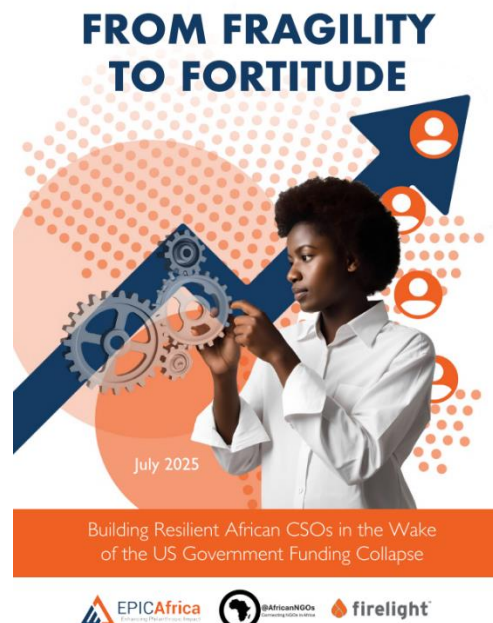


**"FROM FRAGILITY TO FORTITUDE"**

**COSW POLICY FORUM FOCUSES ON AFRICAN CSOs IN TURBULENT TIMES**

**SATURDAY 13<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025**

**06.00 - 07.30 or 16.00 – 17.30 (UTC/GMT)**



**ZOOM LINK AVAILABLE [HERE](#) BEFORE THE EVENT**

A new report: "*From Fragility to Fortitude: Building Resilient African CSOs in the Wake of the US Government Funding Collapse*" will be a key element in the 2025 COSW annual Policy Forum. In one of the first global presentations, the authors Rose Maruru and David Barnard will present findings from a survey of 364 African CSOs in 42 countries. The impact of the change in US policy is not limited to Africa and is compounded by changing policies in other donor countries. A panel will explore future global impacts and opportunities, with time for interventions by participants.

The survey generated responses from 364 African CSOs across 42 countries – 243 CSOs which were recipients of USG funding and 121 non-USG-funded CSOs impacted indirectly.

The survey findings present a troubling picture of vulnerability and uncertainty across the sector. Many African CSOs had received a large portion of funding from the US government. In 2024, 35.4% received more than 50% from US government sources, while 16% received between 31% and 50%. This is a permanent loss of funding. 46.5% of respondents had already received termination notices at the time of the survey. Many are social workers.

As a result of the funding cuts, 38.3% of these CSOs reported losing more than 50% of their total funding for 2025. Additionally, 55.6% indicated that their operations have been severely impacted and they were unable to achieve their goals for 2025. 64.6% stated that the communities they serve are severely affected, with critical services being discontinued.



Looking ahead, the future appears grim for many African CSOs. One long-recognised vulnerability of many African CSOs – over-reliance on a single donor – has now escalated into an acute system failure.

Based on the survey findings, the report identifies four strategic pillars for reform and action:

- **Capital** – Shifting from project-driven aid to flexible, core funding;
- **System** – Shifting from siloed interventions to creating ecosystem infrastructure;
- **Partnership** – Shifting from compliance to co-creation;
- **Innovation** – Shifting from donor-led pilots to African-designed solutions.

Creating a shared blueprint for long-term sustainability should be a collective impact initiative led by African CSOs, with support from governments, funders and intermediaries. Alongside the urgent need for immediate humanitarian relief, this is the core recommendation of the report. The question is not whether to act, but rather when and how.

In this troubling context, how should social work react to the global turbulence affecting people worldwide? How does the experience of local social workers get brought into Commonwealth-wide and global debates? Does our experience count? Can we make a difference?

This will be explored in the Policy Forum including a pan-Commonwealth panel and an open mike for participant contributions.

Visit <https://cosw.info/cosw-news/> for more information and Zoom link.

NOTE: COSW is an organisation for citizens of the Commonwealth who are interested in supporting social work and social development. It is supported by social work associations in the Commonwealth. It aims to promote and support communication and collaboration between social workers and social work associations of Commonwealth countries, and to uphold and promote the code of ethics of the International Federation of Social Workers. This statement can be found on the [COSW website](https://cosw.info/).

**Contact**

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4/9/2025