

Dan Schwarz
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Testimony at Senate Global Health Roundtable

Good afternoon Ranking Member Shaheen and members of the Committee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today about the impact of the recent terminations of global health programs.

My name is Dan Schwarz, I grew up in a small town in Appalachia and am a practicing pediatrician and a Vice President at Management Sciences for Health.

MSH is a Virginia-based nonprofit that works with communities to save lives by sustainably strengthening country health systems. MSH has been in operation since 1971 and has worked in more than 150 countries, often in close partnership with the U.S. Government.

My remarks today are informed by my career as a doctor, both here in the US and abroad. They are guided by my oaths to care for all and to do no harm. I offer them in the spirit of an objective analysis of the impact recent program terminations will have on the health of the most vulnerable communities around the world.

I would like to begin by telling you about one of the most effective methods of stopping malaria. Quite simply, it involves providing preventative treatment to women and children most at risk throughout the rainy season – the most dangerous time for malaria. In Nigeria, where we work, they have over 25% of the world's malaria infections and 30% of malaria deaths - that's about 200,000 deaths a year. 70% of those deaths are children under the age of 5. During the time that I am delivering these remarks to you, at least two children will die of malaria in Nigeria.

Every year, with the generous support provided by the American people, at the beginning of the rainy season we work with the Nigerian ministry of health to get the medicines and train the health workers who provide it to those children.

This has prevented millions of cases of malaria and saved hundreds of thousands of lives. It's extraordinary life-saving work that Americans should be very proud of.

This year, however, this will not happen. That is because these US government-funded projects have been terminated. Millions of children are at risk of sickness and many will die. We should not be proud of that.

These stories are not unique. Thousands of programs have been terminated without warning, with deadly consequences for communities around the world. At MSH we had 15 USAID projects terminated; only five remain. We have let go of over 1,000 of our team members – colleagues who live and work in these communities, providing this life-saving treatment.

At MSH, we focus on building strong health systems. Viewed from this perspective, the recent terminations are even more concerning. The elimination of foundational programs like maternal health or health worker training only serves to undermine the effectiveness of what programs remain. These cuts will devastate entire communities.

But let's bring it home, right here in this city, in this very room. The safety of Americans is very much at risk as global health security programs are shuttered. Programs we implemented that responded to the plague, Ebola, and drug-resistant tuberculosis have suddenly ended, even as the United States experiences its largest TB outbreak in decades. These programs helped address emerging health threats at their source and built the capacity of country governments to confront disease themselves.

Today, we should be discussing how to make America's investment in global health more efficient and effective. We should be discussing how we can integrate programs such as HIV and malaria treatment into countries' primary health care systems and reduce reliance on outside sources. Or how we can help countries to finance their own health needs. Instead, we are asking if lifesaving foreign assistance is of benefit to the US. The answer to that question is and always has been a resounding "yes." We have so much to be proud of. But with the recent program terminations, we are turning our backs on that. So much progress has already been lost in the past two months, and so many lives will be lost with it.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you today. I look forward to your questions.