



Statement  
29 January 2025

### Leaving no-one behind? Trump's 'stop work' order on funding freeze aid is killing us

We are a group of sex workers and sex worker allies from 10 sex worker-led and sex work service organisations from Angola, Eswatini, Mozambique, South Africa, the UK, Zambia, Zimbabwe. We have gathered in Johannesburg to discuss programmatic work on the reduction of violence against sex workers and to build a more empowered and resilient sex worker movement that demands its rights.

On Tuesday, we woke up to the news that all PEPFAR-funded clinics for Key Populations will be closed by the end-of-business following the Trump Administration's 'stop work' order for existing foreign aid grants and contracts. Throughout the day we dealt with queries and fears from our colleagues within Key Population including sex workers, LGBTI community and people who use drugs. Some PEPFAR-funded organisations that employ our allies and colleagues have issued a silence order to staff, while others fear that speaking out could result in further US backlash and the cutting of funds.

Stories that have been shared with us include:

- In rural **Eswatini** where health services are completely dependent on PEPFAR, clinics have been closed and 4000 jobs have been suspended. This means that at least 8 000 sex workers will be without health services. Six people who were working for USAID in the US were deported back to Eswatini on Tuesday.
- In **Zimbabwe**, 25 000 health service providers were notified on Tuesday that their salaries have been paused.
- In **South Africa**, staff in PEPFAR supported clinic staff have been told not to come to work any more. All service-users were urged to go to the clinic to pick-up medication before close-of-business on Tuesday, as they will not be able to access their medication after that.
- In **Zambia**, 174 people were deported from the US back to Zambia
- In **Mozambique**, all Key Populations clinics funded by US funds have closed

This has created apprehension, distrust and fear for the close to [19 million people](#) in Africa on antiretroviral therapy supported by PEPFAR, and whose health and well-being are now at

risk. Key Population services are the most urgent: they are more vulnerable to infection of various diseases including HIV, and these infections are harder to mitigate.

The freezing of PEPFAR programmes makes a mockery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of “Ending AIDS” by 2030, and will undo the important progress made towards the UNAIDS 95-95-95 goals.

The Trump Administration Executive orders have placed global health at risk.

Therefore, we urgently call on:

1. The US government to immediately **rescind the funding freeze and ‘stop work’ order** to foreign aid programmes;
2. National governments **to provide stopgap health measures** to Key Populations and assure them of continuity of care, confidentiality, non-discrimination and respect for human rights;
3. National governments to ensure the **sustainability of health services** in the longer term. HIV and other essential health services should not be dependent on the whim of politicians or elections in the global north;
4. All health care users who are affected by the cessation of services and who require care and medication to **seek services at their local health care centres** and to take all possible measures not to default on their medication;
5. Humanitarian and non-profit organisations to **provide assistance** and to work with Key Population-led organisations to respond to where the need is the most urgent;
6. Pharmaceutical companies to **lower their prices for medicines** or to provide them at no cost to assist in this emergency response; and
7. Individuals and civil society organisations internationally to **stand in solidarity** with Key Populations and demand an end to the Trump Administration’s repressive measures.

This statement is issued by

1. Associação de direito das mulheres, Angola
2. Asijiki Coalition for the Decriminalisation of Sex Work South Africa
3. Asociacion de trabajadoras do Dexo Angola, Angola
4. AIDSfonds, he Netherlands
5. Sex Worker Advocacy and Resistance Movement, UK
6. Sex Worker Education & Advocacy Taskforce, South Africa
7. Sisonke National Movement, South Africa
8. Southern Africa Sex Workers Alliance, southern Africa
9. Springs of Life, Zimbabwe
10. Association Cubhahwa, Mozambique

We also call on all ally individuals and organisations to endorse this statement, by filling out this Form:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf4QFo1LNxCiskDK0MA7ktQ7AIFnWjOcUI3xfP\\_hmhY5W0r-ZQ/viewform?usp=preview](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf4QFo1LNxCiskDK0MA7ktQ7AIFnWjOcUI3xfP_hmhY5W0r-ZQ/viewform?usp=preview)