

GLOBAL APPEAL UPDATE

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE



July 2025



Health and Hygiene session, Chad

Dear Friends and Partners,

The US government's decision to suspend foreign aid funds earlier this year has sent shockwaves around the world.

Those hit the hardest are the people we serve. It was a devastating decision, felt by the entire humanitarian sector. And it has been echoed by other governments, who have chosen to make similar divestments from international solidarity.

For JRS, it meant that 18 million dollars in annual funding were cut from one day to the next. These funds supported vital programmes serving some of the world's most vulnerable people: school lessons and end-of-year exams for displaced children in Chad; mental health support for Yazidi refugees in Iraq; basic needs in Uganda for families fleeing war in neighbouring countries.

As we navigate this new reality, one thing has become clearer than ever: we are not just a service provider. We are an organisation that walks with refugees. In times of crisis, we stand in unwavering solidarity with those forced to flee. Withdrawing dignity from one group today can lead to the same happening to all of us tomorrow.

We know a different world is possible, not because we imagine it, but because we see it every day in the small gestures of solidarity made by those we accompany. It is possible for everyone: for refugees, and also for ourselves. People ultimately do not want to live in a world of destruction, of non-recognition.

We thank you for your solidarity and support,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Michael Schöpf'.

Br Michael Schöpf SJ, JRS International Director

A GLOBAL CRISIS

In January, JRS received a notification from the US government that it would suspend funding to our projects in nine countries (Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, South Africa, South Sudan, Thailand and Uganda). This was part of a wider freeze of US foreign aid budgets that has affected the entire humanitarian sector and has been felt by vulnerable communities around the world. Meanwhile, other governments have also reduced their budgets for humanitarian and development work, further precipitating the situation.

The direct effects of these cuts in those nine countries have been devastating for our ability to support and accompany. The indirect effects have the potential to resonate even more widely. Over the past few months, major multilateral agencies such as UNHCR and WFP, as well as NGOs and implementing partners, have been forced to close offices, cut staff, slash budgets.

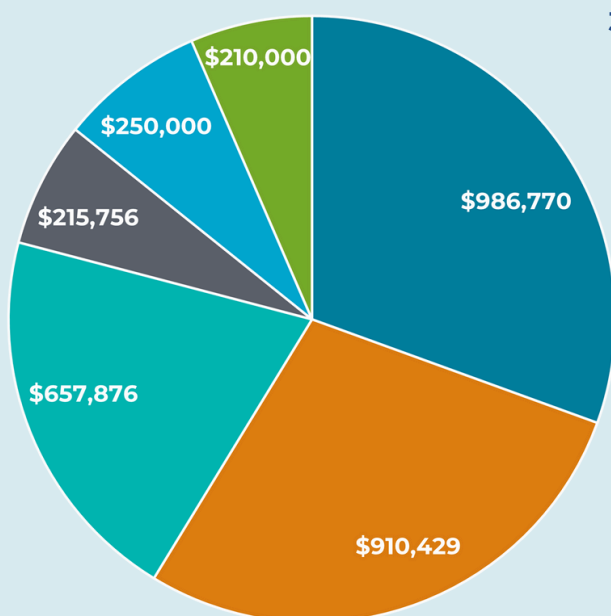
As a result, other JRS projects have also been impacted by the US stop-work order. Increasingly, we are struggling to refer displaced people for vital services. In many cases, local institutions were already under-resourced and international partners are downsizing their programmes. **Concretely, this means that underserved communities are losing the few lifelines that they had left.**

JRS RESPONSE

Amid the crisis, this has been an opportunity to deepen existing partnerships and build new ones. With the help of our friends, donors and Jesuit partners, we acted fast to provide vital support for the first three months. In the weeks that followed, seven of the nine countries directly affected received a termination letter. Two, Colombia and South Sudan, remain suspended, with conversations on how to proceed ongoing.

In the medium term, JRS is working to mitigate the impact and sustain its services, albeit with increasingly limited resources. Funds have so far been distributed to 22 local offices and key programmes have been able to continue. **JRS has been able to maintain relationships, to live with displaced people through this incredibly challenging situation.**

We are grateful for your solidarity during this crisis: many of you answered our global appeal, which has so far raised almost 4 million dollars for JRS projects. Of these, 3.2 have been disbursed, and the remainder is already earmarked to ensure the sustainability of the projects affected.



3,230,831 USD disbursed so far from the Global Appeal

- To projects in the JRS West Africa Region (Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, DR Congo)
- To projects in the JRS East & South Africa Region (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda)
- To projects in the JRS Latin America Region (Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Venezuela)
- To projects in the JRS Middle East & North Africa Region (Iraq)
- To projects in the JRS South Asia Region (Bangladesh, India)
- To projects in the JRS Asia Pacific Region (Thailand)

ASIA PACIFIC

JRS programmes for urban refugees in Bangkok and Mae Sot, **Thailand**, offer accompaniment to highly vulnerable groups, many of whom have fled violence in Myanmar. They include unaccompanied children, pregnant women, people with severe physical or cognitive disabilities and people at risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Funding raised through our global appeal has allowed us to continue to meet the needs of these groups with essential services such as emergency assistance for housing, food, and psychosocial and medical support - needs made all the more urgent by the closure of many aid programmes in the region.

LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America and the Caribbean, cuts in funding by multilateral agencies have severely and directly impacted our programmes and those we serve. In **Ecuador**, JRS mobilised swiftly when a project partner suspended funding that provided food to over 100 families in our shelters. In **Mexico**, JRS deployed emergency funds after support was cut to our teams offering legal and psychosocial support to vulnerable people in transit.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

JRS provides protection services to displaced people in **Iraq** and Iraqi Kurdistan - including survivors of the 2014 Yazidi genocide - through education and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) projects. Without US-backed funding, we cannot sustain our MHPSS programming in the long term. However, abruptly halting this support would cause serious harm to those we serve. To prevent this, JRS is working to ensure a smooth transition and to hand over activities to other organisations.

The crises in Sudan and Tigray, Ethiopia, led to an influx of refugees and returnees to **South Sudan** as well as a large population of internally displaced persons in **Ethiopia** itself. Cuts in funding for humanitarian aid are like rubbing salt in the wound of crises that have already been forgotten.

Now refugees and asylum seekers are facing a worse situation than ever before. Food rations in **Kenya's** Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps have been reduced from 60% in 2024 to 25% in 2025. Tension between refugees and the host community is high. Humanitarian agencies are also facing these tensions from refugees.

Obed Ombuna, Regional Education Specialist, JRS **Eastern Africa**

SPOTLIGHT ON: UGANDA



In the JRS Urban Refugee Programme in Kampala, Uganda, US foreign aid funding covered over 70% of the overall budget, including livelihoods, English language teaching, Day Care, education, basic needs and MHPSS activities. Its sudden suspension impacted more than 12,000 people directly and 100,000 family members and close relatives.

The suspension hit both staff and beneficiaries hard. “On that day, we had to suspend 46 staff members. Everyone understood what it means at the end of the day for each of us individually, and for the beneficiaries we serve”, explains Christina Zetlmeisl, JRS Uganda Country Director. “When they came and told us, it was a shock to all of us to leave the class. To leave our classroom was a problem for all of us. We kept on looking at each other like: “what are we going to do?”, adds Lawa, a JRS fashion and design student.

Projects have now restarted in a more limited capacity, and we hope to continue our vital work with affected communities. “We want to build on the resilience developed so far”, says Christina. “They have shown they are capable of doing many things. And we want to build on that moving forward.”

When work was suspended, it felt like hope had been lost. It was emotionally heavy, knowing that people trusted us and we couldn't be there for them anymore. We felt we had betrayed the people who had opened up to us, who had confided their stories. There's an obligation you have as a counsellor, and we felt we had breached that obligation.

We received a lot of phone calls; there was a lot of distress. There were a lot of people who felt like they had reached the end of their journeys.

Now, we are doing what we can with the little that we have. We're trying to strengthen our community-based approaches. But the need is still so high.

Angeline Namulanda, MHPSS Coordinator JRS **Eastern Africa**

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SPOTLIGHT ON: INDIA



The US stop-work order came as a shock to the JRS teams in North-East India (Mizoram and Manipur) and Delhi, pressing pause on Education, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and Reconciliation programmes serving people fleeing the conflict in Myanmar and urban refugees from Afghanistan.

The news was all the more distressing as up to 80% of project staff are paid volunteers belonging to the refugee community. Uncertainty gripped the entire team. Funds raised by the Global Appeal allowed JRS to maintain a continued presence, but we were initially forced to reduce key services such as community outreach — critical avenues through which forcibly displaced individuals feel seen and heard.

In April 2025, the project resumed. With support from JRS partners around the world, our team in India continues to serve vulnerable populations, albeit under a scaled-down activity plan and with a limited budget. Learning centers for refugees from Myanmar will remain operational at least until December 2025, while Child-Friendly Learning Centers for Afghan children were suspended in June 2025, severely disrupting the educational progress of an already vulnerable population. Gaps in access to nutrition, health support and protection for displaced girls and women are also an increasing cause for concern.

JRS LOOKING AHEAD

The new global strategic framework that JRS developed in 2024 offers guidance in navigating the challenges ahead. What is clear is that we must continue to insist on a rights-based approach. We must work with communities and increase people's self-reliance as much as possible, so that they can take control of their own futures. Where the law fails to protect the individual, a strong community can be the best available option. We must seek broader partnerships that include not only NGOs but also local communities, universities, businesses and friends and supporters around the world.

At a time when narratives of division are increasingly taking root, and as we witness the very real dismantling of solidarity and care, we hope that more people are moved to take a stand in the name of compassion and collective action. Together, we can work towards a world that is peaceful, compassionate and just.

Thank you for walking with displaced people at a time of dire need.