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U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN AFRICA:

Interests, Opportunities, and Challenges

September 21-27, 2025
Nairobi, Kenya
Senior Congressional Staff Conference

U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa: Interests, Opportunities, and Challenges

September 21-27, 2025 | Nairobi, Kenya

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AGENDA

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21:

10:55 AM: Participants depart the U.S.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22:

1:10 PM: U.S. participants arrive in Nairobi, Kenya

3 – 6:30 PM: Participants check into hotel and Executive Time

7 – 9 PM: Scene Setter and Working Dinner with Kenya Red Cross
Discussion with representatives from the Kenya Red Cross Society with a focus on refugees living in Kenya.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23:

6 – 7 AM: Breakfast

7 – 9 AM: Drive to Naivasha

9 AM – 12 PM: Site Visit on Agricultural Development with Dave Payne, *Chief Revenue Officer, Kentegra*

Kentegra Biotechnology Pyrethrum Processing Facility and Local Farm, Naivasha

Once Kenya's third largest export, pyrethrum is a naturally occurring mixture of chemicals found in chrysanthemums that are extracted and refined into pale refined extract (PRE), an active ingredient used to formulate organic insecticides and pesticides. Kenya contributed more than 80 percent of the global supply and was a major supplier to the U.S. until the late 1990s, with over 300,000 farmers growing chrysanthemums.

Kentegra Biotechnology, a U.S. firm based in Kenya, is at the forefront of the pyrethrum revival. The company has contracted with more than 20,000 farmers, 46 percent of whom are women, and has invested over $4.5 million to build a factory in Athi River.

The organization operates two nurseries in Nakuru County. Kentegra partners with the U.S. Development Finance Corporation.

12 – 2 PM: Drive to Nairobi and Eat Boxed Lunch

2 – 4 PM: Site Visit on Food Security

International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi

Food insecurity continues to be a major issue facing millions of people throughout Kenya. On this day, the delegation will hear from researchers and scientists on ways that the government of Kenya is working to provide a more resilient food safety system for farmers and the most vulnerable populations. The delegation will spend 2 hours touring the main research center and have a roundtable discussion with front line food security specialists.

4 – 4:30 PM: Drive to Hotel

4:30 – 6:30 PM: Executive Time

7 – 9 PM: Working Dinner with NGO Representatives
Discussions with representatives from Plan International, PATH, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), One Acre Fund, and the International Rescue Committee will focus on aid work in Kenya.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24:

6 – 6:45 AM: Breakfast

6:45 – 7 AM: Drive to airport

8 – 9:30 AM: Board flight and travel to Dadaab Refugee Camp

9:30 AM – 3:30 PM: Site Visit on Severe Acute Malnutrition and the Life of a Refugee

Dadaab Refugee Camp

Dadaab Refugee Camp, located in eastern Kenya near the border with Somalia, was established in 1992 as a temporary location for Somalis fleeing from civil war. Over the years, famine and drought have forced growing numbers of Somalis to seek housing in

Dadaab. Today, the camp is the world's largest, housing over 432,000 refugees and asylum seekers, supporting children and families from primarily Somalia.

The camp is managed by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with food support provided through the U.N.'s World Food Programme (WFP), water and sanitation by CARE, and health care by the Kenya Red Cross Society. The United States, in the past, has been a major contributor to UNHCR and WFP, providing over $800 million in assistance to refugees in Kenya, including Dadaab. More recently, however, American commitments to both organizations have declined significantly.

3:30 – 5 PM: Board plane and travel from Dadaab Refugee Camp back to Nairobi

7 – 9 PM: Working Dinner
Discussions to focus on learnings from the site visit to the Dadaab Refugee Camp.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25:

6:30 – 8 AM: Breakfast

8:15 – 10:30 AM: Site Visit on HIV/AIDS Education

Global Fund School Visit

HIV/AIDS continues to be a great educational problem in Kenya. Educating school age students is the front line of fighting against this disease. On this day, the delegation will visit a secondary school in Nairobi and hear directly from students about the challenges facing them every day and what they are learning about HIV/AIDS and prevention. The students will share what they have learned from peer education & empowerment programs targeting HIV/AIDS that are paid for directly by the Global Fund. We will spend time with the students in a roundtable, Q&A format.

10:30 AM – 11 AM: Drive to Airport

11:30 AM – 1:40 PM: Flight to Maasai Mara Conservancy

1:40 PM – 2:10 PM: Quick Working Lunch at the Maasai Mara
The Maasai Mara National Reserve scientists will talk about the process of conservation, its impact on global wildlife, the local economy, and political stability.

2:10 PM – 2:30 PM: Drive to the Conservancy

2:30 – 3:30 PM: Site Visit on Economic Impact

Maa Trust and Maa Beadwork Project

The Maa Trust is a non-profit organisation working with community-owned conservancies in the Maasai Mara, Kenya. Its mission is to increase the benefits of wildlife and conservation to Maasai families so that they value and contribute to the protection of wild animals on their land. The Maa Trust empowers local people by promoting small business startups and micro finance schemes, enabling them to make their own money and to invest in their family's development. Their members identify their needs and wish lists of items, and The Maa Trust helps them to save up for and attain these. Despite a severe lack of education for girl children in previous years, the female beadwork and honey projects are now providing a way for these women to invest in clean drinking water for their homes, a solar power alternative firewood, and the ability to send more of their children to school.

Maa Beadwork is a social enterprise established by The Maa Trust as a sustainable alternative livelihood to generate income for Maasai women and their families. Beading is a tribal art and talent of Maasai women, who have been famed for their adornment for centuries.

3:30 PM – 4 PM: Drive to Camp and Check in

4:30 – 7:30 PM: Afternoon field Drive briefing with Daniel Sopia*, CEO of the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA)*

Daniel Sopia will brief the delegation on the community conservancy model in the Maasai Mara, including its history, unique ownership and land-use rights, and the direct support they have received from the US government. This discussion will further illustrate how the conservancy model generates sustainable incomes for individual landowners. The Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association is a membership organization of the Mara Conservancies established in 2013. They have a mandate from landowners and tourism parties to play an overarching coordination role for Greater Mara Ecosystem stakeholders. Currently, there are 24 conservancies at different stages of development, covering about 450,000 acres. The member conservancies bring together over 15,000 landowners who annually receive approximately 7.5 million paid as lease fees.

7:30 – 8 PM: Return to Camp

8 – 9:30 PM: Working Dinner with Dan Sopia
Dan Sopia will brief the delegation on the role of sustainable tourism in supporting conservation. The delegation will gain a better understanding of the ecotourism models in Kenya and the economic opportunities presented for local communities.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26:

6 AM: Coffee and Tea Available

6:30 – 9 AM: Field briefing to observe predator activity and discuss human-wildlife conflict

Conservancy representatives will guide participants to track lion pride movements, discussing, en route, the important role lions and other predators play in the ecosystem as well as the Maasai's historical relationship with lions and present threats of human-wildlife conflict. This discussion will provide participants with key background information and observations on how predators, in particular, support the overall health of the ecosystem, human-wildlife conflict, traditional practices of indigenous groups, and the challenges these create for local buy-in to ecotourism as a development solution.

9 – 10 AM: Breakfast in the field with Niels Mogensen, *Senior Program Scientist at the Mara Predator Hub*

The Mara Predator Hub leads research on the Mara's top predators to help community members and landowners understand and appreciate the role of predators in the ecosystem, ensure that key stakeholders in the Greater Mara Ecosystem consistently utilise sound scientific information to inform conservation strategies, and support stable, healthy predator populations in the Greater Mara Ecosystem by providing scientific evidence for conservation action.

10:30 AM: Return to Camp

12 – 1:30 PM: Working Lunch with Dr. John Sankok, *CEO of Community Health Partners (CHP)*

Dr. Sankok will brief the delegation on CHP's health and community development programs. The delegation will learn how these programs work in tandem with the conservancy model to support human development in the communities. Community Health Partners has been on the forefront of healthcare since 1980, and played an especially big role during the COVID-19 pandemic. They work on two fronts: primary health care services and community development initiatives.Their overall strategic plan is to contribute to the delivery of quality, accessible, and affordable health services.

2 – 4 PM: Board flight and travel to Nairobi International Airport

6 PM: Participants depart Nairobi International Airport to return to the United States

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27:

8:55 AM: Participants arrive in the U.S.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

SENIOR CONGRESSIONAL STAFF:

Caroline Bender	*Deputy Chief of Staff, Rep. Juan Ciscomani*
Claire Dufault	*Director of Operations, House Foreign Affairs Committee*
Lizzy Letter	*Legislative Director, Sen. Patty Murray*
Patrick Mocete	*Chief of Staff, Rep. Young Kim*
Philip Oke-Thomas	*Legislative Policy Analyst, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Africa and Global Health Policy Subcommittee*
Caroline Paris-Behr	*Chief of Staff, Rep. Lauren Underwood*
Chandler Smith	*Legislative Director, Rep. Guy Reschenthaler*

FOUNDATION REPRESENTATIVES:

Jill Barasa	*Africa's Program Director, International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF)*
Mariana Becerra	*Director of North American Advocacy, Eleanor Crook Foundation*
Valerie Lemmie	*Senior Advisor for State and Local Government, Kettering Foundation*

ASPEN INSTITUTE CONGRESSIONAL PROGRAM:

Tyler Denton	*Deputy Director*
Jennifer Harthan	*Associate Director of Congressional Engagement*
Larry Nowels	*Co-Chair, Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network*

RAPPORTEURS' SUMMARY

Larry Nowels
Rapporteur and Counselor to the Aspen Institute Congressional Program; Co-Chair, Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network

From September 21 to 27, 2025, the Aspen Institute Congressional Program brought senior congressional staff together with African development and health experts, humanitarian providers, business leaders, and conservation stewards to assess the current context of U.S.-Africa relations at a time of historic change and future uncertainty. Convened in Nairobi, Kenya, at the crossroads of key strategic and economic priorities for the United States, the program examined how America can advance its national interests by engaging with African nations to promote development and better health on the continent, support humanitarian interventions to stabilize refugee movements, invest in scientific innovations to foster greater food security for Africa, and boost conservation efforts to protect livelihoods of local populations and wildlife.

The program took place against the backdrop of significant changes to U.S. development, health, and humanitarian assistance in Africa over the previous seven months. On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order that froze all foreign aid while a 90-day review of American assistance programs took place. By March 10, the Administration announced that 83% of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) contracts were canceled worldwide, and later that month, the White House notified Congress of plans to move some USAID functions into the Department of State and end the Agency's remaining activities. In July, Congress approved a request to rescind nearly $8 billion in previously appropriated foreign assistance, including sizable amounts for Africa. The Administration further proposed a 49% reduction in International Affairs appropriations for fiscal year 2026, with substantial cuts to foreign aid programs in Africa. During dinner conversations and at each site visit, the delegation heard from on-the-ground practitioners and beneficiaries how these changes in U.S. policy had impacted their programs and lives.

Refugees in Kenya: Setting the Scene

At an introductory dinner, the delegation hosted several officials from the Kenyan Red Cross, including Dr. Ahmed Idris, Secretary General of the organization. Dr. Idris characterized the refugee situation in Kenya as posing the most significant humanitarian crisis ever, coupled with a high degree of uncertainty for the future. He noted that in Dadaab refugee camp, located in northeast Kenya near the border with Somalia and one of the largest settlements in the world with a population of over 400,000, monthly food rations for the families were currently set at 40% of normal dietary requirements due to funding reductions. Dr. Idris further identified a policy change under consideration by the Kenyan government that would better integrate the refugees into the local population, which held the prospect of improving the lives of those living in the camp and in the surrounding communities. He believes that climate change represented the "elephant in the room" issue, noting that drought is a challenge every three years in Kenya as opposed to every eight years in the past. Dr. Idris encouraged American lawmakers to think about where policies evolve going forward in a way that creates greater efficiencies and reduces the role of the "middle man" in the aid industry. He further expressed concern about Kenya pivoting to a closer relationship with China at the expense of the United States.

An American Private Sector Investment Creates Jobs, Builds Household Incomes for Small-Holder Farmers, and Promotes Sound Environmental Practices

Once Kenya's third largest export, pyrethrin is a naturally occurring mixture of chemicals found in pyrethrums, a type of chrysanthemum, that are extracted and refined into pale refined extract (PRE), an active ingredient used to formulate organic insecticides and pesticides. Kenya contributed more than 80 percent of the global supply and was a major supplier to the United States until the late 1990s, with over 300,000 farmers growing chrysanthemums.

Kentegra Biotechnology, a U.S. firm based in Kenya, is at the forefront of the pyrethrum revival. Established in 2017, the company has contracted with more than 20,000 farmers, 46 percent of whom are women, and has invested over $14 million to build two factories near Nairobi. Kentegra has partnered in the past with both USAID and the U.S. Development Finance Corporation.

The delegation was hosted by David Payne, Kentegra's co-founder and Chief Revenue Officer, at the company's newest production facility in Naivasha. There, the delegation learned about the rapid growth in pyrethrum production as an alternative to synthetic pesticides that have been linked to cancer. Chrysanthemums are harvested twice per month and boost farmer incomes by 3 to 15 times that of other cash crops. CRO Payne, however, expressed frustration at the lengthy approval process by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that has delayed Kentegra entering the American market and the loss of $200,000 from a USAID grant when the program was terminated earlier in 2025. Members of the group also had the opportunity to visit a farmer, Irene, who had been working with Kentegra for the past five years.

Innovations in Agriculture through Science as a Path to Food Security in Africa

Food insecurity continues to be a major issue facing millions of people throughout Kenya and across the continent. As part of the solution to inadequate nutrition and food supplies in Africa, the delegation met with researchers and scientists to learn about ways that governments in the region are working to provide more resilient food safety systems for farmers and the most vulnerable populations. The delegation spent an afternoon touring the main research center of the International Livestock Research

Institute (ILRI), an organization that is part of the umbrella institution of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

During an introductory discussion, the senior congressional staff learned about ILRI's work in Kenya and nine other African countries. Researchers saw three major development challenges on the continent: 1) population increase; 2) urbanization; and 3) the growing youth bulge. Who will feed this rising population and create jobs for the African youth are questions explored by scientists at ILRI. The delegation also heard from several other affiliates located at the ILRI campus, including the International Water Management Institute, World Fish, the Africa Agriculture Technology Foundation, and the International Service for the Acquisition of Agriculture-Biotech Applications. The visit to IRLI also included a tour of several research laboratories located on the campus.

Challenges Facing NGO Development Implementers in Africa: Personal Stories from the Field

Over dinner, the delegation engaged with four American non-governmental organizations (NGO) representatives who managed development, health, and humanitarian aid programs in East Africa. These four individuals, affiliated with Plan International, Catholic Relief Services, One Acre Fund, and PATH, spoke about the work of their organizations and challenges they confronted in 2025 as the shifting landscape of U.S. foreign assistance policy escalated uncertainty and disruption across their operations. Members of the group were able to engage in small, intimate conversations and learn about the vision these representatives held for the future.

A Day in the Life of a Refugee: Firsthand Observations in Dadaab

The delegation traveled by air to the Dadaab refugee camp located roughly 100 kilometers from the Somali border in northeast Kenya. Established in 1992 as a temporary location for Somalis fleeing from civil war, over the years, famine, drought, and continuing conflict have forced growing numbers of Somalis and those from South Sudan to seek housing in Dadaab. Today, the camp is one of the world's largest, housing over 432,000 refugees and asylum seekers, supporting children and families from primarily Somalia and South Sudan.

The camp is managed by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with food support provided through the U.N.'s World Food Programme (WFP), water and sanitation by CARE, and health care by the Kenya Red Cross Society. The United States, in the past, has been a major contributor to UNHCR and WFP, providing over $800 million in assistance to refugees in Kenya, including Dadaab. More recently, however, American commitments to both organizations have declined.

After a welcome meeting with camp officials, the delegation toured Dadaab's hospital, a facility that sees between 150 and 300 emergency cases per day and 200 child deliveries per month. Severe malnutrition of young children remains a significant problem in the camp. The hospital maintains a one-month supply of the lifesaving Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) while UNICEF reports that it has a sufficient RUTF supply through February 2026. Due to dwindling resources, the World Food Programme has divided malnutrition patients into four categories, with only categories one and two – the most impacted population – receiving direct services. Hospital officials noted that there had been no maternal deaths in 2025 and that "mama taxis" that provide urgent transportation to the hospital for mothers going into labor had greatly increased the number of safer hospital deliveries. They expressed growing concern, however, over the significant loss in the number of doctors, nurses, health clinicians, and other medical staff due to donor funding reductions. At a health clinic facility elsewhere in Dadaab, the delegation learned that staff had been cut to one nurse and one health clinician who sees 130 patients per day.

The senior congressional staff also made two household visits. The first was with a South Sudanese family that fled the country in 2009. They had no intention to return, given the continuing conflicts, but expressed concern over deteriorating food conditions in Dadaab. At the second household, a nine-person family from Somalia lived in a single-room tent while the father slept outdoors at night for security protection. They had left Somalia a year prior after the patriarch's brother and father had been killed in a bomb blast.

Educating Students on Healthy Life Choices: The Strength of Peer Mentors

The senior congressional staff visited the Visa Oshwel Primary/Secondary School in Nairobi, where the Kenya Red Cross, with the support of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, teaches first aid, provides mental health services, and trains students to engage their peers in the practices of healthy lifestyles. The delegation heard from an impressive eighth grader about what he spoke about with other students regarding HIV, including the need for testing, the challenges of stigma, what HIV treatments are available, and prevention and awareness practices.

Balancing Wildlife Conservation and Community Development: A Perspective in the Maasai Mara

Conservation and natural resource management are drivers of poverty reduction, sustainable development, and regional security. Kenya has been an African leader for decades in biodiversity protection, maintaining policies that protect wildlife while promoting community development. With the support from USAID, the Kenya Wildlife Service, created 35 years ago, has a remarkable record of helping to reduce elephant and rhino poaching in the region. USAID was also instrumental in pioneering the community conservancy model that has served as Kenya's most widely used conservation approach.

The delegation traveled to the Maasai Mara, Kenya's most important wildlife and tourism area. Two-thirds of Mara is owned by the Maasai and other landowners whose livelihoods center around farming and cattle raising. As tensions rose between the landowners and wildlife, over the past decade, Maasai landowners and innovative tour operators have come together to create conservancies on private lands across the Mara. Conservancy landowners receive monthly lease payments from tour operators and both serve on boards overseeing conservancy management. The conservancies support the livelihoods of over 100,000 people living in the Mara.

The group first met with the Maa Trust, a non-profit that helps increase the benefits of wildlife and conservation to Maasai families, thereby protecting animals and the community lands. Dr. Crystal Mogensen of the Maa Trust spoke with the delegation about her work helping local populations create small businesses and microfinance operations as a means of income generation. She spoke about the Trust's three areas of focus: 1) education and child protection; 2) water and health; and 3) livelihoods, including beadwork and beekeeping. The latter has helped empower women in the community to invest in clean water for their homes, utilize solar power alternatives to firewood, and send more of their children to school.

The delegation also met with Daniel Sopia, CEO of the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservation Association, where members learned more about the community conservancy model, past support received by the U.S. government, and how the model promotes sustainable incomes for local landowners. During another presentation, the senior congressional staff heard from representatives of the Mara Predator Hub, which is a leading research organization intended to help local communities understand and appreciate the role of predators in the surrounding ecosystems. Their work informs conservation strategies and supports stable, healthy predator populations throughout the Mara. The delegation's final stop in the Maasai Mara was a conversation with Dr. John Sankok, CEO of Community Health Partners (CHP). Dr. Sankok spoke about health and community development programs in the Maasai Mara and how they work in coordination with the conservancy model to promote health and human development within the community. CHP was especially active during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

New York Times	*A $45 Treatment Can Save a Starving Child. US Aid Cuts Have Frozen the Supply*
Nature	*The full lethal impact of massive cuts to international food aid*
ReliefWeb	*Somali refugees in Dadaab don't have enough to eat after aid cuts*
Wall Street Journal	*Kenya Uses U.S.-Funded Antiterrorism Courts for Political Crackdown*
Al Jazeera Staff	*Refugees in Kenya impacted by food aid cuts; WFP rolls out new system*
Business Insider Africa	*Kenya's deepening ties with China ruffle feathers in the U.S.*
New York Times	*China's Exports to Africa Are Soaring as Trade to U.S. Plunges*
Newsweek	*How the US and China Are Fighting for Africa's Vital Resources*
World Food Program USA	*West and Central Africa: More Than 15 Million Expected Cases of Acute Malnutrition in 2020*
Devex	*From 'aid trap' to 'brutal' cuts: African leaders confront a new reality*

A $45 Treatment Can Save a Starving Child. US Aid Cuts Have Frozen the Supply[1]

By Apoorva Mandavilli | Photographs by Taiwo Aina

The dismantling of U.S.A.I.D. has disrupted the global supply chain that provides a therapeutic food, leaving thousands of malnourished children at risk of dying.

Apoorva Mandavilli and Taiwo Aina visited several camps and clinics in Nigeria where malnutrition treatments are dispensed. Apoorva spoke to dozens of people before and after the U.S. aid cuts.

The women walked miles through the dusty streets of Maiduguri, in the northeastern corner of Nigeria, carrying their emaciated children. At 7 a.m., they began lining up to wait, for hours, to be handed a small, red packet containing a special paste that could bring their children back from the brink of starvation.

The children were eerily listless; they did not run, shout or even swat the flies off their faces. Their tiny, frail frames made many appear years younger than they were. Near the head of the line, Kaltum Mohammad clutched her two-year-old daughter, Fatima, who weighed just 16 pounds.

Women and children like these waited for treatments in the half-dozen camps and clinics visited by The New York Times last November. Now, six months into the United States' withdrawal of foreign aid, many of the sites are closed, some permanently. At others that remain open, rooms once filled with boxes of the lifesaving packets are close to empty.

Starvation in Gaza has brought intense international attention to the horrors of famine, but less attention has been paid to a wider issue: the dismantling of U.S.A.I.D. has worsened the problem of severe hunger and malnutrition throughout the world.

Saving children with severe acute malnutrition is simple and inexpensive. Each packet costs less than 30 cents, but contains a high-calorie mix of peanuts, sugar, milk powder and oil — flavors appealing to children — and a blend of vitamins and minerals. A complete six-week treatment for a severely malnourished child runs to less than $45.

[1] This article was originally published in The New York Times on August 15 and 18, 2025: https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/15/health/hunger-malnutrition-usaid-cuts.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare.

U.S.A.I.D. funded roughly half the world's supply of ready-to-use therapeutic food, or R.U.T.F., purchasing some directly from American manufacturers and funding the United Nations Children Fund, or UNICEF, to manage its distribution.

Attending an acutely malnourished child at a clinic in Damasak, Nigeria, in November.

All those grants were abruptly halted when the Trump administration froze foreign aid earlier this year. U.S.A.I.D. eventually reimbursed grantees for costs already incurred. The State Department authorized a $93 million new grant to UNICEF last week, but it is less than half what the government had typically spent. In 2024, the agency spent about $200 million on this work, not including aid for countries and direct grants to organizations that implement programs.

Funds for 2025 have yet to be released to manufacturers, the World Food Programme — which distributes a similar product for moderate acute malnutrition — those who transport the products or the many organizations, like the International Rescue Committee, or Helen Keller Intl, that run the malnutrition programs.

In response to questions from the Times, the State Department emailed a statement asserting that lifesaving malnutrition programs "remain a priority."

"Malnutrition treatment is among the first new obligations of foreign assistance funding," the statement said.

But it also said that “other actors — including national governments and international humanitarian organizations — must step up.”

President Trump has made the same argument for many aid programs, saying the United States should not have to carry the bulk of the burden of caring for the world. Though other countries do already contribute, and some organizations are scrambling to fill the gap, it is unlikely that they can do so quickly enough to help the children who are now in need.

Increasingly, some governments such as Nigeria, Kenya and Burkina Faso have been contributing by hosting factories that manufacture the packets. The Child Nutrition Fund, started by UNICEF, the British government and others, encourages governments to finance supply by offering a 1:1 match for every dollar.

Before the sudden withdrawal of aid, “things were absolutely moving in the right direction,” said James Sussman, a spokesman for the International Rescue Committee.

Now, boxes containing millions of dollars worth of the lifesaving packets are stuck at every link in the supply chain: in manufacturers’ warehouses, at shipping companies, in cities that received the shipments and in treatment centers that have shut down all over the world.

In nearly a dozen countries, the supply chain for the packets has become so unstable that thousands of children are at high risk of dying, according to organizations that help distribute the treatments. Tens of thousands more could be in danger in the coming weeks and months if funds for this year do not move quickly.

“We have seen the mortality rates in the hospitals increasing by the day,” said Aliyu Mohammed Jabo, Helen Keller’s director for Nigeria. “This is the ugly situation that we are facing because of this funding cut.”

In Nigeria, 150 clinics operated by the World Food Programme in Borno and Yobe states, which provided treatment for more than 300,000 children below the age of 2, shut down at the end of July. In Bauchi state, Helen Keller has had to stop treating malnutrition in 16 of its 17 centers, leaving more than 17,000 children without treatment.

In eastern Chad, Mali and Niger, malnutrition treatments are unavailable or in dangerously short supply. Clinics in northeast Syria, Burkina Faso and Kenya have closed down. In South Sudan, the International Rescue Committee estimates that it will have to close 62 static treatment sites and nine mobile clinics if funding is not restored by September.

In Afghanistan, I.R.C. warehouses are bare, despite 900,000 children who are in desperate need of treatment for severe acute malnutrition. Nepal has no supply in about half of its provinces, and is facing a nationwide shortage starting this month, endangering about 200,000 malnourished children, including about 25,000 who are at risk of death.

Several other countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Madagascar, similarly have only enough products to treat children for a few more weeks or months.

Maryam Mohamed, 35, is mother to three boys under 4, all severely malnourished. She also has three older boys who are not much better off, but it's the young ones who most need help. In the past few months she has taken them to a series of different centers in Maiduguri as one after another has shut down, sometimes walking 45 minutes or more each way, with one boy on her back and two in her arms.

She now brings them to Mashamari camp in Maiduguri, where the supply of treatments is expected to run out this month.

"I wish they will have a change of decision," she said about the Trump administration, through a translator. "They should please try to help by not stopping the supply."

A nutrition stabilization center at the Rescue Mashamari health clinic in April. By the time a child reaches a treatment center, he or she may have only hours or days to survive.

Last week, after months of delays, the State Department authorized $93 million for UNICEF, its first large grant for 2025, to supply R.U.T.F. to 12 African countries and Haiti. Part of the grant is for distributing 11,000 metric tons of packets, enough for about 800,000 children, to last through June 2026. Some money will also be spent to transport and distribute more than 1,200 metric tons of stalled packets — enough for about 87,000 children.

But UNICEF expects that it will be two to three months before the products are delivered, according to Helen Wylie, a spokeswoman for the organization.

After orders are placed and products manufactured, it can take months for treatments to reach people.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has repeatedly said that no children have died as a result of the cuts to foreign aid and the dismantling of U.S.A.I.D., calling reports of any deaths "false" and "fake."

But several organizations, including Doctors Without Borders and the aid group Action Against Hunger, have reported deaths in children related to malnutrition. More timely and precise estimates of deaths are difficult, because many of the programs that track children in need have shut down, and most organizations dare not speak up against the administration, fearing retaliation.

"No one's counting these children," said Jeanette Bailey, director of Nutrition for the International Rescue Committee, among the largest of groups implementing the treatments.

"With pretty strong certainty, we know children are dying," she added. But, "we don't know how many."

One global study has estimated that more than 160,000 children might die each year if the funds are not restored.

Acute malnutrition, also called wasting, is thought to affect about 43 million children worldwide. Even when aid flowed freely, it did not reach many of them. In 2023, R.U.T.F. was dispensed to 9.3 million children, according to UNICEF.

The first 1,000 days of life in particular are critical for brain development. Severely malnourished children have impaired immune responses, may suffer permanent cognitive damage, and are more vulnerable to infections, even after treatment. They are up to 11 times as likely to die as a healthy child is. Severe wasting accounts for as many as one in five deaths of children under 5 worldwide.

By the time a child reaches a treatment center, he or she may have only hours to days to survive. "It really comes down to the children who do not have time to waste," said Navyn Salem, who runs Edesia Nutrition, one of two large American manufacturers.

In previous years, American farmers supplied the raw ingredients — peanuts, milk powder and soy — to Edesia and Mana, another large American manufacturer. The finished product was transported by truck to major American ports, then shipped to the ports of Africa, where it would be unloaded and stored. An intricate network of organizations then transported and distributed the boxes.

The stop-start-stop of work orders and the dissolution of U.S.A.I.D. have thrown the system into disarray. U.S.A.I.D.'s activities have in theory been transferred to the State Department, but the department has neither the personnel it needs to restart all activities — even less so after widespread layoffs earlier this month — nor the systems needed to release funds.

The department "continues to strengthen internal systems and personnel capacity to ensure timely, accountable delivery of lifesaving humanitarian programs," a spokesperson for the State Department said in an email.

In the meantime, some organizations are burning through their reserves, but many small ones have folded.

Others are looking to philanthropy. Mana received a gift of $20 million from a British philanthropist, and donated about 500,000 boxes to UNICEF. Edesia has raised $2 million in private funding and is shipping some boxes to the neediest sites on its own.

Without more funds, the companies will have no money left to buy raw materials, and are in danger of defaulting on contracts from farmers in 25 states.

"The American farmers that we work with can only hold on for so long as well," Ms. Salem said. "So it's been a waiting game, a very stressful waiting game."

Edesia recently shipped 122,000 boxes to Sudan, and still has more than 185,000 at its warehouses. UNICEF will use the new funds to ship those products soon, according to the State Department. Mana, too, has already been paid for 400,000 boxes which have yet to ship; 100,000 are slated to move to South Sudan some time in the coming weeks.

Even if funding were to resume tomorrow, it takes weeks to ship products to their destinations. For R.U.T.F. to reach locations in South Sudan, for example, the products must first be shipped to Mombasa, Kenya — or produced locally in Kenya — then transported by road through Kenya and Uganda to Juba, the capital, and then to more remote parts of the country.

The roads are rough, especially in the rainy season, and boxes may take two or three months to reach the sites, said Stephane Doyon, an operations manager for Doctors without Borders. In Afghanistan, the time to delivery may stretch to eight or nine months, he said.

That may be too late for some children.

Chi Lael, a spokeswoman for W.F.P. in Nigeria., sat in a car just outside the Nana Kashim clinic in Maiduguri, a few days before it shut down at the end of July. W.F.P. would typically be scaling up in order to reach more people in July, the lean season, when food stocks dwindle and prices rise.

“A halt in assistance at a time where people are the hungriest, when they have less access to food, when prices of food are much higher,” she said, her voice breaking. “It’s the worst time imaginable to stop providing assistance.”

The full lethal impact of massive cuts to international food aid[2]

By Saskia Osendarp, Marie Ruel, Emorn Udomkesmalee, Masresha Tessema & Lawrence Haddad

The sudden withdrawal of almost half of global funding for nutrition suddenly will have dire consequences for decades.

Loss of funding for ready-to-use therapeutic foods could mean that millions of children globally cannot access this life-saving treatment. Credit: Jake Lyell/Alamy

The dismantling of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and reductions in aid budgets over the next 3–5 years announced by other Western donor countries, including the United Kingdom (40%), France (37%), the Netherlands (30%) and Belgium (25%), threaten to reverse decades of progress in reducing malnutrition[1].

[2] This article was originally published in Nature on March 26, 2025: https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00898-3.

These cuts — equivalent to 44% of the US$1.6 billion in donor aid provided in 2022 to support the World Health Assembly nutrition targets — will lead to hardship and death among the most vulnerable people in the world[2]. The implications for public health, economic growth and societal stability are profound.

Severe acute malnutrition, or severe wasting, is the most lethal form of undernutrition and is responsible for up to 20% of deaths of children under the age of five years, and affects 13.7 million children a year worldwide. Left untreated, up to 60% of affected children might die[3].

Proven programmes, such as community-based management of severe acute malnutrition, which combine screening, treatment and counselling, can reduce mortality to below 5%[3] and have been used in more than 70 countries. In 2022, the United States and other donors reporting to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development spent $591 million on severe-wasting treatment[2], which was matched by receiving countries.

The abrupt withdrawal of donor support leaves millions of critically ill children without access to these life-saving programmes. It is already undermining the institutional capacity, expertise and data infrastructures required to deliver essential nutrition services.

For example, in Nigeria, withdrawal of USAID Advancing Nutrition funding has meant that the charity Helen Keller International has had to stop a programme that provides nutrition services for 5.6 million children. In Sudan, almost 80% of emergency food kitchens are closed. In Ethiopia, supplies of nutrient-rich foods used to treat around one million severely malnourished children annually will run out by May. And the global FEWS-NET network — a leading source of data on famine risks — sits idle, disrupting early-warning systems for humanitarian planning and emergency resource allocation.

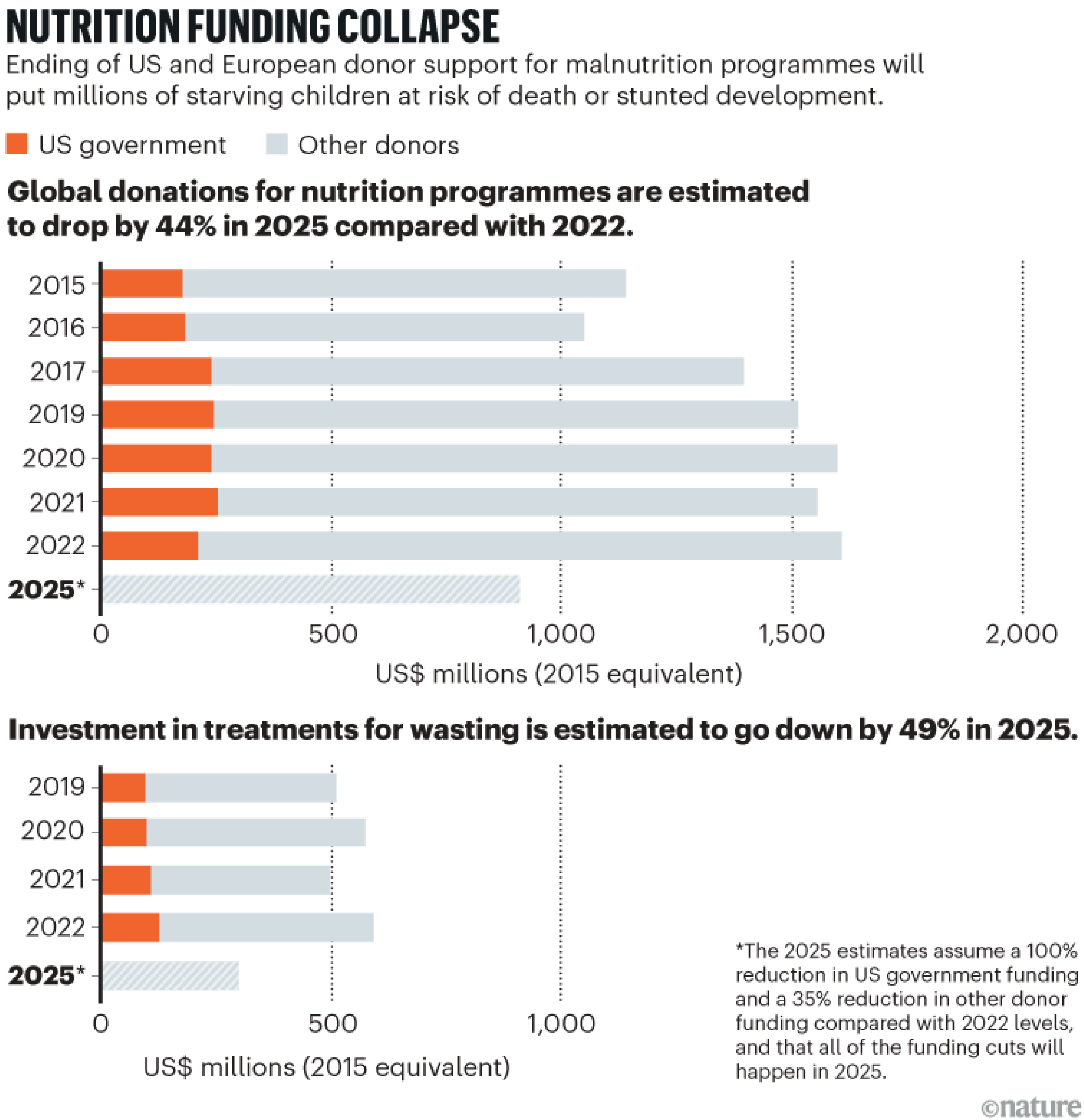
Loss of donor funding is also jeopardizing the procurement and distribution of ready-to-use therapeutic food, a life-saving treatment for severe acute malnutrition. The product comes as a dense micronutrient paste that contains peanuts, milk powder, sugar, oils, vitamins and minerals. USAID supported half of the world's supply[4].

The impacts of these cuts will be dire. To illustrate, here we assess their scale.

Millions of lives in peril

Altogether, we estimate that reductions of $290 million in donor funding for severe acute malnutrition (see 'Nutrition funding collapse') will cut off treatment for

2.3 million children in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This would lead to 369,000 extra child deaths a year that would otherwise have been prevented.



Source: Ref. 2

Of those, the termination of US-funded programmes (worth $128 million in 2022) alone will keep one million children from accessing such treatments, causing an extra 163,500 child deaths yearly.

These worst-case scenarios are based on 2022 donor disbursement data for severe wasting treatment, drawn from the Creditor Reporting System of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and analysed by Results for Development, a global non-profit organization[2] (see Supplementary information). These treatments are included in community-based management of severe acute malnutrition programmes, which screen and treat children with severe acute malnutrition and follow them to prevent relapse after recovery.

Cutting all US financing and on average 35% of aid from other donors results in $704 million less funding for nutrition programmes overall, and $290 million less for severe acute malnutrition treatment. These numbers assume that disbursements would have otherwise been similar to those in 2022, that the 35% average cuts to aid that were announced by European donor countries will reduce funding for nutrition by 35%, and that donor funding is matched by contributions from LMIC governments, as is often the case.

The No Time to Waste report[4] by the United Nations children's fund UNICEF estimated that 1.2 million deaths were averted in 2023 by treating 7.4 million children with severe acute malnutrition in 47 high-risk countries. Because 80% of cases worldwide were in these countries, we increased these numbers to cover 100% of cases globally, to 9.3 million children treated and 1.5 million deaths averted.

We calculated the percentage of reduction in donor funding compared with the 2022 disbursements and assessed how many of the children treated in 2022 would now not receive aid. Similarly, we analysed how many of the prevented deaths because of treatment in 2022 would now not be averted.

Global consequences

Although shocking, the number of deaths might be an underestimate, because the aid cuts threaten a huge array of nutrition-supporting programmes, including health, agriculture, school feeding and water and sanitation. Soon we might see many more millions of children around the world developing wasting, stunted growth and micronutrient malnutrition.

Severe wasting is responsible for up to 20% of deaths of children under the age of five.Credit: Tiksa Negeri/Reuters

The long-term consequences are also worrying. Malnourished children will fail to meet their physical and cognitive potential, reducing their educational attainment and jeopardizing their future economic productivity and health[5,6]. The economic cost of malnutrition — through lost human capital and increased health-care expenses — can reduce nations' gross domestic product by 3–16%[7]. Such severe economic outcomes further compromise public health and undermine development for decades to come, eroding the safety, stability and prosperity of those nations, with ripple effects for donor countries.

The case for treatment is unequivocal, and the knowledge and tools to prevent and treat malnutrition are available and highly cost-effective. The World Bank estimates that every $1 invested in tackling undernutrition returns $23 in value in terms of child survival, human capital development and economic prosperity[8].

Next steps

This unprecedented crisis requires the world to rethink aid to nutrition, as well as to prioritize and expand financing options. We call for governments, donors and funders to take the following steps.

First, restore the implementation and targeting of humanitarian relief for life-saving nutrition interventions. This is essential to ensure the continuation and scaling of community-based management of severe acute wasting programmes that include screening, treatment with therapeutic foods, nutrition counselling and follow-up to prevent relapse.

Second, enable, incentivize and support governments to redouble their efforts to scale up coverage of evidence-based essential-nutrition programmes across health, agrifood and social-protection systems. For instance, to promote optimal breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices, increase the uptake of supplements containing vitamin A for children and those containing multiple micronutrients during pregnancy, and support policies that increase access to healthy and sustainable diets.

Third, work with LMIC governments and national leaders and incentivize development-finance institutions to increase global funding for nutrition programmes[9]. Funding from outside the nutrition sector can be leveraged by accelerating efforts to make agricultural, workforce and climate investments more 'nutrition smart'. For example, ensure that agricultural investments focus on high-value nutritious foods; build alliances with climate champions to reduce food loss; and finance small and medium-sized enterprises to ensure access to and affordability of locally produced, nutritious foods.

Finally, rebuild and strengthen nutrition data-gathering and monitoring systems, such as FEWS-NET, using innovative low-cost technologies, such as mobile-phone-based surveys, satellite imaging and artificial-intelligence-powered predictive analytics, to guide timely responses to food crises using fewer resources.

Failure to act now will result not only in a drastic increase in child mortality but also in long-term societal damage that will reverberate across generations. It is imperative that global development partners, governments and donors mobilize immediately to safeguard nutrition for the world's most vulnerable populations. Our collective future depends on it.

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Somali refugees in Dadaab don't have enough to eat after aid cuts[3]

Source: Radio Ergo

(ERGO) – Thousands of Somali families living in Dadaab refugee camps in northeastern Kenya are struggling to find enough to eat after the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) suspended both food and cash assistance to them in August.
Families who were dependent on the aid now have nothing to cook even one meal a day

Radio Ergo's local reporter met with Farhiya Aden Mohamed, said she hasn't been able to cook a single meal since the aid was cut.

"I am heartbroken. I have nothing, and I'm sick on top of that. The aid that we were dependent on has been cut. We are people who have nothing and are just struggling with life," she said.

"The [aid beneficiary] card we were living on, and which we couldn't do without, has been cut off."

Farhiya, 49, said this was the worst news she has had in the 25 years she has lived in the refugee camps, since fleeing Sakow in Somalia's Middle Juba region in 1992.

Her monthly ration used to consist of 40 kg of rice, 8 kg of lentils, 5 litres of oil, and $25 in cash.

None of her family of four is able to work. Her husband, 70, has been bedridden for 10 years since he broke his back while building a house. Her son became disabled two years ago after a car he was fixing fell on him, and her daughter is also disabled. Farhiya herself suffers from a seizure disorder.

Isnino Aden Ilmi, a mother of seven, said her family has gone up to 24 hours without cooking a meal since their aid was cut.

[3] This article was originally published in Reliefweb on September 2, 2025: https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/somali-refugees-dadaab-dont-have-enough-eat-after-aid-cuts.

She has been looking for work since she moved to Ifo-2 camp in 2023 but hasn't found any. Her husband, who has a mental illness, has been moved to live with his relatives in Dagahley camp.

"As a woman, when I fail to find something for my family, I am now forced to tell them to drink water and go to sleep," she said.

Isnino said her shelter is in a poor condition. She has to walk to fetch and carry water for up to three kilometres.

She fled to the Dadaab camps because of insecurity in Salagle, Middle Juba, in 2023, where her family depended on farming.

The camp chairwoman, Habibo Nuur Khalif, told Radio Ergo that the decision to cut off aid for 150,000 people was made without consulting the refugee community.

She said those who had been cut off included the most vulnerable, including the disabled and sick.

"The people who have been cut off from aid are those who have no other source of income, and we are the ones who are in charge of the camps," she said.

"The people who are most in need have been left behind. People are suffering. What will the children's stomachs be like if they eat dinner tonight but nothing tomorrow? We ask donors and aid agencies to come and help these people. I am worried that people will die of hunger and famine."

The aid cuts come at a time when the cost of living and inflation have been rising since 2020. With little to no access to employment opportunities, aid is the only source of income for many refugees.

Dadaab camps, established in 1991, currently host over 400,000 refugees.

Kenya Uses U.S.-Funded Antiterrorism Courts for Political Crackdown

Young people who took to the streets to protest corruption and poor job prospects could face decades in maximum-security prison under a set of laws set up to combat al Qaeda to combat al Qaeda[4]

By Caroline Kimeu

NAIROBI, Kenya—The Kenyan government is using special antiterrorism courts—established with U.S. money to combat al Qaeda—to threaten political dissidents with decades in prison.

Prosecutors have charged 75 Kenyans with terrorism in recent weeks, the majority for allegedly destroying government property during street demonstrations against President William Ruto.

The charges raise the possibility that dissidents, most in their early 20s, could find themselves in maximum-security prisons for decades after allegedly participating in protests against high taxes, poor job prospects and rampant public corruption. Defense lawyers say none of the accused has a known criminal record or connections to designated terrorist groups.

"Applying terrorism charges even where you believe individuals have burned down buildings or committed robbery is excessive," said Irungu Houghton, head of Amnesty International's Kenya office.

Kenya is one of the closest U.S. allies in Africa, winning favor from Washington for deploying troops to neighboring Somalia to fight al-Shabaab, one of the world's most-virulent al Qaeda affiliates, and sending police across the world to battle gangs in Haiti.

[4] This article was originally published in the Wall Street Journal on September 8, 2025: https://www.wsj.com/world/africa/terrorism-court-kenya-protesters-7349e793?gaa_at=eafs&gaa_n=ASWzDAjGqfC-Z0y7M46j0xe0vZpZFQKniIj4sPI96Ah17Oce7eIv4LWGISI0&gaa_ts=68bf82fa&gaa_sig=BNzC-cfZ-V3_MvJADzFaw7eXTPNcBasiS8nbZxNbJ1Y0SZDy54Hz9dD2uzM3Ct_c29L5IWgAW-OFcF1pO9ROSQ%3D%3D.

Multinational soldiers participate in a training exercise held by the U.S. Africa Command in Kenya earlier this year. PHOTO: THOMAS MUKOYA/REUTERS

The U.S. helped Kenya establish the antiterrorism courts five years ago, after a series of al Qaeda-linked attacks shook the East African country, from the truck-bombing of the U.S. Embassy in 1998 to the massacres of shoppers at the Westgate Mall in 2013 and of students at Garissa University two years later.

The U.S. provided training for judges, prosecutors and investigators to better identify and convict terrorists. That same year, the U.S. funded a Kenyan counterterrorism force, training officers in techniques similar to those used by U.S. agencies, including how to uncover terror networks, monitor and question suspects, secure crime-scene evidence and track terror financing.

In recent weeks, U.S. diplomats have raised concerns with Kenyan authorities that Ruto is misusing the courts to crush his critics, according to an American official. U.S., British, European and United Nations officials met privately with human-rights advocates in Nairobi in July to discuss the government crackdown.

The director of public prosecutions said in a recent statement that destroying government and private property constitutes a terrorist act when it disrupts essential services and aims to cause fear among the public or the government. The prosecutor's office added that early investigations indicated the attacks on government property were premeditated.

A Ruto spokesperson didn't respond to requests for comment.

The terrorism charges are the latest in a series of ever-sharper government responses to more than a year of youth-led demonstrations.

The Gen Z protests, as they're known here, began in opposition to tax hikes, but have come to reflect anger about youth unemployment and the theft of public monies by government officials.

Antigovernment protesters in Nairobi's central business district last year. PHOTO: KC CHENG FOR WSJ

Just 10% of Kenyan workers have formal jobs, meaning millions, especially young people, are scratching out a living on the edges of the economy, according to the World Bank. Roughly one in three Kenyans lives below the poverty line.

Kenya ranks in the bottom third among 180 countries in the corruption perceptions index assembled by Transparency International, the nonprofit watchdog. Kenyans are faced with graft at all levels of government, from traffic police demanding a roadside payoff to the hard-to-explain wealth of top officials.

The heavy-handed reaction of security forces to the protests—jail-cell beatings, drive-by abductions and outright killings—has intensified the protesters' fury.

More than 120 people were killed during demonstrations over the past year. In one recent incident filmed by a bystander and widely circulated among Kenyans, police shot a Nairobi street vendor in the head at point-blank range, apparently unprovoked.

Human-right groups accuse the government of hiring provocateurs—known locally as goons—to infiltrate protests and discredit demonstrators to justify the violent reaction. Goons, the activists say, looted, set fires and assaulted passersby while police stood aside.

Defense lawyers predict prosecutors will struggle to prove terrorism in protest-related cases, but say the charges could be damaging even if eventually dropped. "Within that time, they will have terrorized young people and sent a message to those at home that if you have a different opinion, we will come for you," said Njeri Maina, a parliamentarian and lawyer representing the protesters. Maina says many defendants have been traumatized during detention in maximum-security prisons.

A National Police Service spokesperson declined requests for comment.

Officials have said harsh measures are necessary to prevent chaos and economic sabotage. Protests in 2023 cost Kenya some $23 million a day in infrastructure damage and lost sales, according to the Kenya Private Sector Alliance.

Meanwhile, Kenya and its U.S.-funded antiterrorism courts continue to face the threat from Islamist extremist groups. Some 60 civilians and security officers were killed last year in al-Shabaab attacks along Kenya's borders with Somalia, according to the Nairobi-based Center for Human Rights and Policy Studies, a nonprofit research group.

U.S. commandos are stationed at a base at Manda Bay, Kenya, where they work with local counterparts fighting al-Shabaab.

Kenya's repression of dissent has raised concerns in Washington. Sen. Jim Risch (R., Idaho), chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, has proposed a review of Kenya's designation as a major non-NATO U.S. ally, the only sub-Saharan Africa country to receive the status, which offers security benefits.

"Kenya's security forces are accused of abduction, torture and even cross-border kidnappings," Risch said in a statement. "We must be sure our assistance isn't enabling these activities and assess whether these abuses mark a breakdown of institutions we rely on as partners."

The U.S.-funded antiterrorism courts, located near a maximum-security prison to reduce the risks of transporting suspects, handle Kenya's most high-profile terrorism prosecutions. In June a judge there sentenced two men to 30 years each for aiding a lethal 2019 al-Shabaab attack on a Nairobi hotel-office complex. One American, Jason Spindler, was among the 22 killed in the attack, and Washington saw the convictions as validation of its long-term strategy of reinforcing Kenya's judicial system.

Now, to the dismay of rights groups, the courts are prosecuting young protesters.

Among them is 25-year old Sharon Nyairo, a junior chef at a Nairobi hotel, who says she lives paycheck-to-paycheck supporting herself and her mother.

When demonstrations spread around the country on June 25, Nyairo says she found herself unable to get to work, due to roadblocks and a public-transport shutdown.

So, angry about corruption and police excesses, she says she joined friends protesting in Kikuyu, a lush town on the outskirts of the capital. They chanted and dodged tear gas.

That evening, after leaving the protests, she went out for food and found herself confronted by a police officer patrolling the area. He gave her a pointed look, she says, and addressed her brusquely in Swahili: "You're a Gen Z—come here."

He ordered her into one of the two police trucks behind him, both packed with young people.

Authorities accused Nyairo and two-dozen others in Kikuyu of raiding and torching government offices in the area, according to court documents. Within weeks, she found herself in a maximum-security prison, battling terrorism charges.

"It was mental torture," Nyairo told The Wall Street Journal. She recalled spending the first nights sleeping on cold floors of police holding cells. Officers then moved her to a high-security facility, where she was unnerved by the routine strip searches, and stunned to be placed in the same block as convicted murderers.

Prison guards hinted she should get used to life there, given the charges she was facing, she says. At court appearances she would dissolve into tears.

Nyairo's mother says her daughter had no prior run-ins with police or even her teachers. "We fear for her, not knowing how this case will end," her mother said.

A spokesperson for the prosecutor's office said it couldn't comment on cases currently before the courts.

An investigator with the terrorism unit revealed a widespread reluctance among his colleagues to proceed with the charges. "You definitely want to associate terrorism charges with serious terrorists," said the investigator, adding that he believes the charges, while legal, are disproportionate.

Lawyers say many of the accused come from poor families, who often travel long distances for their children's cases and cannot afford legal assistance or bail. Kenya's antiterrorism law allows the government to detain people for up to a year before even being charged.

"The fact that the courts are entertaining these cases is a failure of justice," said lawyer Andrew Muge, who represents dozens of the defendants.

Initially, courts set protest-related bail at between $1,500 and $2,300, a colossal sum for most Kenyan families. Lawyers and relatives appealed, however, and the courts dropped the demand to less than $400.

A public crowdfunding campaign raised bail money, but the kitty quickly ran dry, leaving many defendants stuck in high-security prisons awaiting trial.

Those convicted would generally face 30-year sentences.

U.S. agencies declined to comment on the recent events. However, a State Department spokesperson said the U.S. had documented human-rights concerns related to protests last year, including reports of unjust arrests and detentions. The spokesperson added that these issues "will remain a part of our diplomatic discussions." The U.S. Embassy in Kenya declined to comment.

The most-recent round of protests hit after a teacher and blogger, 31-year-old Albert Ojwang, died in police custody.

Mourners carry the casket with the body of a blogger and teacher Albert Ojwang, who died in police custody earlier this year. PHOTO: EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

A high-ranking police officer had accused Ojwang of publishing a critical post about him, and, on June 7, police seized Ojwang from his home in Homa Bay, a town in western Kenya. Officers took him to a local precinct before transferring him to a police station more than 200 miles away in Nairobi. His father followed behind, boarding an overnight bus to the capital, and carrying the family's land title deed to post bond. By the time he had reached Nairobi in the wee hours of the morning, Albert was dead.

At first, police said Ojwang died after hitting his own head against the cell wall.

After an autopsy revealed head and body injuries consistent with an assault, and signs of a struggle, authorities admitted he had died at the hands of police. The police station commander, two junior officers and three civilian detainees face murder charges.

Maina, the lawmaker and defense lawyer, says she plans to introduce legislation amending antiterror laws to prevent their misuse. The laws, she said, are "so wide and vague that you can charge for someone breathing in a manner that you do not like."

Mwau Katungwa, a 28-year-old student and part-time construction worker, says he attended a June protest in Matuu, a town in eastern Kenya, but left when it began to turn violent. He was arrested after helping two friends who had been wounded by gunfire.

"Should I have left them to die?" he asked in an interview.

"I'm not a terrorist," he said.

Last month, Ruto ordered unspecified compensation for civilians and security forces killed or injured during protests.

But the president shows no sign of giving into protesters' demands, especially from those calling for his resignation. He accuses such critics of illegally plotting his ouster.

Ruto publicly ordered police to aim for the legs of any protester vandalizing businesses. One of his top aides openly encouraged police officers to "shoot to kill" during demonstrations, later backtracking in the face of public outrage.

A police officer who publicly challenged the shoot-to-kill directives was transferred to a remote station. The officer, Hiram Kimathi, says he hasn't been paid for two months and suspects he has been suspended, but hasn't received formal communication.

"If you come out and say that what the government is doing is totally unconstitutional, you will find yourself in hot soup," said Kimathi, who recently joined a movement against unlawful police conduct, alongside two former security officers.

Kenyan activist and protest mobilizer Boniface Mwangi, 42, was arrested at his home to face charges of facilitating terrorism. He says officers searched his home without a warrant, as is sometimes allowed under the antiterror laws, before taking him to a police station.

Amid condemnation from the public and human-rights groups, authorities dropped the terror charges and instead charged him with unlawful possession of ammunition. Officials said they had seized three tear-gas canisters and a blank rifle round during their searches of his home and office.

"This is a fear offensive," Mwangi said. "The government is ruining the lives of young Kenyans."

Refugees in Kenya impacted by food aid cuts; WFP rolls out new system[5]

By Al Jazeera Staff

The World Food Programme (WFP) has said it will need to drastically cut rations to refugees in Kenya due to reductions in global aid, including major funding cuts from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Residents of the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps were beginning to feel the impact of food aid cuts on Monday as the WFP implemented a new assistance system there in which certain groups are prioritised over others.

The WFP said aid is being cut by 60 percent for the most vulnerable groups, including pregnant women and disabled people, and by 80 percent for refugees with some kind of income.

The two camps host nearly 800,000 people fleeing conflict and drought in Somalia and South Sudan, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

"WFP's operations supporting refugees in Kenya are under immense strain," Baimankay Sankoh, WFP's deputy country director in Kenya, said in May. "With available resources stretched to their limits, we have had to make the difficult decision to again reduce food assistance. This will have a serious impact on vulnerable refugees, increasing the risk of hunger and malnutrition."

"There has been a lot of tension in the last couple of weeks or so," Al Jazeera's Catherine Soi said, reporting from Kakuma.

"People were very angry about what WFP is calling the priority food distribution, where some people will not get food at all and others are going to get a small fraction of the food."

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[5] This article was originally published in AlJazeera on August 11, 2025: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/11/refugees-in-kenya-impacted-by-food-aid-cuts-wfp-rolls-out-new-system.

These tensions boiled over, triggering protests last week, which left one person dead and several others injured, said Soi, adding that WFP officials she spoke with said the aid cuts from organisations like USAID meant they have had to make “very difficult decisions about who gets to eat and who doesn’t”.

Refugees are now assessed based on their needs, rather than their status, said Chica. “We need to look at them separately and differently and see how best we can channel the system so that it provides.”

The impact of these cuts is severe amid concerns over malnutrition. The Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate among refugee children and pregnant or breastfeeding women in Kenya is above 13 percent. A GAM rate over 10 percent is classed as a nutrition emergency.

“Already the food that is being issued is quite low, 40 percent of the recommended ration, and this is being shared by a bigger chunk of the population,” Chica said, adding that stocks will therefore not last as long as hoped.

This reduction took effect in February and is based on a daily recommended intake of 2,100kcal.

With its current resources dating from last year, WFP will only be able to provide assistance until December or January, said Chica.

WFP said in May that $44m was required to provide full rations and restore cash assistance for all refugees just through August.

Kenya's deepening ties with China ruffle feathers in the U.S.[6]

By Solomon Ekanem

Kenya has dismissed US concerns over its growing ties with China, affirming its strong US partnership while pursuing a foreign policy based on mutual benefit and sovereignty.

In a formal response to the U.S. Senate, Nairobi clarified that it is broadening its global relations to advance national interests, not abandoning traditional allies.

These accusations surfaced during a U.S. Senate hearing led by Senator Jim Risch, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who criticized Kenya's foreign policy under President William Ruto, particularly its growing engagement with China.

Speaking on May 13 during the hearing titled '*East Africa & The Horn: At A Turning Point or Breaking Point?*', Risch said, "*Just last month, President Ruto declared that Kenya, a major non-NATO ally, and China are 'co-architects of a new world order'. That's not just alignment to China; it's allegiance.*"

He added, "*Relying on leaders who embrace Beijing so openly is an error. It's time to reassess our relationship with Kenya and others who forge tight bonds with China.*"

Risch's concerns reflect unease over Kenya's apparent pivot from Western alliances toward Beijing amid domestic unrest linked to tax hikes aimed at addressing its debt owed to China.

Kenya's response

In response to the growing allegations against Kenya, Nelson Koech, lawmaker and chairperson of the National Assembly's Defence, Foreign Affairs and Intelligence Committee, affirmed that the country is not shifting allegiance but advocating for broader global engagement.

"*President Ruto's reference to Kenya and China as 'co-architects of a new world order' must be viewed as an assertion of Africa's right to shape its future, not as a pivot in allegiance,*" Koech wrote in a letter to Senator Jim Risch on Monday.

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[6] This Article was originally published by Business Insider Africa on May 20, 2025:https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/lifestyle/kenyas-deepening-ties-with-china-ruffle-feathers-in-the-us/03z51tt

"*Kenya is calling for a more just* global system *— one where Africa contributes meaningfully to international governance and economic policy. This aspiration mirrors President Trump's own push for reform within global institutions*."

"*Your framing of Kenya's current foreign policy posture, particularly in relation to China, appears to overlook the depth, consistency and achievements of the US-Kenya partnership," Koech added. "I believe it is necessary to remind ourselves of the broader and richer context of this relationship*." Koech added.

Ruto's interest in China

The U.S. criticism follows President William Ruto's recent state visit to China, the first by an African leader this year.

At a public lecture at Peking University in Beijing, Ruto called for a fairer global system, saying, *"Kenya and China are not merely trading partners. They are co-architects of a new world order, one that is fair, inclusive and sustainable."*

He added, *"Let us measure our success, not in GDP growth or in trade volumes, but in how many lives we uplift and how much dignity we restore."*

During the four-day visit, Ruto met with Chinese President Xi Jinping, where they elevated Kenya-China relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Chinese Envoy to Kenya, Ambassador Guo highlighted that Ruto was the first African leader invited for a state visit following the 2024 FOCAC summit.

The two countries agreed to implement FOCAC outcomes and align China's Belt and Road Initiative with Kenya's Vision 2030.

They also signed 20 cooperation agreements across sectors, including extending the Standard Gauge Railway to the Ugandan border to boost regional connectivity.

China's Exports to Africa Are Soaring as Trade to U.S. Plunges[7]

By Daisuke Wakabayashi and Musinguzi Blanshe

China has racked up a $60 billion trade surplus with Africa so far in 2025, nearly surpassing last year's total, as Chinese companies redirect trade to the region while President Trump's tariffs crimp the flow of goods into the United States.

Through August, China exported $141 billion worth of goods and services to Africa, while importing $81 billion, according to data released by the Chinese government on Monday. The widening trade imbalance with Africa stems from surging exports of Chinese-made batteries, solar panels, electric vehicles and industrial equipment.

The swell in exports to Africa, along with record volumes of goods sold to Southeast Asia and Latin America, underscores the resilience of Chinese manufacturers in finding new markets for the products their factories continue to churn out in enormous quantities.

China has long been the biggest trading partner for the region. But the flow of Chinese-made goods has never been more important as the trade war with the United States rages on and the growth of China's domestic economy slows. In August, China's exports to the United States plunged 33 percent while those to Africa grew 26 percent.

The boom in trade to Africa is apparent on the streets of Kampala, Uganda's capital city. In a bustling neighborhood full of electronics shops, most of the solar panels crowding the interior of nearly every storefront had one thing in common. They were made in China.

One shop owner, Mwiine Joseph, said Chinese solar panels had edged out rival offerings from Europe and India over the last decade. He estimated that nearly 99 percent of the solar brands on offer were made in China. At the end of the day, the products from China could not be beaten on price.

"I only look for cheap solar to sell if I am to compete with others in the market," said Mr. Mwiine, 38. "This is what the Chinese are giving us."

It was not just the solar panels. Nearly everything in the small and crowded electronics shop, from lightbulbs to generators, was also made in China.

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[7] This Article was Originally Published by the New York Times on September 8, 2025: https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/08/business/china-exports-africa.html?create-password=email&auth=create-password-email

For more than a decade, China has invested heavily in building infrastructure throughout the continent as part of its Belt and Road Initiative. The projects have deepened Beijing's influence across Africa, creating business opportunities for Chinese companies and providing access to valuable raw materials.

This year, the Trump administration has gutted foreign aid to Africa, leaving a host of health and development initiatives in limbo. It also targeted many African countries with tariffs, including a 30 percent duty on goods from South Africa.

Mr. Trump initially threatened a 50 percent tariff on imports from Lesotho, forcing the textile-dependent country to declare a national state of disaster. The rate was reduced to 15 percent, which is still expected to hurt Lesotho. It was among nearly two dozen African countries that had sent certain products to the United States without any import taxes under a law passed by Congress in 2000.

As the United States pulls back from Africa, China is presenting itself as an economic counterbalance. In June, Beijing said it would waive nearly all tariffs for 53 African countries. China was sending a message: It was committed to nurturing a fruitful, mutually beneficial relationship with Africa.

Xinhua, China's main state-run news agency, claimed in an editorial in January that China had created more than one million jobs in Africa in the last three years, while helping the region build roads, railways, bridges and ports over the previous quarter-century.

What Beijing portrays as a marriage of convenience is most apparent in the solar energy sector. Although China dominates all aspects of the industry, Chinese solar companies are struggling to survive, plagued by cutthroat competition and overproduction that has driven down prices and eroded profitability. However, plummeting prices have spurred a solar energy boom in Africa, where there is a desperate need for energy.

As a result, solar is "taking off" in Africa, according to Ember, an energy tracking group. Solar panel imports from China rose 60 percent in the last 12 months, and 20 African countries imported a record amount over that period, Ember said.

In Uganda, many Chinese solar manufacturers have established distribution offices in Kampala, allowing retailers to obtain products quickly and avoid the hassle of importing them from China.

Walter Cuccu, managing director of W. Water Works, a water and solar energy installation company, said Chinese solar companies were prevalent in Uganda and were setting up branches across the continent. He said more than eight Chinese companies had distribution centers in the city.

He said the companies were competing aggressively with one another, driving down prices. He estimated that solar panel prices had fallen 40 percent over the last 12 months.

Mr. Cuccu said European competitors were not investing in the sector in Africa like the Chinese firms.

"They will discover when it's too late that the Chinese have already taken over," he said.

It's not just clean energy. The surge in Chinese exports to meet Africa's industrial needs is staggering. In the first five months of the year, steel shipments to Africa rose nearly 30 percent. Deliveries for Chinese agriculture, construction and shipbuilding machinery all rose more than 40 percent. In addition, electric motors and generator exports rose more than 50 percent, according to China's most recent customs data.

For consumer products, the gains are equally eye-opening. Chinese exports of automobiles rose 67 percent in the first five months of 2025, including a doubling of shipments in May alone. China already dominates other key sectors: Four of Africa's five biggest smartphone brands are Chinese, with Huawei and Xiaomi tallying the biggest market share gains this year.

For years, African leaders have expressed concern about what they perceive as a lopsided relationship with Beijing, with China devouring Africa's natural resources while flooding the market with its manufactured goods.

The deluge of Chinese exports puts African countries in a hard spot, threatening to undermine their efforts to develop high-value industries of their own. Yet policymakers feel they must stay in China's favor, said David Omojomolo, Africa economist for Capital Economics.

"China is really the only game in town," he said.

How the US and China Are Fighting for Africa's Vital Resources[8]

By Amir Daftari

Africa's vast mineral wealth is reshaping global power dynamics in the 21st century, sparking a new geopolitical contest between China and the United States.

While Beijing has long held a dominant position in trade across the continent, the emerging fight for control over resources crucial to electric vehicles, renewable energy and defense systems signals a high-stakes shift.

The scramble for these raw materials is more than an economic rivalry; it's a contest for technological leadership and strategic autonomy in a rapidly changing world.

Africa holds nearly 30 percent of the world's proven reserves of minerals like cobalt, lithium and rare earth elements. As global demand surges—expected to increase anywhere from two to 10 times by 2050—the continent's resource wealth is emerging as a linchpin for global technological and economic futures.

This shift elevates Africa from a supplier of raw materials to a central player in the strategic competition between global powers.

China's economic footprint in Africa has expanded dramatically over the past two decades. The country's investments in infrastructure, from railways to ports, have cemented strong trade ties.

According to Visual Capitalist, almost all African countries now conduct more trade with China than with the U.S. This dominance is clear, with China's trade volume in Africa vastly outpacing that of the U.S., setting the context for an intensifying rivalry across multiple economic fronts.
In 2003, China was the top trading partner for 18 African countries—just 35 percent of the continent. Two decades later, that number has surged: by 2023, 52 out of 54 African nations (97 percent) traded more with China than with the United States.

In 2024, China-Africa trade reached $295 billion, a 6 percent increase from the previous year.

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[8] This article was originally published by News Week on August, 6th 2025: https://www.newsweek.com/2025/08/22/how-us-china-are-fighting-africas-vital-resources-2108635.html

While China leads in overall trade, the competition over critical minerals has emerged as a pivotal front in U.S.-China tensions. These minerals are vital for strategic technologies critical to economic and national security.

Afshin Molavi, senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, told *Newsweek*: "Africa sits at the fulcrum of the 21st-century resource economy. The challenge lies in ensuring that this mineral wealth translates into broad-based development. The current global push for green technologies offers a new window to rewrite that dynamic."

Beijing's Strategy

China's approach has been intense and long-term. Although Chinese firms account for less than 10 percent of Africa's total mining output, according to Eric Olander, editor-in-chief of multimedia initiative The China-Global South Project, its influence is outsized in key sectors.

The Chinese mining presence in Africa is largely concentrated in a few select areas like Guinea, Zambia, DR Congo and Zimbabwe," Olander told *Newsweek*. These are precisely the regions rich in the minerals powering the global energy and technological transition.

What makes China's grip formidable is its dominance in refining and processing. Even when raw materials are mined outside of China, as much as 60-80 percent of global refining capacity—especially for cobalt, lithium and rare earths—takes place in China. This allows Beijing to control global supply chains.

Molavi noted that "these resources have become more than commodities; they are now strategic assets," adding that China's model of vertically integrated mineral control gives it a structural advantage over Western rivals.

The U.S., meanwhile, has largely been absent from Africa's mining landscape.

Olander said: "The U.S. mining presence in Africa is minuscule compared to what China is doing, so it's not really accurate to frame this as a competition. That's not to say that U.S. mining companies won't eventually make their way into these markets, they just aren't there now in any meaningful way.

He added that Washington has recognized the strategic imperative but has yet to match rhetoric with action.

"The Trump administration is amplifying the need to break the current U.S. dependence on Chinese critical mineral supply chains, as Biden did as well, and that includes building up both extractive and refining capacities in places like Africa. The problem, at least for now, is that the U.S. is a lot more talk than action," Olander said, citing risk aversion and weak price incentives as deterrents for U.S. firms.

Washington's Policy Shift

That's where the Trump-brokered peace deal between the DRC and Rwanda enters the picture. Signed in June, the agreement aims to stabilize eastern Congo, where vital mineral resources are located.
President Donald Trump linked diplomacy directly to resource access, saying: "We're getting, for the United States, a lot of the mineral rights from the Congo as part of it."

The deal signals a notable shift in U.S. policy, linking peace-building efforts directly with strategic resource access.

On July 9, President Trump hosted a summit at the White House with five African leaders—from Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania and Senegal—to discuss expanding economic ties and countering China's growing influence on the continent.

Capturing Africa's perspective, Gabonese President Brice Oligui Nguema stated: "We are not poor countries. We are rich countries when it comes to raw materials. But we need partners to support us and help us develop those resources with win-win partnerships."

The peace deal between Rwanda and the DRC marks the beginning of a new geopolitical chapter in Africa's mineral-rich heartland. As the U.S. seeks to reassert its influence and China defends its trade and strategic foothold, the contest is expected to intensify.

With African nations in a rare position of leverage, the outcome will depend not only on foreign investment but also on the political will of local leaders to demand transparency, value addition, and long-term benefits for their people.

West and Central Africa: More Than 15 Million Expected Cases of Acute Malnutrition in 2020[9]

By World Food Program USA

Conflict and armed violence have led to massive population displacements and drastically limited access to basic social services, leading child malnutrition to increase to unprecedented levels. The coronavirus disease is exacerbating fragile contexts in West and Central Africa, such as in the Sahel region across Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal, which were already stricken with food insecurity and malnutrition.

> *Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 4.5 million cases were anticipated to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2020, in these 6 countries. Today, with growing insecurity and COVID-19, that number has jumped to almost 5.4 million.*

"Children suffering from severe acute malnutrition are at higher risk of COVID-19-related complications. Whereas, good nutrition for children, starting from their early days, protects them against illnesses and infections, and supports their recovery when they become ill," said Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa. "Ensuring the continuity of preventive and lifesaving health and nutrition services, building shock-responsive social protection systems, protecting livelihoods and supporting families' access to water, hygiene and healthy food are critical for child survival and long-term development."

Several factors threaten the nutritional status of children under five in West and Central Africa. These include:

- household food insecurity
- poor maternal nutrition and infant feeding practices

[9] This article was originally published by the World Food Program USA on July 17, 2020:https://www.wfpusa.org/news/west-central-africa-15-million-cases-acute-malnutrition/

- conflicts and armed violence
- population displacement
- high levels of childhood illnesses and water-borne diseases such as diarrhea, fragile health systems
- poor access to clean water and sanitation
- chronic poverty

Adding to these malnutrition aggravating factors, COVID-19 pandemic containment measures have led to disruptions in food production and distribution, in health and humanitarian supply chains, as well as a slow-down of economic activities. The pandemic has had indirect negative impacts on food systems, households' income and food security, and the provision of treatment against malnutrition. This makes it more difficult for populations to maintain healthy diets, optimal infant and young child feeding practices, and hinders their access to essential nutrition services.

> *"Thousands of families will be unable to provide their children with the nutritious food needed for their proper growth and development," said Chris Nikoi, U.N. World Food Programme Regional Director for West and Central Africa. "We must work together to improve access to nutritious foods and ensure that there are strong preventive actions that protect children from falling into the vicious trap of malnutrition and sickness."*

The U.N. World Food Programme and UNICEF are working with governments and partners to ensure the continuation of essential services. Together, they deliver an integrated package of care focused on the prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition and empower communities for the provision of basic services.

In northern Mali, for example, the U.N. World Food Programme and UNICEF are joining their efforts and resources to treat and prevent maternal and child malnutrition and reinforce good feeding practices. This includes screening of children for malnutrition. The screening is part of an initiative that promotes early detection of malnutrition in children by mothers and families, using a Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) screening tape. In addition, it allows for the referral of moderate and severe acute malnutrition cases to health facilities, supported by both agencies. Prevention activities include sensitization sessions on infant and young child feeding practices, supported by UNICEF and complemented by the provision of vouchers to women to exchange for nutritious foods available in the market, facilitated by the U.N. World Food Programme.

From 'aid trap' to 'brutal' cuts: African leaders confront a new reality[10]

By Ayenat Mersie

Facing historic donor pullbacks, African leaders call the cuts "brutal" but say they may be the wake-up call needed to break dependency.

Internally displaced persons wait to receive food at a distribution point in Jowhar, HirShabelle state of Somalia in June 2021. Photo by: AMISOM

Official development assistance is in freefall. Major donors such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States all cut their aid budget recently, and plan to cut further in 2025. It's a historic moment: For the first time in decades, all four are pulling back at the same time, leaving many developing countries facing steep declines in support.

The pain will be felt unevenly, but sub-Saharan Africa is in the bullseye. Countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have long been

[10] This article was originally published by Devex on July 8th, 2025: https://www.devex.com/news/from-aid-trap-to-brutal-cuts-african-leaders-confront-a-new-reality-110307.

among the largest aid recipients. And with USAID, once the world's biggest aid agency, now dismantled, longstanding channels of assistance are breaking down even further.
The way the U.S. aid reductions were delivered — abruptly, with little coordination with national governments or implementing partners and NGOs — was undeniably brutal. But it's also sparking a different conversation — one that's surprisingly pragmatic. While many in the aid industry reacted to the cuts with alarm, some African leaders and analysts saw a silver lining: A chance, however painful, to break free of old dependencies and push governments to finally set their own priorities.

Former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta captured that mood with candid remarks back in January at a regional health summit in Mombasa.

"I saw some people the other day, crying — 'Oh, I don't know, Trump has removed money,'" he said through chuckles. "Why are you crying? It's not your government, it's not your country. He has no reason to give you anything. You don't pay taxes in America! He is appealing to his people. This is a wakeup call for you to say: 'OK, what are we going to do to help ourselves?'"

The crowd's laughter and applause suggested this wasn't an unpopular view. Across the region, many leaders and analysts said the cuts are forcing a long-overdue reckoning.

There's growing agreement that the status quo wasn't sustainable, and that the aid crisis might finally push countries and donors alike to rethink how development is financed and who should take the lead.

The aid-dependence trap

One theme comes up again and again in conversations about the cuts: Aid has arguably done good, but after decades of massive spending, have the results really matched expectations? And to what extent have countries become dependent — ceding sovereignty over their own priorities in the process?

Development aid expanded rapidly in the 1960s as newly independent African states sought support to build infrastructure, health systems, and economies, with donors and former colonial powers formalizing large-scale programs and partnerships.

"You know, the whole point of independence struggle here is to be able to charter one's course in terms of planning and management, finance, and all of that," January Makamba, a Tanzanian member of Parliament for Bumbuli constituency, told Devex.

"But immediately after independence, there came a new thing called development partnership, which led to global development. Which became its own monster industry," he explained.

But dependence on aid, Makamba said, has created a situation "in which decision making in terms of priorities, in terms of planning, are more or less outsourced. You had people on the continent that felt that — yes, we got independence, but really we still are not able to charter our own course."

This sentiment is echoed in Somalia, one of the world's most aid-dependent states: In 2023, it received $1.8 billion in ODA compared to its gross national income of $10.4 billion, which gave it a 17.6% ODA percentage to GNI — the highest in a recent Devex analysis.

"There has been an aid trap — a perpetual cycle of project after project, where rather than solving the root causes of the problem, there's only a surface solution," Abdihakim Ainte, a senior adviser to Somalia's interior minister, told Devex.

"We've been caught in this trap, where we have been waiting and dependent on money after money. And the more money we receive, the more pervasive our addiction becomes."

"It has in many ways denigrated our people into this trap. It's very much like an opium," he said.

Long-term gains

This dependency and outsourcing of what should be core government functions has ultimately weakened institutions, experts argue.

"You have entire bureaucracies whose activities have been entirely outsourced to foreign actors. Health sectors. I think Malawi would have to be the worst example. It's where the entire country almost seems to run on foreign aid," said Ebenezer Obadare, senior fellow for Africa studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. About 54% of Malawi's health care budget comes from foreign donors.

"And it's always with this expectation that, OK, the next years and the next five years, next seven years, things are going to wind down and these countries can pick the baton and do this thing for themselves. And that never happens. That's wrong."

Still, experts and policymakers warn against imagining an easy fix. While the aid model has created deep dependency, they argue that sharp, sudden reductions of ODA — and the abrupt closure of an institution such as USAID — comes at a high cost.

“To see such a gung-ho, almost happy heroic decimation of USAID and staff and money overnight, it was a shock,” said Makamba. “It was brutal.”

“There will be short-term pain, but in the long run, it will discipline us to really reevaluate and rethink how we work,” said Ainte.

Makamba put it this way: “There'll be pain. But we think it's a necessary pain. I think it's a pain, not death pain, but birth pain.”

So what happens next?

There’s no shortage of lofty declarations that these aid cuts could be good in the long term — forcing hard choices and sparking reforms. But what about right now? How will African countries fill the gap? Where will the money come from?

Governments are tackling that question in different ways.

Immediately after USAID’s shutdown, for example, the Nigerian government announced it would absorb health workers previously funded by the agency — the U.S. in 2023 provided around one-fifth of Nigeria’s health budget. But the fate of health workers in other countries whose health systems relied on USAID funding is less clear.

Some argue governments can cover more than they claim — even for critical needs such as HIV treatment, much of which was funded by the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR.

“When you look at the cost of ARVs and we look at some of our expenditures here and you say we can manage,” said Makamba.

Still, governments need reliable resources to replace the aid that is used to fund so many basic needs. Some are scrambling for short-term stopgaps while also looking for ways to strengthen long-term financing.

In Somalia, officials are looking to Gulf countries like Qatar and Saudi Arabia for immediate support, while emphasizing the need for longer-term solutions such as diversifying revenue sources, reforming the tax system, and building a more self-sustaining economy, Ainte said.

This conversation about domestic resource mobilization has become increasingly urgent in speeches by finance ministers around the continent.

Uganda's finance minister a few weeks ago introduced the 2025-2026 budget. Compared to 2024/2025, it places a much stronger emphasis on domestic resource mobilization and includes a more clearly delineated strategy for achieving it. This includes broadening the tax base, eliminating corruption, and combating cross-border smuggling.

Other countries are looking at filling the gap head-on through targeted legislation. In Ethiopia, for example, lawmakers in March introduced a new tax aimed at channeling revenue into an Ethiopian Disaster Risk Response Fund to support projects that had relied on USAID funding.

Whether similar measures will be politically feasible elsewhere remains to be seen. In places such as Kenya, where tax hikes last year fueled intense youth protests, pushing through new taxes may be far more difficult.

This scramble for alternatives was a major theme at the African Development Bank's annual meetings in May, where the African Economic Outlook report argued that closing the Sustainable Development Goals financing gap is feasible if countries can curb losses from illicit financial flows, profit-shifting, and corruption, estimated at $90 billion, $275 billion and $148 billion (about 25% of gross domestic product) annually, respectively — far less than ODA.

Another major topic was remittances, which already outstrip foreign aid. The report and panel discussions repeatedly raised the question of how governments can better capture and leverage these flows to fund development. Ideas included securitizing remittances to unlock larger sums of financing and even the possibility of introducing a diaspora income tax.

But even as countries look for new resources, many insist that real change will require structural reforms. A key focus is debt — specifically, the high cost of borrowing driven by flawed credit assessments.

“There's a massive rating bias that exists. And there is a massive and skewed risk assessment and profiling. So we end up taking a necessarily costly debt,” said Makamba.

This issue has become a central theme in development discussions. A recent Devex opinion piece by three AfDB presidential candidates — including Sidi Ould Tah, who later emerged as the winner — framed it bluntly:

“African nations are being punished by a global financial system that systematically overprices the risk of investing in their economies. The result: Governments are paying up to five times more to borrow from capital markets than they would through concessional financing. For many, the choice is stark — repay creditors or invest in schools, hospitals, and clean water.”

The authors argued that the international community has a crucial role to play in lowering Africa’s borrowing costs. They call on the Group of 20 leading economies and development banks to fix biased risk perceptions in credit ratings, expand credit guarantees to attract private capital, reform global financial regulations that discourage investment in Africa, and support African governments in strengthening local financial systems.

‘Trade not aid’

Some also point to the promise — and limits — of trade as a path forward. The Trump administration, for example, has recently started to promote its vision of “trade, not aid” for Africa. But critics say it’s not so simple in practice.

Ghana, for example, is the world’s second-largest producer of cocoa, yet almost all of what it exports remains raw beans, with the value added elsewhere. At the AfDB meetings, Ghana President John Mahama highlighted the challenges to local processing:

“We can increase processing overnight, but you have non-tariff barriers in exporting into some of the markets. Unless they bring a processor from outside, from Europe, who comes and sets up a processing plant. That's why sometimes you notice that the world economic order is rigged against Africa.”

And even if trade barriers are removed, there’s no guarantee countries can immediately take advantage.

“Trade requires that you have something to sell,” said Makamba. “If say, you give Togo tariff-free everything to the United States, or Madagascar, will they use it? Of course not.

Because we don't have anything to sell," Makamba said. Effective trade partnerships require countries to be productive, competitive, and able to manufacture products that appeal to global consumers.

"Otherwise, it's still going to be primary goods, just as it's been since colonial times," Makamba said.

Industrial policy is clearly something African governments themselves control — and many experts argue it should have been a higher priority. But even that failure, they say, is closely linked to broader governance challenges and the way aid has sometimes enabled poor accountability.

Obadare argued that development aid can end up entrenching authoritarian rule by making it harder to hold governments accountable.

Critics say aid has too often become an end in itself rather than a path to true development. Once people become invested in the aid industry, they stop asking whether it's actually building the institutions and capacity it promised to, he said.

"The fact that none of that appears to have happened after 40, 50 years has created a lot of disaffection," Obadare said.

SITE VISITS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

Site Visit	*Kentegra Biotechnology Pyrethrum Processing Facility and Local Farm*
Site Visit	*International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi (CGIAR)*

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Site Visit	*Dadaab Refugee Camp - Ifo Camp*

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

Site Visit	*Global Fund School Visit*
Site Visit	*Maa Trust and Maa Beadwork Project*
Site Visit	*Maasai Mara Conservancy*

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Site Visit	*Maasai Mara Conservancy*

KENTEGRA BIOTECHNOLOGY PYRETHRUM PROCESSING FACILITY and LOCAL FARM

Background

Kentegra is an American, Nairobi-based biotechnology company specializing in the production of organic insecticide pyrethrum for home biocide, agricultural, and pharmaceutical pesticide markets.[11]

Once Kenya's third largest export, pyrethrum is a naturally occurring mixture of chemicals found in chrysanthemums that are extracted and refined into pale refined extract (PRE), an active ingredient used to formulate organic insecticides and pesticides. Kenya contributed more than 80% of the global supply with over 300,000 farmers growing the flowers, and it was a major supplier to the U.S. until the late 1990's.

Kentegra Pyrethrum Company Limited (Kentegra), a U.S. firm based in Kenya, is at the forefront of the pyrethrum revival.

Impact

The company has already contracted with more than 20,000 farmers, 46 percent of whom are women. The organization operates two nurseries in Nakuru County. Kentegra partners with the U.S. Development Finance Corporation.

[11] Photo from: https://nakuru.go.ke/2022/12/13/pyrethrum-farming-provides-a-more-sustainable-income-source-for-farmers-in-the-county/

INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK RESEARCH INSTITUTE, NAIROBI (CGIAR)

Background

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya and is co-hosted by the Government of Ethiopia through a Host Country Agreement with the Government of Kenya signed on 29 December 1994 and the Government of Ethiopia signed on 8 June 1995. It has 14 offices across Asia and Africa, employs some 700 staff and has an annual operating budget of about USD 80 million.

ILRI is a CGIAR research centre, a global research partnership for a food-secure future. CGIAR science is dedicated to reducing poverty, enhancing food and nutrition security, and improving natural resources and ecosystem services. Its research is carried out by 15 CGIAR centres in close collaboration with hundreds of partners, including national and regional research institutes, civil society organizations, academia, development organizations and the private sector.

Impact

Many of the most pressing global challenges today involve livestock. More than half a billion people in developing countries depend in whole or in part on farm animals for their livelihood.

Some 821 million people are undernourished, many of them because they lack the proteins and micronutrients most readily available in animal-sourced food. The prospects of zoonotic pandemics or of human-triggered climate change are real and growing.

ILRI's research contributes to:

- increased food production and productivity, providing safe, nutritious and affordable food to the world's poorest people;
- employment opportunities for millions of women and young people in the farming and other related sectors; and
- efficient use of scarce natural resources and develop livestock practices which foster climate change mitigation and adaption.[12]

[12] All Information from https://www.ilri.org/index.php/.

DADAAB REFUGEE CAMP - IFO CAMP

Background[13]

Dadaab Refugee Camp, located in eastern Kenya near the border with Somalia, was established in 1992 as a temporary location for Somalis fleeing from civil war. Over the years, famine and drought have forced growing numbers of Somalis to seek housing in Dadaab. Today, the camp is the world's largest, housing over 432,000 refugees and asylum seekers, supporting children and families from primarily Somalia.

The camp is managed by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with food support provided through the U.N.'s World Food Programme (WFP), water and sanitation by CARE, and health care by the Kenya Red Cross Society. The United States, in the past, has been a major contributor to UNHCR and WFP, providing over $800 million in assistance to refugees in Kenya, including Dadaab. More recently, however, American commitments to both organizations have declined significantly.

[13] Photo from https://www.unhcr.org/ke/about-us/where-we-work/dadaab-refugee-complex.

MAASAI MARA CONSERVANCY

Impact

Conservancies allow the people that live near national parks or reserves to combine their properties into large, protected areas for wildlife. These landowners can then earn income by leasing that land for safaris, lodges and other tourism activities. Communities in Maasai Mara have created 24 conservancies, protecting a total of 180,000 hectares (450,000 acres) — effectively doubling the total area of habitat for wildlife in the region, beyond the boundaries of nearby Maasai Mara National Reserve.

“It's significant income for families that have few other economic opportunities — around US$ 350 a month on average for a family. In Kenya, that's the equivalent of a graduate salary coming out of university,” said Elijah Toirai, Conservation International’s community engagement lead in Africa.[14]

Through Conservation Efforts:

- The acreage under community conservancies has increased significantly; there are many tens of thousands of acres now under conservancy in the Mara ecosystem.
- Wildlife densities (e.g. lions) are reportedly higher in many conservancies than inside the protected national reserve in some cases.
- Lease payments, tourism income, new jobs (rangers, staff, community enterprises) have improved livelihoods.

[14] https://www.conservation.org/blog/in-kenya-global-crisis-sparked-a-new-way-to-do-conservation.