Dollar One World" (1D1W) campaign was launched in response to the USA's announcement that it was withdrawing from the WHO, thereby also stopping its financial support for the organisation. Launched by a WHO employee, it gives private individuals the opportunity to support the work of the WHO with a 1 dollar donation: [1 dollar, 1 World](#)
6. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Increased public engagement is essential to pressure policymakers to prioritize global health as a shared responsibility.
7. **Protection of SRHR and Gender Equality:** Governments and global health partners must actively counter the erasure of SRHR and gender from health policies by reinforcing funding and explicit political support for comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare, family planning, and gender-focused health programmes.

Global solidarity for health

The suspension of USAID funding and any move toward WHO exit represents an unprecedented challenge to global health security. FESTMIH calls upon all stakeholders to act swiftly to prevent the erosion of hard-earned health gains and ensure that international collaboration remains the foundation of global health efforts.