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Hampton-Piggs Peak Partnership Newsletter



Just days after taking office last month, U.S. President Donald Trump enacted a sweeping freeze on nearly all foreign assistance as part of his "America First" agenda. The abrupt cessation of humanitarian aid to Eswatini, including crucial funding for antiretroviral therapy (ART), has sent shockwaves through the country.

Eswatini, with over 215,000 people enrolled in ART, received the equivalent of about CAD 70 million per year in HIV/AIDS support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This assistance, vital to combating the nation's HIV/AIDS crisis, was suddenly halted.

On January 28, 2025, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued a waiver allowing some life-saving humanitarian aid to continue, including ART. However, the closure of USAID by President Trump and Elon Musk, head of the Department of Government Efficiency, has effectively severed most funding, leaving a gaping hole in vital services.

An HIV/AIDS activist in Eswatini put it bluntly: "This signals doomsday for us." As the country struggles with the highest HIV/AIDS incidence rate in the world, halting ART will almost certainly lead to a surge in new infections and increased deaths from AIDS.

But the consequences extend beyond healthcare. The Trump administration's decision has also disrupted funding to local NGOs in Eswatini that help pay school fees for high school students. January marks the start of a new school year, but while some students sponsored through the Piggs Peak Partnership are beginning their education, many others are being turned away. Mathi Mathunjwa, a local partner, shared his heartfelt gratitude: "On behalf of the seven

schools and surrounding communities, thank you to our sponsors for making it possible for our children, siblings, and grandchildren to attend high school for the very first time.”

Yet, Mathi’s words also highlight growing despair. “Our students are settling into their classes, ready to learn, but for others, the light has dimmed. Some kids were told there is no help coming. Young Heroes (an NGO previously funded by USAID) can no longer continue supporting these children. The disappointment on their faces is heartbreaking, and I share the pain of both the messenger and the receiver of such devastating news.”

Last week, I spoke via video call with three of our lead partners in Eswatini to hear firsthand about the impact of the U.S. funding withdrawal. As Mathi writes, this decision has ushered in a period of darkness for many. But the support of Canadians through our Partnership remains a beacon of hope. While many students face uncertainty, the 500 students we sponsor will continue their education. We rely solely on private donations - no government funding - and remain committed, with your help, to shining a light in the midst of these dark times.



The shockwaves of the US Administration's freeze on aid to other countries, including Eswatini, continue to reverberate throughout the nation. Our partners on the ground are witnessing the effects firsthand, as students who had relied on US funding are being sent home from school. TK Maseko shared the story of one student who "cries day and night because she needs an education". This student has been added to our waiting list for sponsorship by the Piggs Peak Partnership. TK tells us, "Her only hope is with us, as we are the only sponsor left."

In times like these, the words of Martin Luther King Jr. resonate deeply: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

These are indeed dark times in Eswatini, but we know the love and support of individual Canadians offer a ray of hope for students who have been left stranded by the US withdrawal. Your donations can help us cover school fees for many abandoned young people, restoring their access to education and a brighter future. Our burden is made lighter by the success stories we continue to witness through our work.

One such story is that of Sinenhlanhla Motsa, a 17-year-old girl who cares for her 5-year-old sister. TK shared her struggles: "Three years ago, Sinenhlanhla was forced to drop school because no one was going to pay for her school fees. Secondly, she was taking care of her sister. She was a maid for two of her rich neighbours, making money for their food and necessities"

"She put some money aside from another homestead she was doing washing for so that she could go back to school in 2024. But she didn't manage to pay for third term. This girl was going to school and taking the little one to a pre-school

paid by the government. She passed Form 2 and I wonder how she managed to pass with all this extra work as a maid and doing washing for the other homestead. During December school holidays she made enough money to finish up last year's fees."

"This year, Sinenhlanhla gave up because of the situation she is living under. She was quitting school. That's where I came in. I arranged with a Member of Parliament here to help take care of the little sister including breakfast, clothes and pre-school uniform. Then I told Sinenhlanhla she was selected by us to go back to Enkhaba High School for her Form 3. She still cares for her little sister but with no concern about necessities."

"We saved her future. This is the good work you are doing here. Thank you so much Canada."





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