

PRESS RELEASE

Sub-Saharan Africa, the first victim of the USAID reduction

Hong Kong S.A.R, 19 March 2025 – On 10 March, the US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, announced the end of the program review by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). 83% of aid has been cut and many African countries will be impacted.

Sub-Saharan Africa: the first to be affected by US disengagement

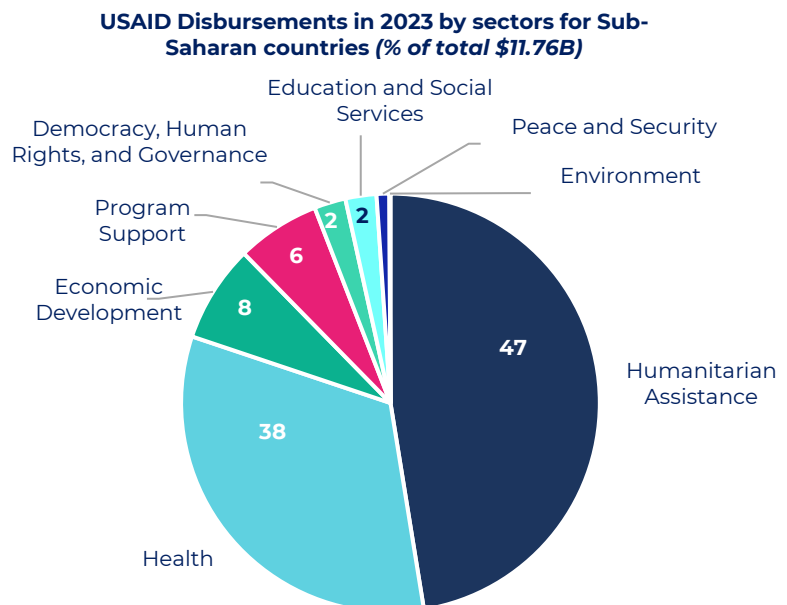
Sub-Saharan Africa is the world's second largest beneficiary of USAID (behind Ukraine), receiving 40% of its budget in 2023.

In 2023, Somalia, the Central African Republic, Liberia, Malawi and Mozambique are the five countries in sub-Saharan Africa that have benefited most from USAID development assistance. For all the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the subsidies from the American agency are intended for various sectors that are essential for the continent, with three major priorities: humanitarian aid (47%), health (38%) and economic development (8%).

The sudden interruption of USAID programmes in Africa will have significant consequences for the continent in all spheres of society. In the field of health, USAID programmes have been vital in combating regional pandemics, from HIV in Southern Africa to the Ebola virus in Uganda. The cessation of these health programmes would favour an upsurge of these deadly diseases for local populations.

After a record year of elections in 2024, the end of USAID will weaken the democratic process in Africa. The vacuum left by the US agency could benefit violent organizations, which are likely to seize coups.

In terms of peace and security, the end of USAID will signal the return of armed conflict affecting civilian populations: the jihadist threat in Somalia and the





proliferation of drug trafficking are evils whose harmful influence has been slowed by the action of the American agency.

'America First': a lever of commercial and political influence

Donald Trump justifies the dismantling of USAID with his '*America First*' policy, which aims to prioritize direct national interests at the expense of strategic international partnerships. The '*America First*' doctrine is being applied not only through the dismantling of USAID, but also with the potential renegotiation of strategic agreements with African countries. A review of such agreements would allow the US administration to obtain commercial advantages, particularly in the mineral industry. The announcement of reciprocal tariffs could also be an opportunity to assert American interests. Six sub-Saharan African countries (South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Niger, Liberia and Togo) export significantly to the United States and would be particularly vulnerable to reciprocal tariffs. But this transactional approach risks compromising the American strategic position in the face of competitors such as China.

Towards a reconfiguration of regional balances in favor of China

Indeed, the case of South Africa illustrates this new approach of the United States in Africa. The conspicuous absence of Secretary of State Marco Rubio from the G20 ministerial meeting in Johannesburg (19-20 February) was a strong diplomatic signal in a context of growing trade and political tensions. The decline of American influence leaves the way clear for China: until now focused on the exploitation of African mineral resources, Beijing can now position itself as an alternative for economic development. Beijing's announcement of a massive commitment of 50 billion dollars, on the sidelines of the China-Africa summit in September 2024, already testified to this paradigm shift. The Chinese offensive could therefore force the Trump administration to reassess its position, at the risk of seeing the United States lose its influence on the African continent in the long term.

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