



The Dismantling of USAID: Impacts on Global Aid and Canadian Nonprofits

Mary Barroll: Hi I'm Mary Barroll. In this episode of CharityVillage Connects we look at how recent cuts to USAID funding are creating ripple effects for Canadian charities working internationally. But first, here's a word from our podcast partner.

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SFX: Buzzing sound

Mary Barroll: Welcome to CharityVillage Connects. I'm your host Mary Barroll.

SFX: Hummingbird flying and tone

That's the sound of a Hummingbird pollinating our world and making it a better place. The Hummingbird is CharityVillage's logo because we strive – like the industrious Hummingbird – to make connections across the nonprofit sector and help make positive change.

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Mary Barroll: In this episode of CharityVillage Connects, we explore how the recent seismic shift in the world of global aid, with the elimination of USAID funding, has created giant ripple effects for Canadian charities working internationally. We look at where this important impact is being felt most, how organizations are adapting to it, and what this means for the Canada's future role in global development.

SFX: News buzz

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17hu684I2qA>

“U.S. President Trump calls for USAID to be shut down: ‘It’s absolutely obscene, dangerous, bad, very costly. I mean virtually every investment made is a con job.’ Current and former USAID officials tell ABC News all of their humanitarian work, all around the world has effectively stopped.”

News clip

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YP_ZMkkExhk

“Secretary of State Marco Rubio has ordered the termination of all remaining overseas employees of the US Agency of International Development USAID to complete the dismantling of the six- decade-old agency. Meanwhile, the House voted Thursday to approve President Trump's request to claw back \$8.3 billion in previously enacted funding for foreign assistance from USAID and the African Development Foundation. Oxfam America warns those cuts could cause 23 million children to lose access to education. While up to 95 million people could lose access to basic health care, potentially leading to over three million preventable deaths per year.

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RU8xVcVAq4s>

“Foreign aid agencies are calling on Canada to fill the gaps from the Trump administration's freeze on the US agency for International Development. So, the US distributed more than \$40 billion dollar through USAID in 2023, and since the freeze this year, \$40 million worth of projects co-funded by Canada have now been left in limbo. And while the freeze on USAID is sparking concerns of humanitarian crises, some experts are saying this is an opportunity for country like ours to step up and fill the void.”

Music

Mary Barroll: The Trump administration's sudden elimination of USAID funding, estimated at over \$63 billion, has created a global aid crisis and a massive funding void, threatening essential programs in health, education, food security, and disaster relief, worldwide. Canadian organizations are facing increased demand to fill the gap, exacerbated by the loss of funding for joint programs. Canadian nonprofits are

troubleshooting ways to continue their international support and they are urging the Canadian government to increase its foreign aid contributions, to meet urgent global needs and maintain Canada's international standing. In today's episode of CharityVillage Connects, we discuss these critical problems and hear insights from sector leaders, as we look for potential ways forward.

Mark Blumberg: USAID was providing about \$80 billion of funds around the world to many of the Global South. If that money is not there, there are potentially millions of people who are going to die. And that's obviously something that Canadians will try to fill in where they can. But obviously, the resources in Canada are limited.

Samantha Nutt: I don't think that there is any humanitarian organization in the world that has not experienced the direct or indirect fallout as a result of the USAID cuts. It wouldn't be overstating the case to say it has been absolutely catastrophic.

Lindsay Glassco: When it was dismantled, it literally was a true unraveling of the global safety net. This is also coming at a time when we're seeing an increase in crises. Just when communities need us the most, it feels a little bit like the world is turning away.

Lauren Ravon: The aid system will never look the same after this. Now at Oxfam, we have been very clear, these are not just funding cuts. This is cruel disregard for humanity from the richest country in the world. Cutting aid to those who most need it and who are most vulnerable is an act of deliberate cruelty.

Kate Higgins: We've seen this rise of authoritarianism, of anti-human rights movements, governments turning their back on democracy, rising polarization. We're at a time of really significant global disruption. And I think the dismantling of USAID is in some ways kind of a really concrete illustration, of this disruption of the global norms.

Jean-Marc Mangin: We know that kids are suffering, kids are dying as a result of these cuts. It's the Americans, first and foremost, in terms of the kind of savage way that it's being done. But there's no point lamenting the disappearance of the Old World. Unfortunately, it is gone. That system is vanishing in front of our own eyes, right now. So, the question is what's going to replace it?

Mary Barroll: The withdrawal of USAID represents an unprecedented disruption to the global humanitarian aid architecture. It has created an enormous vacuum in global funding. The integrated nature of the aid system means the cuts have far-reaching, direct and indirect consequences for operational delivery.

Dr. Samantha Nutt is founder and president of War Child Canada and for over two decades, she's worked with children and their families on the front lines of many of the world's major crises. According to Samantha Nutt, every humanitarian organization around the globe has been affected by the USAID cuts.

Samantha Nutt: I don't think that there is any humanitarian organization in the world that has not experienced the direct or indirect fallout as a result of the USAID cuts. USAID and the US State Department collectively were responsible for, on average, almost half of the humanitarian budget within those countries of operations. So, for example in Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, all areas in which we are operating and in Afghanistan, the withdrawal of that existing money, but also the pipeline of available funding, for organizations to be able to continue their work, all of these things are threatened.

That's in addition to the indirect effects because UN organizations receive USAID, USAID department money, and then subcontract out to groups like ours. United Nations humanitarian flights were heavily subsidized by USAID, World Food Program flights, in places like Sudan, Yemen, and elsewhere. Now the cost of those flights, the cost of being able to move your staff around, move goods around, engage in those humanitarian programs, all of those costs have gone way up and not to mention the availability of those services has declined. It wouldn't be overstating the case to say it has been absolutely catastrophic already, but we will see an even deepening catastrophe over the next few months to years.

Mary Barroll: Lauren Ravonne is the Executive Director of Oxfam Canada. Before joining Oxfam, she worked at the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development and on programs tackling gender-based violence and promoting sexual and reproductive rights with Planned Parenthood Global and the International Rescue Committee. She tells us how she's seen the USAID cuts affect both American and Canadian organizations working internationally.

Lauren Ravon: The aid system will never look the same after this. It's a catastrophic impact at every single level within the humanitarian community. Anything from support to independent journalists in countries where there's limited free press to human rights defenders working in exile. It's at every level, at the most emergency level, and then in terms of building more healthy, resilient, educated societies for the future. The entire aid and development world has been turned upside down. And to be honest, there's no one individual actor in the system that can make up for that level of funding cuts. Now at Oxfam, we have been very clear, these are not just funding cuts. This is cruel disregard for humanity from the richest country in the world. Cutting aid to those who most need it and who are most vulnerable is an act of deliberate cruelty.

Mary Barroll: Lauren Ravon says this deliberate act of cruelty is more than just the cutting of funding for USAID. It's more than the dismantling of an aid program – it's a wrecking ball. A catastrophic act of destruction intended to obliterate an interwoven global humanitarian aid system painstakingly built over decades of international cooperation.

Lauren Ravon: The aid system is one complex web where USAID was an intricate part

of it all. It's estimated that the American government was providing almost 40% of all aid globally, and that was in all pieces. So, that could be funding a Canadian organization that was working overseas. It could be funding a clinic in a local community. It could be funding the Ministry of Education in another country. So, it's at every level. It's within and of the government apparatus and social services that governments in developing countries could provide to their citizens. It could be cuts to UN agencies that were providing education for refugees, emergency response, even the planes that humanitarian workers use to get to remote emergency locations. You have cuts to civil society organizations that were receiving USAID but also, the infrastructure in the countries where we operate. Even an organization like Oxfam that continues to have funding to work and to provide, for example, water and sanitation services, in emergency context, even if we have the funding to do our work, if the local clinic in that community has been shut down, then community members, who were coming to us for water and sanitation services, are weakened because they don't have access to healthcare, their kids might no longer have access to vaccines. If the UN agencies that were on site, in those communities, to coordinate your humanitarian response has less capacity, then our operations are less effective, less coordinated. So, you pull at any string within the aid system, and you'll see USAID come up somewhere. And so, the consequences are at every level of this humanitarian ecosystem.

SFX: Sounds of wind blowing

Mary Barroll: Lindsay Glassco is CEO of Plan International Canada, a leading children's charity that is active in over 80 countries and supports and advances children's rights and equality, especially for girls. She corroborates this devastating destruction of the international aid system, observing that entire delivery chains have been dismantled and cooperative partnerships are collapsing.

Lindsay Glassco: USAID accounts for nearly half of global aid, which is about \$70 billion a year. So, when it was dismantled, it literally was not just a budget trim but a true unraveling of the global safety net. Most Canadian NGOs are not directly funded by USAID, so we weren't directly impacted, but none of us work in isolation. We co-deliver our programs with major multilateral partners like the World Food Program, large organizations like the Global Fund, and of course, a huge number of small local partners, in the countries where we operate.

Music

And for a global NGO like Plan, we're part of a federated model. So, our U.S. national office was directly impacted. And then the country offices, that are actually responsible for our operations that were funded by the U.S., were also impacted. So, at the end of the day, when all of our partners and our country offices are impacted, we're all affected. When they lose the funding, the gaps quickly appear. We see it in infrastructure; we're seeing entire delivery chains collapsing, from medical supplies being disrupted, to food rations being stopped, to research and data for early warning

systems that are used to predict food insecurity. None of these things are available. It's actually devastating, and I want to point out that this is also coming at a time when we're seeing an increase in crises.

So, we're seeing conflict, displacement, hunger, climate change, all converging, at a time when these cuts are taking place. And we're also seeing other donor countries reducing their aid, as they're reprioritizing defense spending, as part of the geopolitical environment right now. So, the contradiction is just heartbreaking. Just when communities need us the most, it feels a little bit like the world is turning away. As the U.S. has shown signs of being more isolationist and as other countries are also declining, their assistance and aid, we're seeing public sentiment starting to shift. We're seeing economic pressures affecting us domestically. So, Canadian donors as individuals are also pulling back. This sort of tectonic shift in global trade, security, public attitudes is just incredibly disruptive to the sector and it's pushing all of us, as NGOs in the sector, to have to adapt.

Mary Barroll: And there was very little time to adapt. The initial cut to USAID was announced on **January 20, 2025**, when President Trump issued an executive order freezing foreign assistance pending a review. A second announcement in March stated that 83% of USAID contracts would be canceled. The agency was formally closed on **July 2, 2025**.

SFX: News buzz

News clip

<https://youtu.be/3QwxBX3rTfM?si=r22Rv280j kf3AFvK>

“Reporters clapped as former USAID employees collected their belongings from the agency’s now closed Washington headquarters.”

Mary Barroll: According to Lindsay Glassco, by fall of 2025, more than one million people had already been deprived of essential food support. And that’s just one example of many, leading to even further devastation among the world’s most vulnerable populations.

Lindsay Glassco: I literally just returned from a trip to Uganda. And Uganda currently hosts nearly 2 million refugees. They're coming from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since the cuts, food support that has been provided to refugees is down by 60%. That's now leaving 1 million people excluded from food assistance. These are parents and families now just struggling to keep their children fed. And these are families that were already vulnerable. They were already refugees who had left conflict in South Sudan. And they're now just running out of options. And I spoke to mothers in a village last week, and they told me that they're having to make some just absolutely impossible choices that they never thought they'd have to make. They are marrying off their daughters. They're sending their boys to work in the mines, just to

survive. And something I've never heard of, in my line of work anyways, was suicides. Because, as refugees, they were already incredibly vulnerable. But now, with that sort of last line of assistance, which was food being cut, suicide rates are on the rise.

Mary Barroll: Cooperation Canada is a network of more than 100 Canadian organizations, strengthening Canada's global impact, by convening leaders, shaping policy and equipping organizations with the tools and expertise for impact. Cooperation Canada's CEO, Kate Higgins, describes how Canadian organizations are coping with the devastating fallout of the cuts.

Kate Higgins: These cuts were drastic. They were abrupt. They were unexpected, at such a fast and intense rate. And we are still seeing the impacts of these cuts of USAID and the dismantling of USAID on the ground. Oxfam Canada does a lot of work on global health and supporting women on sexual and reproductive health and rights. And they found in Malawi, for example, partners that they were working with on the ground, in clinics, pretty much overnight had to close their doors because they were also reliant on USAID funding. So, even though the Canadian funding was continuing, their partners on the ground lost such significant portions of their funding that they had to shut down and close the doors, leaving many, many women at risk.

Mary Barroll: Many Canadian international development projects depend directly or indirectly on USAID funded multilateral structures. Kate Higgins explains that the global humanitarian aid system is highly interconnected and tells us how Save the Children Canada's work with UNICEF was disrupted.

Kate Higgins: It's really interesting to think of the global humanitarian system as a system where a number of different types of organizations, types of funding streams, types of institutions contribute to that system. USAID and U.S. funding was a considerable portion of that global humanitarian system. So, when you take, in such an abrupt way, such a significant funding for that system, in some places the system really verges on collapse. One of Cooperation Canada's members, Save the Children Canada, was doing really important work with undernourished and malnourished children in Sudan and were working in close partnership with UNICEF. As UNICEF lost their money, those clinics had to close or they had to reduce significantly their capacity. World Vision Canada works closely with the World Food Program or the WFP, delivering emergency food aid to people that desperately, desperately need it. Their supply chains were really dismantled which meant that they weren't able to engage in those really important life-saving programs as they had been. And we heard stories of food going bad, rotting in warehouses because of this really significant disruption to the system.

SFX: News buzz

News clip

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/video/sudanese-women-children-face-brunt-usaid->

[cuts-amid-120848409](#)

“And now to the humanitarian crisis in Sudan where today marks three years, since the country’s civil war began. Tens of thousands have been killed in a power struggle between the Sudanese armed forces and the Rapid Support Forces or RSF. Violence intensified Friday when armed groups attacked a camp where about 500 000 people had taken shelter.”

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-BePOYREmQ>

“489 million dollars in food is rotting on the docks right now because of what Trump did to suspend USAID.”

Mary Barroll: Not only has the entire global aid system been significantly disrupted, Samanth Nutt describes the endless knock-on effects and real impacts of these cuts on the work on the ground. War Child Canada is world renowned for pioneering catch-up learning programs for children who’ve been displaced by war and violence in places like Uganda, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Samantha Nutt: They can catch up on their learning. And kids who've been out of school for seven or 10 years can then reintegrate into the appropriate grade level. So, kids who were being recruited by armed groups, who had lost out on years of schooling, who are now back in school, who are graduating, who are going on to become doctors and lawyers and artists and entrepreneurs and have aspirations to someday lead their countries.

In many cases, we were a partner organization working with the UN, working with other international and non-governmental organizations, whether it was Oxfam or World Vision or Save the Children. And so, we were all responsible for a little piece of it. Somebody might be responsible for the school, we were responsible for the catch-up learning, someone else was responsible for the training and the salaries of the teachers, making sure that the physical structures for children were safe. And then, all of a sudden because of the USAID cancellations, the teachers are no longer being paid, because that was through a USAID pipeline. And so, we're stuck going, how can we now run our program? Can we absorb this cost, or do we have to shut this down? And that's a very pronounced example and a very good one because, in some of our programming areas in Uganda, where we are one of the largest contributors to refugee education in Uganda, which is the largest refugee hosting country in Africa, with more than 1.5 million refugees, everyone is scrambling trying to figure out what to do.

In Afghanistan, we had a similar knockoff effect because we are a partner with UNFPA and we are doing youth skills training and development. And we had to close one of our youth centers for young boys. And those were kids who were learning tangible skills, who were getting an education, who were less vulnerable to recruitment by particularly

by hardline elements, through their participation in this kind of a program, very strong on the child protection front, as well. And we had to close one of those centers, which affects hundreds of children within that community, making them more vulnerable over the long term. And these are just a few examples.

SFX: News buzz

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ms9CqNL9UVY>

“The world’s most successful HIV AIDS program is now on life support. ‘The USAID program is really corrupt.’ ‘Over \$1 billion go to these organizations.’ ‘A vehicle to promote a radical agenda.’ But what does it mean in a place like Namibia where US-funded clinics, are the only lifeline for the country’s most vulnerable people?”

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CNmghoRM4A>

“Millions of dollars’ worth of US-funded contraceptives have been stuck over seas since February. About 20% of America’s contraceptive donation to Nigeria has been affected, now caught in a web of policy changes and halted logistics.”

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDaes9QyjpE>

USAID has been the biggest HIV funder and I would I would say that close to 20 million people are receiving ARVSR treatment testing services from the funds that USAID has been providing to us. We are now looking at an increase in infections, a decrease in suppression, we are looking at a decrease in care and also many people are now going to become infected.”

Mary Barroll: The wide gaps in global inequality will only be worsened by these massive cuts to aid having knock on effects that reduce equality and increase health risks among more and more people worldwide. Lauren Ravon explains.

Lauren Ravon: At every level, this will have consequences. And on inequality, if you think of areas where we've made great progress, for example, in the fight against HIV AIDS, because of medical advancements and access, in some of the poorest communities around the world. People could live with HIV AIDS and reduce transmission. When those clinics are closed, when people no longer have treatment, we'll see rates spike again. So, it's not only increasing inequality, but it's also just moving backwards, in the fight against inequality and the fight against poverty, that had been progressing in recent years, too slowly, but had been making progress. And now, as we look at global indicators, related to global health, gender equality rankings, all of these, we'll see a hit.

In Malawi, we are fortunate enough to continue having funding from the government of Canada to advance sexual and reproductive health programs. And yet our partner, that we worked with has seen half of their clinics closed, across the country, because of these funding cuts.

So, if you don't have a clinic for people to gather in, then you don't have a space to offer services to young people, contraceptive commodities, basic healthcare, for these communities. Even if we can continue operating, it's almost certain that we'll see a spike in early pregnancies, girls dropping out of schools, we'll see lowering education rates for girls. These are the real-world consequences. It means that an entire generation of girls will have less access to education than they could have otherwise, less economic opportunities, less control over their own bodies and lives. And that's just one country, one example.

Mary Barroll: Oxfam Canada's Lauren Ravon gives another example of a serious crisis only worsening due to the shrinking pool of international aid.

Lauren Ravon: Not too long ago, I was visiting Oxfam's operations on the border between Sudan and South Sudan, in a small town called Reng. Already then, pre-USAID cuts, people were living outside. This wasn't even a refugee camp. This was people living just outside, in the elements. Oxfam was providing latrines and water access, but there was hardly any infrastructure that you would usually see, in a displacement setting. And this was before the USAID cuts. My heart breaks imagining people living in Reng today that can only have gotten worse. And that's going to be the case for many emergencies that are all but forgotten, in terms of global media and international communities' attention.

Mary Barroll: The cuts to international aid will also have consequences on global security. Lindsay Glassco lays out how the loss of funding disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable populations, particularly girls and women.

Lindsay Glassco: We've been working in Northern Uganda for quite a while now, trying to get girls back into school. And the programs that have been in place, getting girls into school, such as school meals, clean water, safe classrooms. These are sort of the incentives that ensure that girls come to school. They're all now disappearing overnight, as a result of the cuts, and teachers are also disappearing. So, it's taking a toll. We know that, already, there are 122 million girls that are out of school. And, as a result of these cuts, we'll definitely see these numbers rise and unfortunately, we could see massive reversals of gains that have taken decades to build.

The programs that are most at risk are some of the most essential programs for women and girls, quite frankly, maternal care, HIV programs, contraception. I was horrified to hear that millions of condoms and contraceptives that were intended for low-income countries were actually left, purposefully, in warehouses and then later incinerated, at

also at a ridiculous cost. So, this is the proof that when politics get in the way, that women and girls are paying the price.

SFX: News buzz

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R78xSQLuOfI>

“The Trump administration is planning to destroy nearly 10 million dollars worth of women’s contraceptives. Yes, you heard that right. Contraceptives that could’ve helped millions of women across Sub-Saharan Africa are now headed straight to the incinerator. According to reports, the products are mostly long-lasting IUDs and birth control implants that are currently sitting in a warehouse in Guille, Belgium. And by the start of August, they’re scheduled to be burned in France. What’s more astonishing is that nearly \$9.7 million worth of taxpayer-funded contraceptives are set for flames at a cost of \$167,000.”

News clip

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/usaid-13m-contraceptives-1.7598749>

“If we look at the reasons why did the US government close down USAID and close down, the world’s biggest and strongest international family planning program, well, DOGE did it under the guise of better efficiencies and value for money, money for the American people, yet they had multiple offers to take this product off their hands at no extra charge to the American people and it would’ve gone into the original supply chain. And instead, they’ve turned that down and are willing to pay an extra 167 thousand dollars of taxpayers’ money to dispose of it. So, to me that sends a really clear signal that this is an ideological position. This is just another front on the war on women that we’re currently seeing, coming out of the U.S.”

Mary Barroll: The wasteful and senseless destruction of ten million dollars’ worth of contraceptives that could have helped so many women and girls, demonstrates that there’s a whole lot is more at stake, if both domestic and international gender equality initiatives are underfunded. It can lead to a reversal of decades of progress built on countless hours of work, across multiple international agencies, and hundreds of millions of taxpayer funds invested -- simply vanishing, sometimes literally tossed to the flames and extinguished in a puff of smoke. Lauren Ravon explains.

Lauren Ravon: If you weaken the organizations that support women and women’s rights in this country, that advocate for women’s rights, you will very quickly see a backsliding. And we’re already under threat around the world. Oxfam is an organization that works on many issues. We work on water and sanitation, economic development, food security. And yet, of all the issues that we work on, we are most systematically attacked by authoritarian regimes, by problematic media, for our work on gender equality. That is where we come under attack the most. And we are seeing this with our

partners as well. That work on gender equality is more and more difficult, more and more under threat. And we have made incredible progress in the last 50 years. And if you look at women's right to vote, to be represented in government, to control when and if they have children, their health. We've seen a reduction in child marriages. There has been so much progress. And in these gloomy times, it's good to remember that when people organize and when governments fund the right things, you can make progress. Just two years ago, our work with fantastic partner organizations in the Philippines led to the first law banning child marriage. And that is incredibly meaningful. If we stop funding organizations that hold governments to account, then we'll see a rollback. If authoritarian or anti-rights actors are given space to thrive, then those laws will not hold, those investments will not hold. It's of grave concern to us, both in Canada and internationally.

SFX: News buzz

News clip

<https://www.facebook.com/RepJayapal/videos/trump-and-elon-musk-are-closing-clinics-that-treat-survivors-of-sexual-assault-a/1876297786438475/>

“It was just 2019 when Donald Trump was President, signed the Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act, which required USAID to consider how their projects affect women and girls, and he actually said, by investing in women around the world, we’re investing in families, we’re investing in prosperity and we’re investing in peace. I agree with that statement that he said in 2019. But now, the Trump administration has actually discouraged officials from even using the word “gender.””

Mary Barroll: Lindsay Glassco reminds us that global gender equality is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic investment in global and national stability. She says by investing in the empowerment of women and girls globally, Canada strengthens the very foundations of global stability and economic growth that benefit Canadians at home.

Lindsay Glassco: When girls stay in school and earn a living, the research tells us that they make better decisions around their family, their community, businesses, families spend more, economies grow. We know from COVID that health issues don't stop at borders. We know that when there are huge humanitarian crises, there are migration consequences. We're not living in isolation in Canada. We're very interconnected and we don't talk about it. But we still talk about it as aid, like we're helping those people over there. And we don't talk about how it's actually investing in our own stability, here in Canada. And so, I think if we want to be globally connected or if we want to say competitive and opening those markets for trade, we need to think about what that means. It means investing in stability and global stability. That's important to us as Canadians.

Mary Barroll: Samantha Nutt says that global stability and security depend on how we

care for the world's most vulnerable people. She argues that investing in humanitarian aid, in projects like clean water and education, isn't just about being compassionate — it's smart policy that benefits everyone.

Samantha Nutt: None of us, no matter where we live in the world, are better served by people, no matter where they live, experiencing higher rates of violence, higher rates of poverty, higher rates of vulnerability to disease, to starvation, to malnutrition. Those represent, frankly, threats to all of us. And so, it is in everyone's best interest to ensure that the most vulnerable children in the world have the opportunity to have access to clean drinking water, to the food that they need, to the school that they need, the education that they need, to be able to grow into thriving, productive adults. The reality is it is really about ensuring that the world is more secure, more stable.

We see images of refugees and migrants coming across very dangerous borders or very dangerous waters. And the pressures that that puts on countries throughout the world, those migratory pressures, those economic pressures, we are all better served by a more stable, prosperous planet. And, and I mean, socially prosperous, not necessarily economically prosperous there, but this is where aid becomes incredibly important. And it's very short-sighted to then shortchange aid because we think that charity begins at home or we have to focus on our own issues here. We do not exist in a vacuum. We have to pay attention to what's going on, in other parts of the world.

Music

Mary Barroll: The shutting down of USAID won't only affect the world's most vulnerable. Worldwide, logistical operations and operational infrastructure and government services are also being affected by the USAID cuts, as Mark Blumberg, partner at the law firm Blumberg's Professional Corporation, explains.

Mark Blumberg: I was just down in Guatemala and when I was going through customs, I noticed it on the computer, it had a sticker saying that it's basically a part of a USAID thing. So, maintaining controls as to who leaves and comes into the country and maintaining controls over your borders was something that was paid for by the USAID. USAID is not only helping people who are poor. It's also helping governments run proper systems. So, there's no question that groups, governments and nonprofit organizations, around the world, are going to be really heavily impacted by the USAID cuts and also other countries.

Mary Barroll: And the USAID cuts are having another unexpected impact on the Canadian nonprofit sector. Mark Blumberg tells us that many American-based international organizations are setting up nonprofits in Canada to shelter their existing funding reserves and operate internationally more securely.

Mark Blumberg: What we've seen, over the last few months, is a very large number of American organizations that are setting up is a nonprofit here in Canada, a nonprofit

that's not a registered charity. Their focus is not on fundraising from Canada. Their focus is on many other things, including the safety of their reserves, the ability to conduct international activities.

We're talking about tens of thousands of nonprofits, in the U.S., that are worried that they're going to get shut down or undermined. The danger for a significant American charity, is that the government can come after them. But there's another danger, which is that the banks who are trying to curry favor, perhaps with the government, could, for example, freeze their accounts. And at that point, they have no access to money. Basically, their whole operations are going to shut down. And even if, in three or five years from now, those assets are no longer shut down, the organization is destroyed by that.

Mark Blumberg: So, groups are looking at what can they do. If you have \$100 million in the U.S. right now? Should you move maybe 50 million to grantees that you would give the money to and maybe some of it to Canadian affiliate, separate entity that doesn't have funds in the States, it basically just operates in Canada and outside of Canada, but not in the U.S. They're looking at whether they can move some of the reserves. There's been talk, forward and backwards, in terms of whether certain types of international activities might be banned from the U.S. For some groups, international is just a small part of what they do, but for some groups, it's the main thing that they're doing. And that could be very problematic. Whereas if they had a Canadian affiliate and it was resourced, that Canadian affiliate may be able to do certain activities. Some groups receive money from groups outside the U.S., and those groups may not be comfortable sending things to the U.S., in the future, worried that there will be a shutdown. So, having an entity outside of the U.S., like in Canada, could be helpful.

They're setting up an entity in Canada, an entity that can have bank accounts, investment accounts that can do transactions and things like that. Some are seeing it as sort of a safety net and maybe to have some greater flexibility.

Mary Barroll: As American nonprofits explore setting up Canadian ones as potential safety nets, Mark Blumberg also outlines how Canadian international development organizations, who have American partners, may themselves be affected by the massive loss of USAID funds.

Mark Blumberg: Many Canadian charities, their way of operating internationally is they work with, they hire, they give grants to, or they use direction and control intermediary arrangements with American organizations.

Those types of groups that are closely aligned with U.S. groups are going to have to do some real thinking. And it's not it's not a situation of trying to punish the U.S. groups or anything. It's just that even the U.S. groups may be saying, it might be better that the money not come to us, that it might go directly into the field and not come to the U.S. at all. So, those are some discussions that I know some groups are having about what's

going to happen. It's just probably going to get worse and worse is the fear. So, if you're giving money to U.S. groups, it's going to affect you. If you're getting money from U.S. groups, it may very well affect you. And if you're trying to get things done, in the U.S. itself, it may not be possible to get those things done in the U.S. So, all in all, groups that are working internationally, that have a strong nexus with the U.S. are going to have to do some thinking and planning around what could happen, right?

So Canadian groups are going to be trying to pick up the pieces doing the best they can but they're certainly not going to be making up for the amount of cuts and devastation that we're going to see.

SFX: News buzz

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-BePOYREmQ>

“From fighting drug trafficking and disease to providing education and funding human rights organizations, these were all roles fulfilled by the United States Agency for International Development or USAID, now shut by the Trump administration. And while thousands of projects around the world are brought to a halt, some say the discontinued aid offers an opportunity.”

Mary Barroll: Could this complete halt in U.S.-backed funding, in fact, be leveraged to transform the global aid system? And could Canada step up to fill that vacuum in leadership? This is an existential moment for global cooperation, and many Canadian nonprofit organizations have been urging the Canadian government to increase, or at the very least, maintain its foreign aid contributions. Mark Carney campaigned on promises not to cut international aid.

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOdPoZxWUkl>

“Mr. Carney, would you cut for an aid from the current ODA and financing levels and what is your broader vision for Canada when it comes to global development?’ ‘Okay. So the short answer is no. My government will not cut foreign aid and we will be releasing our platform soon.”

Mary Barroll: Cooperation Canada advocated for the Carney Liberals to hold the course.

Kate Higgins: It's really important for us to be clear and for us to understand and acknowledge publicly that our country is facing, in many ways, a number of different crises. At the same time, the Prime Minister during the election period did make a commitment that he will not cut aid. And what we are seeking to hold him to account for is that commitment. We do not expect Canada to fill the gaps left by USAID. Let us be

clear. But we as a country can do our part. We can make contributions. We can continue to look outwards rather than retreating inwards. And one of the ways that we can do that is for him to keep his promise to maintain the international aid budget in the upcoming budget.

Mary Barroll: That was then. This is now. Prime Minister Mark Carney did not keep his promise. The new federal budget, unveiled on November 4th, 2025, and voted into force later that month in Parliament, made significant cuts to foreign aid spending, bringing it back to pre-pandemic levels. The budget forecasts \$2.7 billion in cuts, over four years, and a progressive withdrawal of support to the International Development Research Centre, starting with \$11.4 million in the new fiscal year and rising to \$23.5 million annually, at the end of five years. In response to the announced cuts, a coalition of over 100 NGOs, led by Cooperation Canada and the Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health put out a statement expressing their concern over the government's decision to reduce Canada's International Assistance Envelope. They stated that "this marks a retreat from our global commitments, and breaks a promise made by Prime Minister Carney during the election campaign." And Cooperation Canada's CEO, Kate Higgins, responded to the cuts saying this: "It is clear that any savings resulting from cutting the international assistance budget will be short-lived. Cuts erode Canada's credibility with our global partners and blunt our capacity to shape outcomes that affect Canadians at home." Cooperation Canada and our members will continue to engage constructively with the government to reinforce that Canada's global leadership cannot be taken for granted and that our commitments must be met."

But, in addition to the government's role, what about the role of Canadian philanthropic organizations? The mandate of PFC or Philanthropic Foundations Canada is "to strengthen Canadian philanthropy— in all of its diversity and in its pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable world." As the Old-World order falls apart, could now be a moment for Canadian philanthropy to take a greater leadership role? With these questions in mind, we spoke to PFC's CEO, Jean-Marc Mangin, to hear his insight into the withdrawal by western democracies of international aid, that signals a seismic shift in the world order and system of global security.

Jean-Marc Mangin: It's the Americans, first and foremost, in terms of the kind of savage way that it's being done. But other bilateral donors have also cut back significantly on their overseas assistance budgets, such as the UK, Germany, Sweden and Canada. There's no point kind of lamenting the disappearance of the Old World. Unfortunately, it is gone. It's a system that's developed slowly after World War II, that took its maturity after the end of the Cold War, in the 1990s. But that system is vanishing in front of our own eyes, right now.

Sfx: News buzz

News clip

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11511224/federal-budget-2025-foreign-aid-cuts/>

“You know for decades, Canada’s foreign policy has relied on a certain number of premises. First, rules-based multilateral trading system. Secondly, collective security, anchored by NATO. Third, our enviable geography which has shielded us from distant conflicts while connecting us to the world’s largest and most dynamic economy, directly to the South. And we also had the expectation that the world would converge, over time, to free markets, open societies and democratic values. But now, the world is undergoing a series of fundamental shifts. New technologies have brought distant threats to our door. Power has become multi-polar. Authoritarianism is resurging. And consensus within many democracies, not all, but many democracies has fractured. These developments are also reducing the effectiveness of global institutions on which middle powers like Canada have long relied. And it’s happening fast. This isn’t a transition, it’s a rupture.”

Mary Barroll: That’s Prime Minister Mark Carney’s Budget speech in November 2025, reiterating this idea that we’re witnessing the end of a post-World War II – rules based world order, characterized, in part, by shared democratic values among Western countries, the use of soft power to achieve global security and a system of collaborative foreign aid programs binding them together in a mutually agreed effort to bring peace, lifesaving healthcare and education to people most vulnerable to terrorism, genocide and warfare. If this order is no longer, what will take its place? Jean-Marc Mangin has the same question.

Jean-Marc Mangin (01:25.483)

The question is what's going to replace it? Where's the niche for Canada? Where can we actually as a middle power, make a difference, given that the rules-based system, which is key to Canada's interests, is collapsing. I think this is an opportunity for Canada to shape that new system, that fits our global interests, for the emergence of a value-based and rule-based global system. To be part of a community of countries and organizations across the world that still believe that we’re all created equal and that we all deserve the dignity of life.

What is the Canadian niche, in terms of humanitarian assistance, do we have some capacity around refugees, around humanitarian assistance, around food aid? And on the development side, we know that moving forward, the key to any progress is going to be local mobilization of capital resources to achieve government goals. Canada has got a long-term experience in developing community foundations. Can we put that to work? In terms of helping the mobilization, in culturally appropriate ways, in the global South, through our volunteer sending agencies, through our community foundations, helping our partners to civil society develop the capacity to raise their own resources? How do we contribute to a culture of giving and philanthropy that makes sense, in their context?

Music

Mary Barroll: At this critical moment, it's important to remember that although the Federal Budget reduced international aid, Canada – unlike the United States – did not end all of its contributions to international support and development. And neither did its European and other like-minded allies. The future is far from certain, but Samantha Nutt sees an opportunity: as humanitarian aid faces increasing challenges on the global stage, Canada is uniquely positioned to step up and demonstrate true leadership.

Samantha Nutt: If Canada can, and if our own political leadership can, continue to hit hard around why we need foreign aid spending, why it's important, if we can continue to be an honest broker on the global stage and stay true to those principles of democratic development and good governance and human rights and humanitarian action, I think that we can really distinguish ourselves at a critical moment in human history. And I hope that that's possible. Unfortunately, a lot of the conversations that have been happening around war, particularly in the last couple of years, have been very angry and antagonistic and divisive. And that's the stuff that I'm very worried about. We should be able to at least unify around the principles of humanitarian action and the importance of providing help and relief to those who need it most in the world.

Mary Barroll: Samantha Nutt is concerned that the perception of the value of humanitarian action is eroding worldwide, and she points to several regions where this decline is already producing serious and dangerous consequences.

Samantha Nutt: Places that I'm worried about right now, certainly Afghanistan. We're still one of the largest organizations directly implementing in Afghanistan, largest Canadian organizations directly implementing. International attention has really drifted away from Afghanistan, particularly in the wake of the US troop withdrawal. And yet the needs are greater than ever. It is a country that is at extremely high risk of famine. There are also ISIS elements within Afghanistan, that we have to be very, mindful of. And a full collapse of Afghanistan, and a deepening humanitarian crisis will make it much easier for groups like ISIS to be able to get an even greater foothold in that corner of the world, which again, affects all of us. Then, there's the crisis in Sudan. It's very, very difficult right now to operate in Sudan, to be able to move around Sudan because the warring parties to this crisis have not been forced to be accountable to maintain any kind of humanitarian space. This is what we're seeing throughout the world. We're seeing the complete erosion of the idea of humanitarian action, its primacy, the importance of humanitarian space.

Mary Barroll: Lindsay Glassco agrees that Canada has a significant role to play in this moment. Plan International Canada, is working with others to advocate for continued investment in global aid.

Lindsay Glassco: Canada has long been a major player, in fact, kind of the moral compass in global development. I think that the leadership from Canada matters now more than ever. In fact, Canadians, when we think of ourselves, we're also known globally as very trusted partners, collaborators. So, it would be a shame, from my

perspective, if we did not step up to this occasion. Plan Canada is working very closely with Global Affairs Canada. We're having continuous discussions around what the priorities should be. We're also part of Sector Coalition, so there are a whole number of coalitions such as CanWatch, the Humanitarian Coalition, Cooperation Canada, and others. So, we're actively working with them to advocate for continued and necessary investment. And we're partnering with the private sector and philanthropic donors. I think there's a recognition that they could play a larger role. And I think that continued collaboration between government, NGOs, and business is needed now more than ever.

As a sector, we need to educate and engage Canadians on how aid works. It's important that we reframe aid for Canadians because they need to understand what's in it for them. It's their hard-earned tax dollars that are being spent and we know what drives political decision-making. So, if Canadians don't feel a need for aid, we can do all the advocacy in the world, and it won't go anywhere. So, for me, it's just really important that we stop framing aid as charity and we start, reminding people, it's not just about global solidarity, but it's actually Canada investing in stability, it's investing in trade, it's investing in our own security.

Mary Barroll: Kate Higgins says Cooperation Canada and its members dedicated to international aid have to do a better job of demonstrating how global aid is good for Canada and Canadians – that foreign aid is actually an investment in global security, human rights and democracy that ultimately pays dividends to our country.

Kate Higgins: Our job, as Canadian organizations who care about international cooperation, who care about international assistance, is to ensure that Canadians, Canadian communities, Canadian kids, but also Canadian politicians understand the impact that this work has around the world. We are absolutely nonpartisan in the way that we engage on these issues. We engage with politicians and elected officials across the range of the political spectrum, across many political parties. And it's really our job to demonstrate that this is a sound investment for Canada and that this aligns with our objective, as a country, around prosperity, around security, around human rights, around democracy. That's the hard work that we need to do. We continue to have conversations, across the aisle, with elected officials to ensure that they really understand and see the value of this investment. It's about two cents on every dollar, our investment in international assistance. It's a relatively small contribution that has a really significant impact.

Mary Barroll: Kate Higgins also believes that the federal government's position on trade and economic partnerships is extremely compatible with a continued investment in international assistance.

Kate Higgins: I think our Prime Minister has been clear on what his priorities are, for our country, and what some of his priorities are, from a foreign policy perspective, and that is around strengthening economic ties, trade relationships, and diversifying our

partnerships, as a country. And what we have been arguing, for a really long time, is that international cooperation, international assistance, is a really important tool in our toolbox. You have defense, you have trade, you have diplomacy, but you also have development. And it's really important that we continue to invest in the development pillar of our foreign policy table. It is a very powerful tool for us, as we seek to build alliances, build partnerships, strengthen a diversified set of partnerships, across the country. We know that there are huge trading opportunities for Canadian companies, for Canadian firms, for Canadian innovators in the developing world, in the global majority of our world. And I think investing in development is one way that we can really leverage some of the strengths of those markets and those partnerships.

Mary Barroll: For Kate Higgins, Canadian security, public health and economic interests are intertwined with global aid investments. She believes that international aid is a smart investment in global stability that directly benefits Canada.

Kate Higgins: Development and international assistance does play a role in supporting governments to provide services, to build infrastructure that enables an environment for trade and economic activity and opportunity. Canada is a very globally connected economy, country, population. And stability in the world is good for Canada.

There's very compelling research that shows that one dollar invested in conflict prevention can save 60 dollars in military intervention down the road. So those sorts of investments are really important. And it's in our interest. It's good for Canada. It's not only the right thing to do, but it's the smart thing for us to do. It's good for Canada to be engaging in and supporting a more stable world.

Mary Barroll: If spending on foreign aid, as Kate Higgins states, is good for Canada and it's good for the world, how can Canada show leadership in continued investment in global aid and consequently, increased global stability? PFC's Jean-Marc Mangin acknowledges that while the world is facing deep setbacks in global development and aid, there's definitely room to make a difference. The question remains exactly how.

Jean-Marc Mangin: Where can we actually make a difference? I do believe that we can step up into the challenge. My fear is that if you're too busy now you're going to miss the opportunities to shape the kind of system that makes sense for the long term. So, on one side is a massive retreat from where we were, not so long ago. We're going to see a falling back in the retreat on many of these universal goals that we've given ourselves as a global society. That's a moral, ethical tragedy and real people are suffering right now, likely to die, as a consequence of this.

So, I don't want to underestimate the impact of the cuts. We simply cannot replace that missing 63 billion dollars, but given the resources that we have now, given the potential for the mobilized local resources, where can we assist to have a more sustainable and perhaps a more just system emerging out of that? But we're going to go through a very choppy waters to get there. So, recognizing that the path is not clear and the path is

going to be difficult, but there's a path to be found.

On the humanitarian side, we can make a difference in the very targeted around refugees, around food security, but also around kind of local mobilization of resources for development. And wherever we can be supportive of these efforts, we will be, but we're not leading the charge.

Mary Barroll: Kate Higgins points to this being a moment of reckoning—and opportunity—where traditional models must give way to more agile, inclusive, and locally driven approaches.

Kate Higgins: I think it's really important to recognize that like any system, the global aid system needs to modernize and evolve and change. And prior to these USAID cuts, the global aid system and many of us who are part of it, including Cooperation Canada and our members, were thinking really hard about how do we need to modernize, how do we need to evolve and how do we need to change? These cuts are pushing us to make those changes even faster. So, there is an opportunity for us to really transform the way that we move resources. I also think this is an opportunity for us to rethink the global humanitarian and global multilateral system.

I and Cooperation Canada strongly believe in the importance of a multilateral system, but that system also needs to modernize and evolve and transform. I think be more nimble, more problem- and solution- focused, with more kind of creative and flexible coalitions rather than very heavy, cumbersome bureaucracies. We now need to think how can we evolve as a global aid system to really be more fit for purpose, in this moment and also into the future.

Mary Barroll: Rather than relying on any single source of support, Kate Higgins suggests that we see collaboration as the key driver of global progress. The idea is to build broad coalitions—linking governments, philanthropies, businesses, universities, and civil society—to pool their strengths and tackle complex, global challenges together.

Kate Higgins: One of the ways that we can do that is by having coalitions of diverse actors, whether it's some government funding, some philanthropic funding, some funding from Canadian organizations that is supported by the generosity of Canadians, the private sector, universities, really coming together and identifying a problem and really working hard together to contribute to seeking to solve that.

Mary Barroll: In addition to creating more efficient ways of working, what could increased public-private partnership and collaboration look like, in the humanitarian space? Samantha Nutt acknowledges the value of collaboration between public and private sectors in humanitarian work but stresses that such partnerships must protect the independence and integrity of the aid.

Samantha Nutt: I do see a role for greater collaboration between the public and the

private sectors and especially when it comes to the humanitarian space. Having said that, we also have to be very careful about the nature of those relationships. Humanitarian aid needs to exist in as independent a way as possible. All aid is inherently political. Who gets funded? Why'd they get funded? When did they get funded? How much did they get funded? Which crisis gets attention? These are all political calculations on some unavoidable level. It also has to do with who's lobbying government and who's getting attention and like all this kind of stuff is very natural, when it comes to the politicization of aid. But we also have to make sure that when we engage in those kinds of partnerships that they aren't coercive. You know we have had experiences in the past, for example, where you would see mining industry connecting in certain parts of the world because they were trying to acquire mining rights and so they were leveraging humanitarian spending, in order to be able to gain access.

You have to be careful when you're engaging in these kinds of collaborations that you're still able to meet that objective as an organization and that you're not allowing your own experience and your own expertise to be hijacked by some of these other special interests.

But I do think if you've got the right kinds of partnerships whether it's private philanthropy or corporate sector, who come to an organization and say, I'm really interested in your work, how can we be helpful? How can we work together to do something really important and innovative and lifesaving and life-changing? If you come at these questions with an open mind, you can accomplish extraordinary things and those can be very, very valuable partnerships.

Mary Barroll: Kate Higgins emphasizes the power of diverse, cross-sector partnerships in tackling global challenges. But she reminds us that these efforts exist within a larger global context, where addressing structural inequalities and upholding human rights and democracy remain critical levers for lasting impact.

Kate Higgins: More diverse partnerships is really important. And diversity, in terms of the types of funding sources, but also the types of partners. Ensuring we're engaging not only Canadian, but global, civil society, universities, governments, the private sector, I think, is a really exciting way of us all working. While all of these kinds of new or imaginative and creative ways of us thinking about how we deliver and engage in international assistance is absolutely critical, let's not forget the broader context within which these programs are operating. That is why things like addressing deep inequality in the international financial architecture is so important. That is why ensuring that Canada holds the line on human rights and democracy is important. So, these broader contextual issues that have such significant and direct impacts on people's lives are really important policy conversations and they're really important policy spaces where Canada has a lot to contribute and where we will continue to push the Canadian government to engage in.

Mary Barroll: When it comes to innovative ways of partnering and working, Lindsay

Glassco offers a few successful examples from Plan International Canada.

Lindsay Glassco: We have a really great project we called COSME. It stands for Conservation and Sustainable Management of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems. It's in Kenya. It is funded by Global Affairs Canada, but also very generous Canadian individual donors. And it's delivered by Plan Canada alongside a BC company called Cascadia Seaweed, as well as the Jane Goodall Institute. Together, these partners are basically helping women in Kenya turn seaweed farming into thriving small businesses that create income, they restore the ecosystem, and then they're also building resilience. So, to me, it's a great example of Canadian innovation, meeting local leadership. The ideas were developed locally. The governments come in, a number of different partners and fantastic global leadership. For me it's sort of the way of the future. Bringing in a variety of different partners at all different levels. It is what future development should look like. It's that entrepreneurship, climate action, gender equality, all working hand in hand.

We have another really interesting project in Ghana. Plans work with the World Bank, the government of Ghana, the Ministry of Education there, and a private investor who provides us with upfront working capital, which is then spent on identifying out-of-school children and enrolling them and providing quality support for children in underserved primary schools. And the way the Education Outcomes Fund model works is we're paid on the results. So, rather than getting an upfront grant, the funding only comes in once the results are produced. And those results are about enrolling girls in school, ensuring that they're learning and that they're graduating to the next level, versus the activity. So, it's not enough just to have them there. We only get paid when they graduate from one level to the next. That's what outcome-based funding looks like. It's real accountability for results. I think that's a fantastic way to move forward, when we're talking about, you know, the reduction of grant funding.

Mary Barroll: In another initiative making waves in the global aid world, last year the Slight Family Foundation announced a \$13 million donation, over two years, to support 13 Canadian-led or Canadian supported humanitarian organizations, intending to address some of the urgent gaps in global aid created by the cuts to USAID. Each of the 13 recipient organizations will receive \$1 million dollar, as part of this initiative, and War Child Canada is one of these 13 recipients. We asked Samantha Nutt what this gift means for her organization.

Samantha Nutt: This gift is everything. The Slate Family Foundation have always been very supportive of international humanitarian causes and in our organization as well. This is the third time that they have made this kind of significant contribution to international humanitarian organizations, which is very rare in the philanthropic space. Remember that less than 10% of Canadian donations each year go to support international humanitarian causes. Usually when you see announcements of this scale, they're usually going to support something at a university where someone's alma mater or a big hospital, something that has a direct impact here at home.

And so, to have a foundation and to have a philanthropist of this scale who is so committed to international humanitarian issues, that in and of itself is really important, but I think it also is very inspiring to other philanthropists and to general donors as well, because it is an endorsement of what we're doing. And so, when you have this kind of announcement, you draw attention to this important issue. You inspire others to step up and to give, to learn more.

I'm also hoping that in a political sense, this announcement has been a reminder that Canada does not have to follow the United States, that we do not have to engage in this kind of cynicism when it comes to humanitarian action and people who are suffering as a result of war and famine and violence and instability, in other corners of the world, that there are things that we can do, that we do have this Pearsonian tradition of caring about people, regardless of where they live in the world, of ensuring that children, especially, do not fall further and further behind and are not put at risk because of the geopolitical machinations of their governments and other armed groups. And I'm hoping that this kind of announcement is a reminder that we don't have to be American on this. We can be distinctly Canadian. We can do the right thing, and we can continue to prioritize aid as an important part of our global reputation and our global influence.

Mary Barroll: Given the example set by the Slight Family Foundation, I asked Jean-Marc Mangin, of Philanthropic Foundations Canada, what he thinks about Canadian private philanthropic foundations doing more to step up and fill the funding gap in international aid.

Jean-Marc Mangin: First, it's simply impossible to fill the gaps. The \$63 billion gaps, - the Canadian donations grant, all of them together, are about a bit more than \$10 billion a year. And most of it is for domestic issues. About 8% goes for international development. So, the math simply does not work. It's impossible for Canada to fill the gap. But you could be very targeted and make a difference. I think there are conversations, in that sense, but some very tough choices that are facing funders and also Canadian-based NGOs, like where do you continue, to even amplify some of the activities, and where do you need to stop? Because you don't have the resources to say yes, to even all of your current partners, because all of sudden, you've got 25, 30, 50% of your funding that's gone. So, you have to make some very tough choices. Because, in many cases, the largest funder was USAID. So, you're being asked to fill a part of the gap.

Even if your partner was not affected by the costs, the ecosystem is. So, the ability to reach their goals, whether it's elder education or food security, is at peril. So, to have truly a context approach, what makes most sense in Senegal, in Nepal, in specific national contexts, where can you actually make the best difference, both in the short and long term. So, that's the humanitarian app, but also the development app that I reconcile the two. And I think there's a possibility for Canada to do that, with civil society and government working. And I've yet to see that scale of long-term perspective come

to play. We've been so busy dealing with the threat to our economy coming from the South and tariffs and threats to our own sovereignty that the ability to think strategically, over the long term, still seems to be lacking. So, I'm concerned about that. We spend so much time about now. I can understand that you want to meet payroll and you want to fulfill your commitments to your partners. But we need more than a three-month or six-month viewpoint. Where we're going to be in five, 10, 15 years.

Mary Barroll: Jean-Marc Mangin tells me that foundation members are engaged in conversations about Canada's current role on the global stage and about how philanthropy might seize this opportunity to actively participate in designing a new, values-driven vision for Canada.

Jean-Marc Mangin: We've engaged kind of a series of roundtables with all members across the country, looking at the needs in Canada, needs globally, on and what we can activate in terms of granting, in terms of investment, helping our foundations members to say, where can we have the greatest impact at this moment? And the international piece is not at the core of our conversation, but it is part of our conversation. And Canada, we need friends globally. The other democracies, in Western Europe and Asia are also struggling. And these emerging democracies in Latin America and Asia and Africa, where we can still strengthen our links, and for Canada to be perceived as a champion of human rights, a champion for global civil society, and to be a haven for human rights defenders. There's a role that we can play or ask for some courage because it might not always be what the powers down South like to hear from us.

But it's important, I think, for Canada to have some courage and live up to our values and protect our interests, all at the same time. I think it's possible to do it. So, to my colleagues in this space, I think it's a space that asks for creativity and innovation and courage, but also collaboration with others.

Our previous generation did it, coming out of World War II, the generation of very young activists, in early 1960s that led to the current ecosystem that's collapsing. But it was built over a 60-year period, did deliver some achievement on human progress. It was far from perfect, now it's collapsing. So, what will replace it, that's still based on these universal values around human rights and justice, all of us deserve, are created equal and deserve a path to be full members of our respective societies. It's an opportunity to shape the future and we can't just kind of wrinkle our hands saying, my gosh, the world has turned so dark, well we have to create the light to find our way through the darkness.

Mary Barroll: Creating the light to find our way through the darkness ... As today's conversation makes clear, the global aid landscape is shifting—rapidly and unevenly. From warnings about the erosion of humanitarian values, to calls for modernization and locally led development, to reminders that courage and creativity must guide Canada's role in the world—each shift takes us closer to a crossroad. The systems built after World War II are straining under new pressures, and yet, within that uncertainty lies an

opportunity to rebuild something stronger: a model of aid that is collaborative, grounded in human rights, and driven by those closest to the challenges. For Canadian nonprofits, as well as players in the private and governmental sectors, the task ahead is not to lament the darkness—but to help create the light that leads the way through the darkness and forward into a brighter future. Here are some final words of advice, from each of our guests.

Mark Blumberg: My view would be the more you can try and avoid actually dealing with the U.S., if it's not necessary, the better. The way I see it is America, as we've known, is finished. Rule of law is being undermined on a daily basis in the U.S., it's just not a good situation and groups need to be careful.

Kate Higgins: Prior to these USAID cuts, the global aid system and many of us who are part of it were thinking really hard about how do we need to modernize, how do we need to evolve and how do we need to change? We need to see this as an opportunity to transform, to change, to shift resources and power to those communities, those people, those organizations, those civil society actors that are really on the front lines of those challenges but are also on the front lines of driving change. This is an opportunity for us to rethink the global humanitarian and global multilateral system.

Lindsay Glassco: We need to stop talking about aid as generosity or as charity. And we need to start seeing it as an investment, because it really is an investment and I call it resilience infrastructure. It's the infrastructure that keeps our shared world stable. It's the system that keeps girls safe, classrooms open, health clinics running. It's what keeps our markets more stable. Aid is an investment in building a future that works for everyone. It's not just about helping those poor people in that other part of the world. It really is an investment for all of us.

Jean-Marc Mangin: Canada can actually make a difference, on some of these questions, if it targets its resources, in the intelligent manner, to those of the most vulnerable and live up to values. And I think that the reputation of Canada and the position of Canada will rise as a result. I am hopeful, but the tough work is ahead of us.

Samantha Nutt: We can care about supporting local children's hospitals and we can care about supporting schools here at home. But we can also care about the lives of children who are facing the worst atrocities that exist in the world. We can do something about it. We don't need to succumb to cynicism. There are terrific organizations who are doing critical work on the ground. Find out more about them. Find out how you can get involved, whether you want to contribute as a donor, whether you want to help support, as a volunteer. There are always ways that you can do something. And the simple act of taking that first step, it changes your view of the world, and it changes your sense of what is possible.

Lauren Ravon: Something that does give me hope is that we're seeing more collaboration across sectors. The climate movement, women's rights and feminist

organizations, anti-poverty housing rights, organizations are working more together and understanding that our issues are very deeply interconnected. When we work in silos, we don't have the full force of our movements. And we've seen that organizing, coming together, in Canada recently, but around the world, as well. Better connecting the dots between economic justice and calling out extreme wealth concentration and issues of human rights, women's rights, LGBTQ rights. These are similar related struggles, and we need to bring them together. That gives me a lot of hope.

Mary Barroll: Thank you to all our guests for their keen insight and wise advice. This failure of the old, centralized U.S.-dominated model is forcing global change. Can something better emerge from this wreckage? Or are we too busy putting out the immediate fires to look five or 10 years down the road and actively invest in shaping future global cooperation? The choices Canada and other countries make right now will determine what the future looks like – and whether we'll stay in the darkness or light a path forward.

Theme music

Be sure to visit our website and our show notes for more information on the resources, reports and programs mentioned in this episode. If you'd like to hear more of what our guests have to say, check out our full video interviews on our website. CharityVillage is proud to be the Canadian source for nonprofit news, employment services, crowdfunding, e-learning, HR resources and tools, and so much more. Please take a moment to check out our website at charityvillage.com. We love to receive your feedback about our podcast and your ideas for stories you'd like to hear about, so please follow us, like and comment, wherever you get your podcasts.

On November 4th, 2025, the federal government released its budget. In our next episode of CharityVillage Connects, we explore what the new fiscal plan means for nonprofits and charities across Canada. Our guests will break down the key measures affecting funding, employment and social programs, and share insights on how organizations can prepare for the changes ahead. Tune in for timely analysis and practical takeaways to help you navigate the budget's impact with confidence. I'm Mary Barroll. Thanks for listening.

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