# Funding cuts threaten to reverse global progress in HIV/AIDS fight



The global fight against AIDS faces a critical juncture as significant reductions in international funding threaten to reverse years of progress in HIV prevention, treatment, and care. The decision by major donor countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Belgium, to cut back their financial support has prompted warnings of a looming health crisis that could lead to millions of deaths and new infections if measures are not taken promptly.

Serge Douomong Yotta, Advocacy Director of Coalition PLUS, an anti-AIDS organisation, has highlighted the devastating potential consequences of these funding cuts in a detailed essay. According to UNAIDS estimates cited by Douomong Yotta, the dismantling of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Pepfar) and related funding reductions could result in as many as 6.3 million AIDS-related deaths by 2029. This figure is comparable to the combined death toll of numerous historical conflicts, including the Vietnam War, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Spanish Civil War. In addition, he points to projections of 8.9 million new HIV infections among adults, 370,000 children acquiring HIV, with half of these children expected not to survive past their second birthday without treatment.

The cessation of donor funding has already led to disruptions in HIV services worldwide. According to coverage by KFF Health News, thousands of health workers involved in HIV programmes have been lost in countries such as Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, and Mozambique. Diagnostic and treatment services for pregnant women and children have been interrupted in Zimbabwe, community outreach has been partially or completely halted in Angola and Eswatini, and Ukraine is expected to lose a significant portion of its HIV workforce. The same source notes that 86% of anti-AIDS programmes report that clients could be cut off from treatment within a month if the funding freeze is not reversed.

These cuts come at a time when many governments have instead prioritised increased military spending. Douomong Yotta notes that the UK plans a 40% reduction in international aid by 2027 while simultaneously increasing its defence budget by 2.6%. Similarly, France and Belgium are reducing aid by 37% and 25% respectively, even as NATO countries move to meet and exceed defence expenditure targets.

The call to action by Douomong Yotta focuses on imminent strategies to avert the potential disaster. He advocates for a strong replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, with a target of US$18 billion for 2026-2028 to save an estimated 23 million lives. However, he acknowledges that even this level of funding alone would not suffice to prevent the projected loss of life.

Looking beyond funding, Douomong Yotta stresses the importance of technology transfer and local capacity-building in the Global South, enabling countries to produce their own diagnostic tools, vaccines, and treatments. The upcoming pandemic treaty, to be proposed at the World Health Assembly, is seen as a pivotal opportunity to advance intellectual property waivers and facilitate such technology sharing.

Further, he discusses economic strategies such as debt relief under initiatives like the Lusaka Agenda, as well as innovative financing mechanisms including "soda taxes" or taxes on airline tickets in Africa to sustainably fund health interventions.

Douomong Yotta also emphasises that the fight against HIV should not be viewed through a purely commercial lens. He asserts, "An epidemic cannot be fought with business plans. It must be fought with strong, coordinated, long-term funded health systems, including community-based ones, based on science and solidarity." He points out that investments in HIV and related diseases generate significant economic returns, citing the Global Fund’s report that every dollar invested can yield up to $19 in health and economic benefits.

Addressing social issues, he urges against conflating the HIV crisis with debates on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) or dismissing advocacy efforts against homophobia, transphobia, and gender inequality as distractions. Instead, he calls for unity among all activist groups, from pan-African and feminist to environmental and LGBTIQ+ advocates, to collectively confront the health challenges.

This stark assessment underscores the precarious situation faced by millions of people living with HIV across Africa and the Global South. With funding cuts jeopardising vital services and international political will shifting towards other priorities, the coming years will be critical in determining whether the global community can maintain momentum in combating one of the most significant public health crises in recent history. The Global Fund’s upcoming replenishment conference in London in September 2025 is expected to be a key moment in mobilising resources for continued efforts against HIV/AIDS.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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