

Countries Are Already Experiencing Significant Health System Disruptions

Funding cuts threaten services for HIV, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections, family planning, maternal health and more.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) issues warning on health service disruptions reported in 70% of its surveyed country offices as a result of sudden suspensions and reductions in official development assistance (ODA) for health.

The findings, based on rapid WHO assessment of the fast-evolving situation, raise concern for potentially deeper and prolonged effects on health systems and services across the world, especially in vulnerable and fragile settings. This requires urgent action and international response.

The new rapid stock take conducted in March–April 2025 with 108 WHO country offices, primarily in low- and lower-middle-income countries, shows that many countries are working to increase or reallocate funding from domestic and alternative external sources to address gaps. However, up to 24% of WHO Country Office responses suggest budget cuts are already translating into increased out-of-pocket payments. The poor and vulnerable likely risk bearing the additional brunt of these impacts.

“These results paint a worrying picture about the impact of the sudden and unplanned cuts to aid on the health of millions of people,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. “Although these cuts are a shock, they are also driving an accelerated transition away from aid dependency to a more sustainable self-reliance, based on domestic resources. Many countries are asking for WHO’s support, and WHO is working with them to identify and tailor the most effective measures.”

The stock take reports provide an early snapshot and insights from WHO country offices that work closely with ministries of health, providing regular support on health systems policies and planning. The stock take aimed at identifying the urgent support countries need to avoid catastrophic impacts on the health of the populations and to guide monitoring of the rapidly evolving situation.

Key findings from the stock take show the following.

- The suspensions and reductions in ODA are disrupting all health system functions, with the most frequently reported impacts being on health emergency preparedness and response (70%), public health surveillance (66%), service provision (58%), humanitarian aid (56%), and the health and care workforce (54%).
- Health services are being disrupted across the board in at least one third of the responding countries, with high levels of disruptions reported in outbreak detection and response, malaria, HIV, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections, family planning, and maternal and child health services.
- The nature and scale of service disruptions are comparable to those observed during the peak periods of the COVID-19 pandemic in some settings.
- Critical shortages in the availability of medicines and health products are leaving one third of responding countries without commodities for major service areas.
- The pause in ODA has led to job losses for health and care workers in over half of responding countries, and significant disruptions to trainings.
- Information systems are particularly impacted as key health data collection is disrupted. Over 40% of countries experienced disruptions to key information systems, including collaborative surveillance and emergency systems, health management information systems, disease-specific reporting systems, lab information systems, and household/population surveys.
- Eighty-one of the 108 WHO country offices have expressed the need for support across a broad range of health areas, including innovative funding and resource mobilization, targeted technical assistance and support.

Given the rapidly evolving context, WHO will be monitoring the situation over time and will engage the global health community, including partners and donor agencies, to inform urgent response plans to mitigate deepening country impacts and enable greater sustainability.

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