

1. INTRODUCTION

Over several years the humanitarian system has faced rising levels of need and a decline in the availability of funding. This reached a critical point in early 2025, when the US government significantly reduced or withdrew funding across multiple contexts. The cuts have had immediate and far-reaching implications for humanitarian programming, particularly in fragile contexts.

Prior to these cuts, US humanitarian funding had doubled between 2015 and 2023, reaching over US\$16 billion annually by the end of that period. The country provided 59% of global funding for nutrition, 52% for food security and agriculture, and 51% for multipurpose cash assistance (ALNAP, 2025). The abrupt cuts in 2025 have reversed this trend, creating widespread operational disruptions across the humanitarian sector.

In response, humanitarian actors used the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) as one of the main mechanisms to adjust how they planned and resourced responses.

These adjustments had already started in reaction to earlier donor reductions prior to 2025, but the suspension of funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2025 placed additional pressure on this process.

The full impact of the funding interruption remains unclear, particularly in terms of short- and long-term effects on humanitarian coordination and the needs of communities affected by crisis. This report is one of a [series of ALNAP outputs](#) to support the sector to understand the impacts of the cuts and the associated prioritisation choices and trade-offs. It specifically assesses the impact of these funding cuts on communities affected by crisis and on the humanitarian sector, drawing on consultations with community members, community leaders and aid workers. The findings show how funding fluctuations influence humanitarian access, service delivery and community coping mechanisms.

South Sudan and Mali are used as case study countries to understand the impact of the interruption of US funding on the dynamics described above. These countries combine a strong prior presence of US funding, active humanitarian coordination structures and acute levels of needs among populations affected by crisis. They are also contexts in which ALNAP's data-gathering partner REACH was able to gain fairly rapid access to conduct timely research. The case studies



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illustrate how funding suspensions can play out in different settings while offering insights that are relevant beyond South Sudan and Mali.

South Sudan has faced worsening humanitarian pressures over recent years as conflict in Sudan has driven more than one million people across the border. Of these people, 68% are South Sudanese nationals returning home. The influx has strained fragile health and WASH systems, contributing to a cholera outbreak. Severe food insecurity persists in South Sudan too, with nearly half the population requiring urgent food assistance throughout March 2025 due to flooding, conflict and surging prices (Care, 2025). Prior to the funding interruption, a critical component of the humanitarian response was provided by USAID/the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and the State Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). This US support reached 1.3 million people with emergency food aid in 2024 and provided US\$27.2 million of funding to health programmes.

The sudden cuts in 2025 have disrupted humanitarian programming and weakened coordination in South Sudan. They have compounded the challenges faced by the populations affected by crisis (USAID, 2024). Since 2024, South Sudan has been among the most vulnerable countries globally, with 71% of its humanitarian funding provided by donors that have since announced aid cuts (ALNAP, 2025).

Mali is also experiencing a severe and protracted humanitarian crisis driven by conflict, climate shocks and economic instability. Violence between armed groups, military forces and local militias has displaced more than 400,000 people internally, while insecurity continues to disrupt livelihoods, food production and access to basic services. The country is also heavily affected by climate change, with prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall and floods undermining agriculture and worsening food shortages.

Prior to the funding interruption, Mali's humanitarian response relied heavily on US support – 46% of total funding received by Mali came from the US, with 69% of that US support directed towards public health. US aid was therefore a critical pillar of both humanitarian programming and coordination. The abrupt cuts have disrupted life-saving programmes and weakened coordination mechanisms, further straining an already underfunded response. Announced reductions in support from other donors, such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, have compounded the situation, leaving humanitarian actors with limited capacity to respond to growing needs.

South Sudan and Mali offer complementary entry points to examine the consequences of US funding cuts in two highly fragile settings. They are well-suited to explore how funding fluctuations affect both programming and

populations affected by crisis. At the same time, the countries' differences – such as the nature of their crises, operational challenges and socioeconomic contexts – allow research on a broader range of impacts, from operational adjustments by aid agencies to coping strategies among communities. By engaging directly with populations affected by crisis, state agencies, local leaders and humanitarian actors, the study provides a nuanced picture of funding-driven changes across the aid system at the crisis level.

[Section 2](#) synthesises key findings across both case study countries, while [Sections 3](#) and [4](#) detail country-specific findings. [Section 5](#) sets out broad conclusions emerging from the research.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used to examine the impact of USAID funding reductions on communities and humanitarian coordination in South Sudan and Mali. Between May and June 2025, data was collected through a single-cycle assessment across two to three locations in each country.¹ Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with humanitarian actors, national authorities and local actors, alongside focus group discussions (FGDs) with community members affected by or aware of changes in aid. FGDs were disaggregated by gender and displacement status, with 6 to 10 participants per group. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents with direct knowledge of changes in humanitarian assistance.

While the study focuses on the 2025 suspension of US funding, participants often referenced earlier disruptions. Therefore, responses may reflect broader, cumulative effects of funding volatility. Additionally, given the time of data collection, it is important to note that the experiences and perspectives expressed in KIIs and FGDs may not reflect more recent in-country impacts and newer prioritisation processes, including subsequent HPC processes.

See [Annex 1](#) for a discussion of the limitations of the study.

¹ The targeted locations were selected in coordination with the respective country teams, based on several criteria: the presence of humanitarian activities, the presence of displaced populations and accessibility to the sites. For the KIIs with humanitarian actors, no specific geographic locations were targeted, as interviews were conducted with actors operating at different levels and locations across the response.