

Risk of 2,000 new HIV infections a day after US aid freeze, UN says

By Olivia Le Poidevin

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GENEVA, March 24 (Reuters) - There could be 2,000 new HIV infections a day across the world and a ten-fold increase in related deaths if funding frozen by the United States is not restored or replaced, the United Nations AIDS agency said on Monday.

President Donald Trump put almost all U.S. foreign aid on hold upon taking office on January 20. Days later, the State Department said life-saving HIV work under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) would continue.

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But the disruption to health funding and the impact on broader services were having a devastating impact on people living with HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS executive director Winnie Byanyima told reporters in Geneva.

"This sudden withdrawal of US funding has been shutting down many clinics, laying off thousands of health workers ... All this means that we expect to see new infections rising. UNAIDS has estimated that we could see 2,000 new infections every day," she said.

Byanyima said the figures were based on UN modelling, but did not give more details on how the estimates had been reached.

A USAID flag flutters outside, as the USAID building sits closed to employees after a memo was issued advising agency personnel to work remotely, in Washington, D.C., U.S., February 3, 2025.... [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)  [Read more](#)

The U.S. delegation in Geneva did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Byanyima said that if funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) did not resume at the end of the 90-day pause, in April, or was not replaced by another government, "there will be, in the next four years, an additional 6.3 million AIDS-deaths."

According to the latest data, there were 600,000 AIDS-related deaths globally in 2023, she added. "So we're talking about a ten-fold increase."

The Trump administration has said the funding was frozen to ensure it was in line with his "America First" policy. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has dismissed concerns that Washington is ending foreign aid, saying waivers had been provided to life-saving services.

Trump's team has said it has saved American taxpayers tens of billions of dollars through rapid-fire moves to cancel contracts, fire workers and root out fraud and waste in the government, although they have offered little evidence to support that assertion.

UNAIDS, which coordinates the global response to preventing and treating HIV/AIDS, received \$50 million in core funding last year from the U.S., representing 35% of the UN agency's budget.

Reporting by Olivia Le Poidevin; Editing by Andrew Heavens Editing by Ludwig Burger and Andrew Heavens

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