



BOCONGO

**BOTSWANA COUNCIL OF
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS**

**THE IMPACT OF THE US GOVERNMENT
SUSPENSION OF FUNDING OF PROGRAMS AND
PROJECTS IN BOTSWANA**

1. INTRODUCTION

Following the decision by the United States government to suspend with immediate effect from the 24th of January 2025, all funding, contracts, programs and activities, civil society organisations (CSOs) in Botswana including Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (BOCONGO) members, have not been spared. This funding suspension has had a ripple effect, severely impacting critical services provided by CSOs in various sectors, including healthcare, education, social protection, and democratic governance. As a result, many organisations have not only been forced to halt service provision but have also had to lay off staff.

Given the important role that CSOs play in the broader national development landscape in Botswana, there is an urgent need for coordinated national response and way forward. It is crucial to engage the Government of Botswana and development partners in a collective effort to address the disruption of critical services and prevent further job losses. Following the US government funding freeze, BOCONGO Secretariat conducted an assessment to evaluate the extent of the impact on CSOs in Botswana including BOCONGO members, with findings presented below.

2. TYPES OF SERVICES AFFECTED

Services and programs provided by various CSOs across various sectors have been disrupted, including:

a. Healthcare

Key services such as HIV testing, HIV prevention and treatment, viral load suppression, Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), Tuberculosis (TB) screening, Non- Communicable Disease (NCD) identification and referral, and gender-based violence clinical response services including psycho-social support and provision of safe spaces and shelters, youth friendly services interventions, Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe (DREAMS) programs, Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) care and treatment programs, gender affirming therapy, key population program which focused on addressing the health needs of key populations such as transgender or men who have sex with other men have been severely impacted.

b. Social Protection

Programs focused on the prevention and treatment of gender-based violence, HIV treatment, education, and psychosocial support, OVC (orphans and vulnerable children) care and treatment, legal and policy advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights, and provision of emergency support such as clothing for OVC have been disrupted, limiting critical support for vulnerable populations.

c. Democratic Strengthening Initiatives

BOCONGO Secretariat was implementing a project aimed at promoting transparency, accountability, and democratic governance in Botswana, which has also been disrupted. The goals and objectives of the project are to ensure that voters make informed decisions on voting day, voters have access to relevant, accurate and timely information on development issues, political party programs and policies, and that political parties are held accountable for the promises they made. Lastly, the project sought to strengthen institutional capacity building for CSO and the media. This is the project through which BOCONGO was able to host Motlhophi Bua podcast in collaboration with DUMA FM, a platform that gave voters an opportunity to engage with candidates leading to elections. Through the project, BOCONGO continued to carry out civic education on various development subjects linked to democratic governance, especially targeting young people.

3. FUNDING SOURCE OR CHANEL

Affected organisations received funding from the following: PEPFAR, USAID, Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Y+Global, Global Fund, and the Embassy of the United States of America in Gaborone, Botswana.

4. NUMBER OF CENTRES AFFECTED AND THEIR LOCATIONS

Centres affected and their locations are as follows:

- Sentebale Charity's 19 Ministry of Health sites in Mahalapye, Serowe, Palapye, Boteti, Tutume, Tonota, Lobatse, Selebi Phikwe, Francistown.
- Tebelopele Wellness Centre's 17 sites which are spread across the country have all closed.

- Stepping Stones International's closed centres in Ngamiland, Bobirwa, Tutume, Serowe, Mahalapye, Southeast, Gaborone, Palapye most of Goodhope, and part of Gantsi, part of Kgatleng.
- Botswana Gender Based Violence Prevention and Support Centre (BGBVC) Gaborone Centre.
- Nothing Without Us Society's Francistown and Maun Centre.
- Humana People to People's 13 centres.
- Success Capital Organisation's 2 centres in Gumare and Gaborone.
- Bakgatla Bolokang Matshelo centres in Mochudi and it's satellite offices in Oliphant's drift, Malolwane, Mmathubudukwane, Malotwane and Dikgonnye.
- Letloa Trust's SHAA health Post and centres in Morama Clinic, Gantsi Clinic, Nxabae Jankie Clinic, Kuke Health Post, Dkar Health Post, New Xade Clinic closed.
- Botswana Christian Health & AIDS Intervention Program's (BOCHAIP) 7 sites in Lobatse, Goodhope, Kanye, Moshupa, Kweneng East (Molepolole), Francistown and Bobonong are all currently closed.
- Minister's Fraternal's centres in Palapye and surrounding areas have been closed.

5. COST OF SERVICES AFFECTED FOR DIFFERENT CSOS

Below is a summary of the cost of affected services per organisations:

- a) Tebelopele Wellness Centre (USAID Funded):
- Kgatelopele Mo Botsogong 2.0, **\$6,680,993.00**
 - Unite Towards 100, **\$1,008,058.00**
 - EPIC, **\$528,660.60**

Total Cost of Affected Services for Tebelopele Wellness Centre is **\$8,217,711.60**.

Tebelopele Wellness Centre has been granted a 90-day waiver to implement HIV Testing Services, HIV Care and Treatment, HIV Prevention (PrEP).

- b) Anonymous Organisation, **P 887 523.33 (Projects still suspended)**

Note: Organisation name withheld due to donor confidentiality.

- c) Bakgatla Bolokang Matshelo USAID Unite Toward 100 Project, **\$200,142.00 (Project still suspended).**
- d) Kgasongo Association, **\$10,000.00.**
- e) Sentebale Charity, **P 2 500 000.00 (Project suspension lifted; implementation resumed)**

Note: As of 13 February 2025, the organisation has received CDC notification of lifting of the suspension and go-ahead to continue implementing their health program focused on HIV/AIDS.

- f) Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (BOCONGO) Secretariat, **\$ 348 040.00 (Project Terminated).**
- g) Success Capital Organisation, **P 1 040 000.00.**
- h) Botswana Christian Health & AIDS Intervention Program (BOCHAIP), **\$ 310 107.00 (P 4 233 175) (Projects still suspended)**
- i) Stepping Stones International, **\$3,298,000 (Projects Terminated).**
- j) Botswana Gender Based Violence Prevention and Support Centre, **P 4,431,931.60. BGBVC has been granted a 90-day waiver to implement HIV care, treatment, and Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) programs. Implementation**

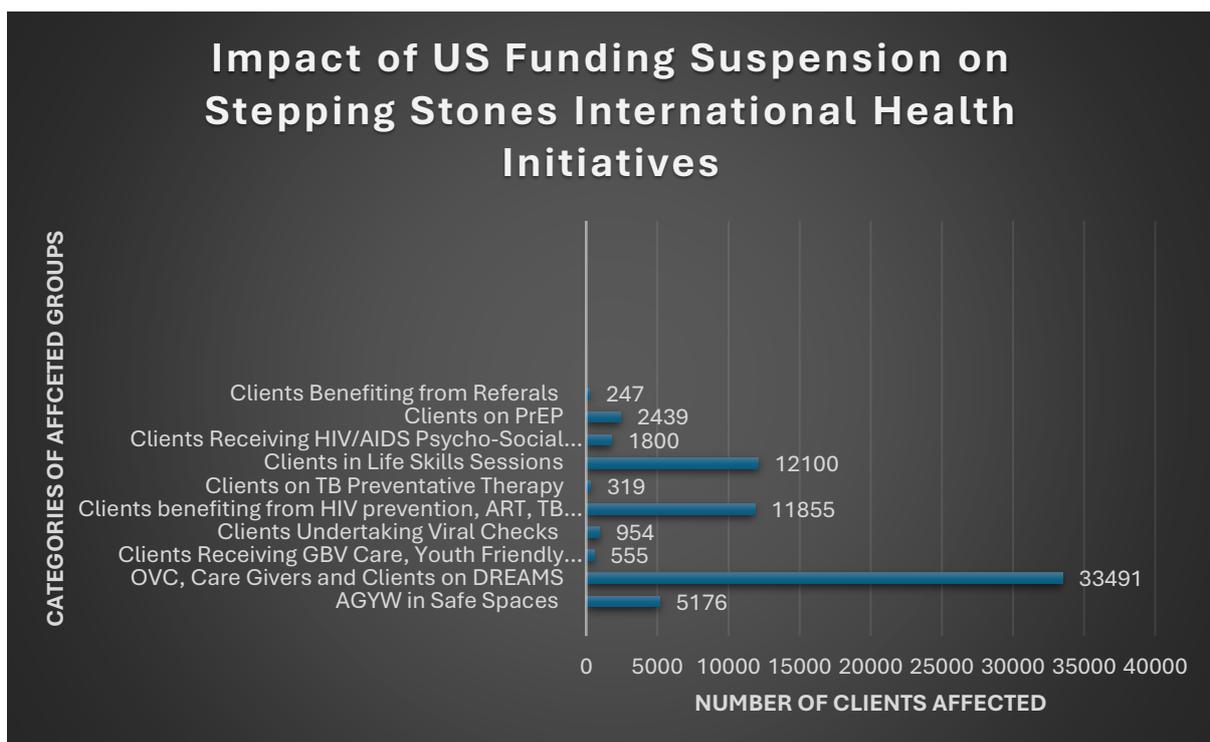
of activities outside the scope of PMTCT is not permitted. Other projects under the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) initiative, including training for district gender committees and first responders on identifying GBV survivors, providing survivor-sensitive services, understanding the referral network, and offering long-term psychosocial support, have been completely terminated.

k) The Society for Children Orphaned by AIDS Inc. (SOCOBA) Botswana \$ 48 081/ P 553 000 (Project still suspended)

Note: The following organisations are yet to submit the cost of affected services.

- a) Mothers Union Orphan Care Centre
- b) Nothing Without Us Society
- c) Humana People to People
- d) Letloa Trust
- e) BW Nama Development Trust (Project still suspended)
- f) Madikwe Community Care Group
- g) Ministers Fraternal Palapye

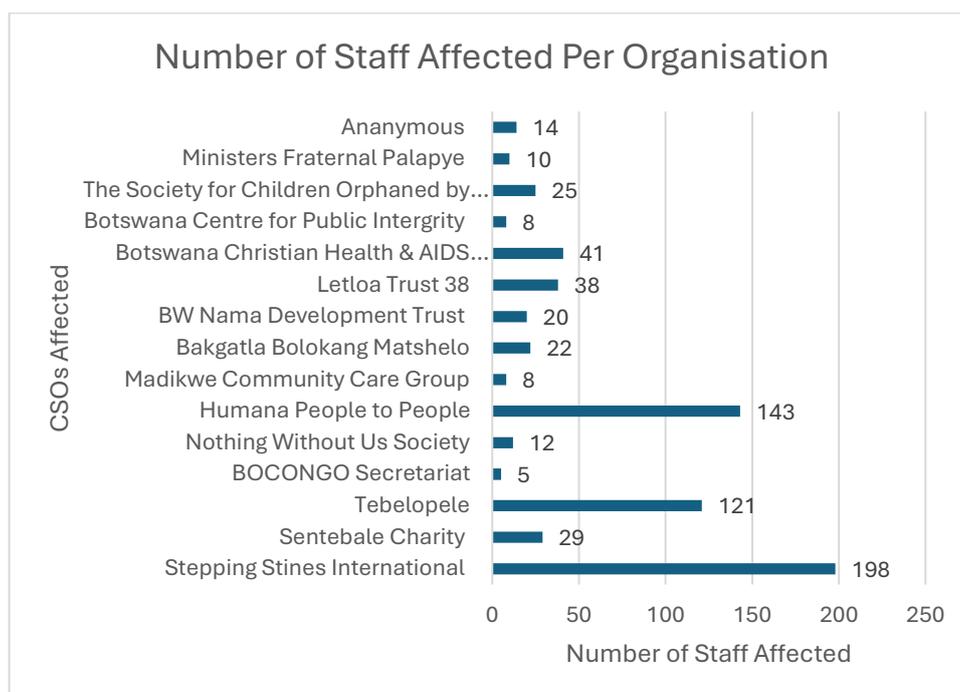
6. NUMBER OF CLIENTS AFFECTED



In addition to the above, beneficiaries of the various democratic governance initiatives have also been affected.

7. Number of CSO Employees Affected

The suspension of funding has not only halted essential services but has also placed many organisations in a position where they are forced to reduce staff and even cancel contracts. Staff members of different CSOs have been affected as illustrated in the chart below:



Current total number of affected CSO staff is **694**.

Note:

- The total number of affected CSO staff is likely to increase as the developments continue to emerge.

- On the 13th of February 2025, Sentebale Charity received CDC notification of lifting of the suspension and go-ahead to continue implementing their health program focused on HIV/AIDS.
- One organisation requested that its name not be disclosed, as their donor has requested confidentiality.

8. IMMEDIATE SUPPORT NEEDED

Immediate support is urgently needed in the following areas:

- Operations: Costs for rent and other office utilities.
- Human Resource: Salaries for staff and consultants, HR notice funds for any immediate staff transitions or departures.
- Funding for Programs: Costs associated with delivering programs and services.
- Counselling services for staff during this period.
- Collaboration with other affected CSOs to lobby government and local private sector to invest in CSO programming.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

BOCONGO recommends that government consider the following:

- An immediate transfer of clients and their relevant data to the government is urgently needed to ensure continuity. Thus, a system that can facilitate this process needs to be urgently put in place.
- A consideration should also be made for programs and services that were offered by CSOs and are affected to be transferred to government.
- For continuity of non-clinical programs and services, explore capacitation of existing structures within the community to implement the programs.
- Consider ways to leverage the skillset and expertise from CSO laid off staff to continue provision of services.
- In the long term, a consideration should be made to establish an NGO Development Fund to enable NGOs to continue complementing government in implementing national development programs and projects. This could be made

possible through the 1% of the national budget that the UDC committed to in their manifesto.

- Establish portfolio-specific funding, where various ministries allocate funds to NGOs operating within their respective mandates. This will facilitate continuity of services and strengthen collaboration between the government and civil society.

Annex 1: CSOs AFFECTED

Several CSOs including BOCONGO members have been affected. They include:

1. BOCONGO) Secretariat
2. Stepping Stones International
3. Sentebale Charity
4. Tebelopelo Wellness Centre
5. Mothers Union Orphan Care Centre
6. Nothing Without Us Society
7. Humana People to People
8. Botswana Gender Based Violence Prevention and Support Centre
9. Botswana Christian Health & AIDS Intervention Program (BOCHAIP)
10. Letloa Trust
11. Succes Capital Organisation
12. Kgasongo Association
13. Bakgatla Bolokang Matshelo
14. BW Nama Development Trust
15. Botswana Centre for Public Integrity (BCPI)

16. Madikwe Community Care Group
17. The Society for Children Orphaned by AIDS Inc. (SOCOBA) Botswana
18. Ministers Fraternal Palapye
19. Anonymous Organisation (The organisation requested that its name not be disclosed, as their donor has requested confidentiality)
20. ACHAP