

2025 Impact Report

Rapid Response Fund

A JOINT INITIATIVE OF



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From Founders Pledge

When massive U.S. foreign aid cuts created an unprecedented crisis in January, I initially felt overwhelmed by the sheer scale of lives suddenly at risk.

Lifesaving programs faced abrupt collapse, putting thousands of children at risk and jeopardizing years of progress in reducing preventable mortality. But what followed became one of the most inspiring experiences of my career: watching our community refuse to standby, and instead transform concern into rapid, coordinated action through the Rapid Response Fund.

Through our partnership with The Life You Can Save (TLYCS) and with the expert guidance of former USAID leaders at PRO, we mobilized more than \$13 million in just six months. These funds were deployed to high-impact programs projected to save the lives of more than 4,000 children.

This experience has been a powerful case for what's possible when motivated donors, deep programmatic expertise, strategic networks, and rigorous impact analysis converge around a shared mission. It showed that philanthropy can move as swiftly and effectively as the crises it seeks to address.

To everyone who contributed: thank you. Your generosity did more than save lives – it demonstrated the collective power we have to protect progress, strengthen resilience, and show that crisis does not have to mean despair.



Katrina Sill

Global Health & Development Lead,
Founders Pledge

Katrina



From The Life You Can Save

The Rapid Response Fund was created from a determination to act in a moment of crisis that threatened to undo decades of progress in the fight against extreme poverty.

Several factors made this response possible. The Life You Can Save and Founders Pledge brought nearly two decades of experience evaluating, recommending, and fundraising for the most effective organizations in global health and development. Our teams and systems enabled us to move from planning to launch in just days, raising funds across multiple countries and directing them swiftly to where they were most needed. Most importantly, thousands of donors chose to act. Good intentions alone do not change lives; but your generosity in action did.

From the start, we knew the Fund could not solve the problem entirely. Our goal was to keep impactful programs running during the sudden suspension of U.S. foreign aid. The results in this report show the power of collective action: donations from around the world sustained critical interventions at a time of urgent need. We also partnered with colleagues from Project Resource Optimization (PRO), a reminder that collaboration and shared expertise are key to fast, effective solutions.

What began as a temporary suspension has now become the new baseline for foreign aid. Our response must therefore evolve from emergency relief to sustained support. The lessons of the Rapid Response Fund are already shaping how we manage funds, conduct research, and expand our collaborations, so that we can continue to strengthen the fight against extreme poverty.

This cause was already deeply underfunded, and the loss of U.S. government support has only widened the gap. The challenges are greater, but so are the opportunities to act effectively. Thank you for standing with us. We hope you will continue to take action in this fight.



Jessica La Mesa
Co-CEO,
The Life You Can Save

Jess



Your impact

\$13,110,062

Contributed by donors and granted to keep high-impact programs running

1,300+

Individual donors

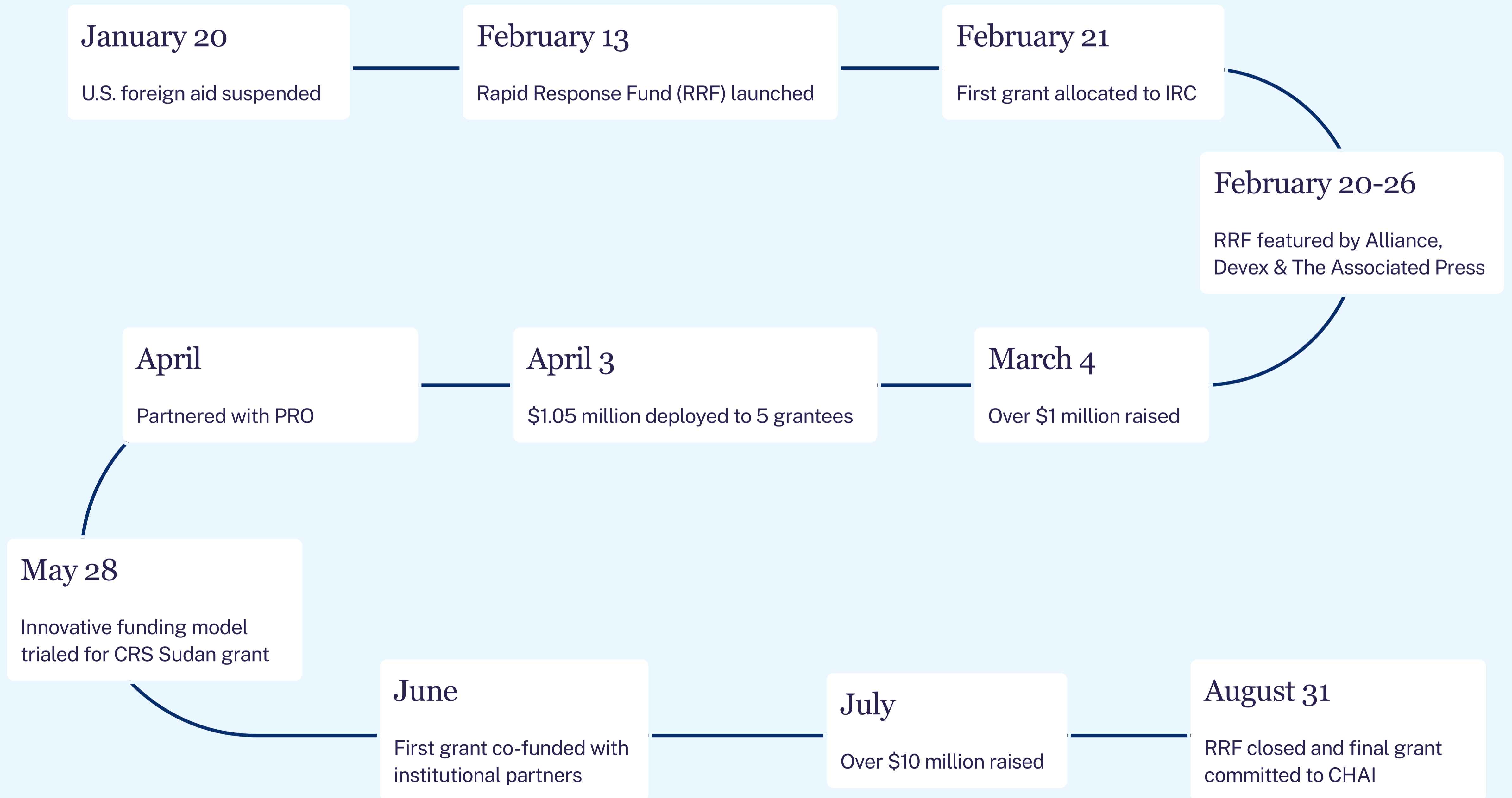
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Programs funded

4,718

Estimated lives saved through our grants

The lifespan of the Rapid Response Fund



Why we launched the Rapid Response Fund

In January 2025, the abrupt suspension of U.S. foreign aid created an unprecedented crisis.

More than 80% of USAID's global contracts were frozen. Government-funded foreign aid, the main source of LMIC development financing, is projected to decrease by roughly 25 percent in 2025 from 2023 levels, with the least developed countries hit even harder.

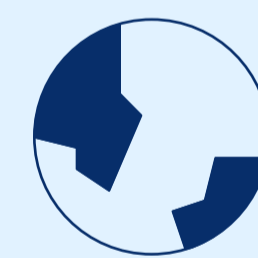
This represented roughly 20-25% of total global health aid, leaving millions at immediate risk of losing access to lifesaving interventions including malaria prevention, HIV treatment, and emergency nutrition programs.

Recognizing this crisis, **Founders Pledge** and **The Life You Can Save** launched the Rapid Response Fund in February 2025 as an emergency measure to provide fast, flexible support to high-impact organizations facing acute funding gaps.

Without urgent intervention, these cuts could lead to:



A rise in preventable deaths due to lack of treatment



Loss of decades of progress in disease prevention and health equity



Millions left without essential services

Driving strategic, high-impact grants

The RRF followed a rigorous, four-step evaluation process to direct resources effectively:

1.

Identify the most urgent needs

Programs facing severe funding shortfalls

2.

Assess geographic & sector impact

Prioritize areas most impacted by funding freeze

3.

Select for evidence & cost-effectiveness

Support programs with measurable impact

4.

Deploy funds strategically

Avoid duplication and maximizing reach

Joining forces with former USAID economists

As the crisis unfolded, former USAID economists Caitlin Tulloch, Sasha Gallant, and Rob Rosenbaum established **Project Resource Optimization (PRO)**, analyzing USAID’s fiscal year 2024 obligations to create an “Urgent and Vetted List” of high-impact projects.

Recognizing our shared mission to maximize impact per dollar, we partnered with PRO to channel resources to these critical programs. **This collaboration proved invaluable.**

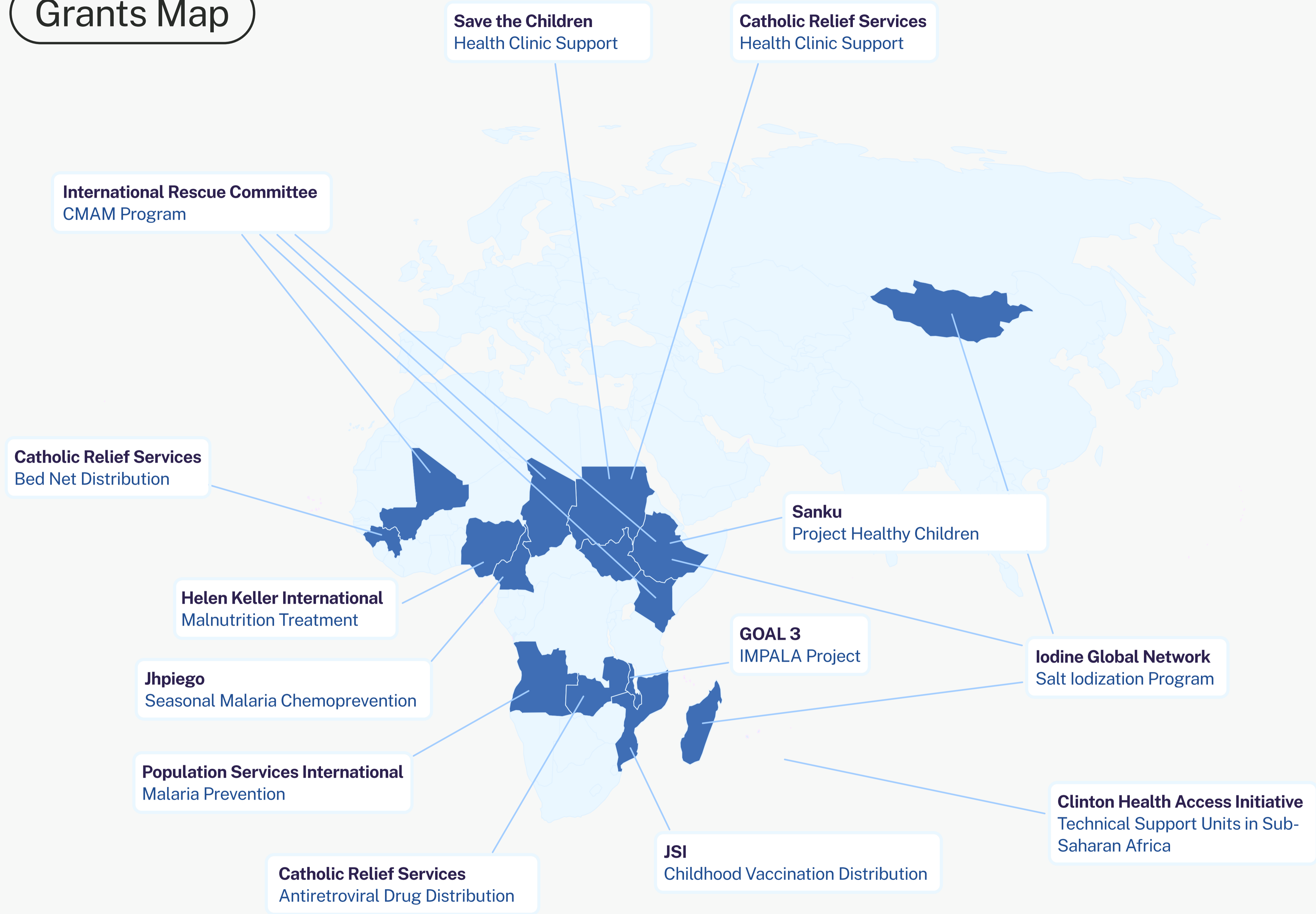


JSI’s vaccination work in Mozambique was identified by PRO. Source: JSI

PRO’s curated pipeline and deep relationships with implementing partners allowed us to direct money efficiently to their rigorously analyzed opportunities. Through this partnership, and thanks to the initial PRO staff funding from CRI Foundation as well as \$1.35M in direct project support, the Rapid Response Fund was able to prevent \$9M of highly cost-effective and life-saving programming from shutting down.



Grants Map



Our Grantees

CMAM Program at International Rescue Committee	\$100,000	Funding their Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) program to combat global childhood malnutrition.
Salt Iodization Program at Iodine Global Network	\$50,000	Funding the prevention of serious physical and mental development problems in children caused by iodine deficiency, their most urgent need in Madagascar.
IMPALA Project at GOAL 3	\$300,000	Funding vital signs monitoring devices for neonatal and pediatric wards in low-resource settings, specifically in Malawi following USAID funding gap.
Project Healthy Children at Sanku	\$250,000	Funding the provision of small-scale food fortification through partnerships with local mills - fortifying flour used for staple food with a micronutrient mix of iron, folic acid, iodine, vitamin A, and zinc.
Bed Net Distribution at Catholic Relief Services	\$300,000	Funding the distribution of insecticide-treated nets in Guinea.
Malaria Prevention at Population Services International	\$300,000	Funding critical malaria prevention and treatment interventions in Angola.



Our Grantees

Antiretroviral Drug Distribution at Catholic Relief Services	\$300,000	Funding the distribution of antiretroviral drugs to treat HIV in Zambia.
Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention at Jhpiego	\$600,000	Funding seasonal malaria chemoprevention.
Childhood Vaccination Distribution at JSI	\$2,000,000	Funding the delivery of essential childhood vaccinations in Mozambique.
Malnutrition Treatment at Helen Keller International	\$1,500,000	Funding nutrition services in four Nigerian states, including treating children for severe and moderate acute malnutrition and training health workers.
Health Clinic Support at Catholic Relief Services	\$2,500,000	Funding the continuation of functioning health and nutrition facilities in hard-to-reach areas of Darfur.
Health Clinic Support at Save the Children	\$3,000,000	Funding health clinics and two mobile clinics that offer essential care in Sudan.
Technical Support Units at Clinton Health Access Initiative	\$1,910,062	Funding work with government health ministries to identify cost-saving measures and redirect funds to programs that save the most lives.



Providing emergency nutrition when health systems collapsed

Global childhood malnutrition is linked to 45% of deaths among children under 5, making it one of the world's most urgent health crises.

The **International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM)** programs train community health workers to identify malnourished children and provide them with nutrient- and calorie-rich foods.

When USAID funding was abruptly cut in January 2025, IRC faced the immediate prospect of shuttering these lifesaving nutrition centers across multiple countries, leaving severely malnourished children without access to treatment.



Zara, forced to flee home with mother Fatima, was treated by IRC. Source: IRC

As the very first grant deployed by the RRF, **our \$100,000 emergency grant enabled IRC to keep these critical programs operational** and provide emergency lifesaving nutrition to approximately 800 children during the funding crisis.

Protecting Nigeria's children through vaccination partnerships

Nigeria has the world's largest number of under-immunized children.

JSI's routine immunization project works to protect 91,000 children across five Nigerian states by sustaining vaccination efforts through local teams and community partnerships.

When USAID cuts terminated this critical program, JSI faced an immediate funding cliff that would have left thousands of children vulnerable to preventable diseases.



Children receive essential vaccinations. Source: JSI

Through our partnership with Project Resource Optimization (PRO) — former USAID experts who identified JSI's program as one of the most cost-effective immunization initiatives — **the RRF was able to provide emergency bridge funding to keep vaccination teams operational**, ensuring children receive lifesaving vaccines against diseases like measles, polio, and pneumonia.

Delivering hope in crisis zones

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) works closely with governments and communities worldwide to improve health, food security, water, and education.

The USAID cuts led to the suspension or cancellation of 90% of CRS's government-supported programs, including their emergency response assistance program in Sudan, where 15 million people are displaced and half of the country faces severe hunger.



Teams provide emergency supplies and healthcare. Source: CRS

The RRF saw the unique potential and importance of this program but the funding gap was large. Therefore, we communicated that if donors could collectively commit to 70% of the funding needed before the clinics shutdown, the RRF would provide the remaining 30%.

We were blown away by the response from donors, which mobilized the full \$2.5M to CRS and preserved their emergency healthcare delivery in Sudan, ensuring that 11 health and nutrition facilities can continue to provide lifesaving antenatal care, medicine, and emergency food aid.

Strengthening health systems for sustainable impact

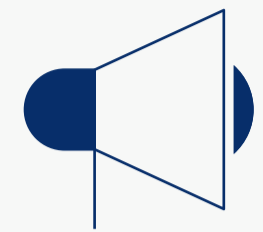
When USAID froze global health funding, ten Sub-Saharan African countries lost an average of 14% of their health budgets overnight, forcing governments to make impossible choices about which health services to maintain.

CHAI's Technical Support Units (TSUs) work directly within government health ministries to co-develop solutions with officials, helping stretch scarce resources by identifying cost-saving measures and redirecting funds to programs that save the most lives. Each dollar spent on this technical assistance influences hundreds of dollars in government health spending.



Source: CHAI

As the final grant from the RRF — bridging Founders Pledge's transition to the GHD Catalytic Impact Fund (CIF) — this \$2.1M investment, made jointly with \$1.9M from the RRF and \$200K from the CIF, represents Founders Pledge's evolution from emergency response to sustainable systems change, empowering governments to make strategic use of limited resources and building lasting paths to impact that will endure long after the current crisis.



Hear more about our work in major outlets

Alliance Magazine — [Philanthropists urged to 'step up' as emergency funds launch to plug USAID freeze](#) ↗

The New York Times — [As the U.S. Exits Foreign Aid, Who Will Fill the Gap?](#) ↗

Devex — [Rapid response funds for organizations affected by the US aid freeze](#) ↗

The Associated Press — [Emergency fundraisers offer a lifeline to groups who've lost foreign aid](#) ↗

Vox — [3 ways you can help the people hurt by Trump's foreign aid cuts](#) ↗

Voice of Islam — [Radio Interview with Matt Hurst-Smith, CXO of Founders Pledge](#) ↗

The Chronicle of Philanthropy — [Seeking Rapid Response Grants? These Funds Are Offering Help.](#) ↗

Inside Philanthropy — [How Donors Can Maximize Impact Following USAID Cuts: The PRO Initiative](#) ↗

Forbes — [With FEMA Cuts The Rapid Response Fund Is Stepping Up, But Will It Be Enough?](#) ↗

From crisis response to catalytic change

The RRF was designed as a temporary emergency measure to address an immediate crisis. What began as an initial freeze has become, eight months later, the new baseline for U.S. foreign aid.

It's clear to us that continuing an emergency-focused fund is no longer the most strategic approach to solving ongoing needs.

We accepted the last donation into the RRF on **August 31st** and all funds have now been distributed or allocated to grantees.

However, the work to improve the lives of those in need and fill critical gaps in global health and development continues.

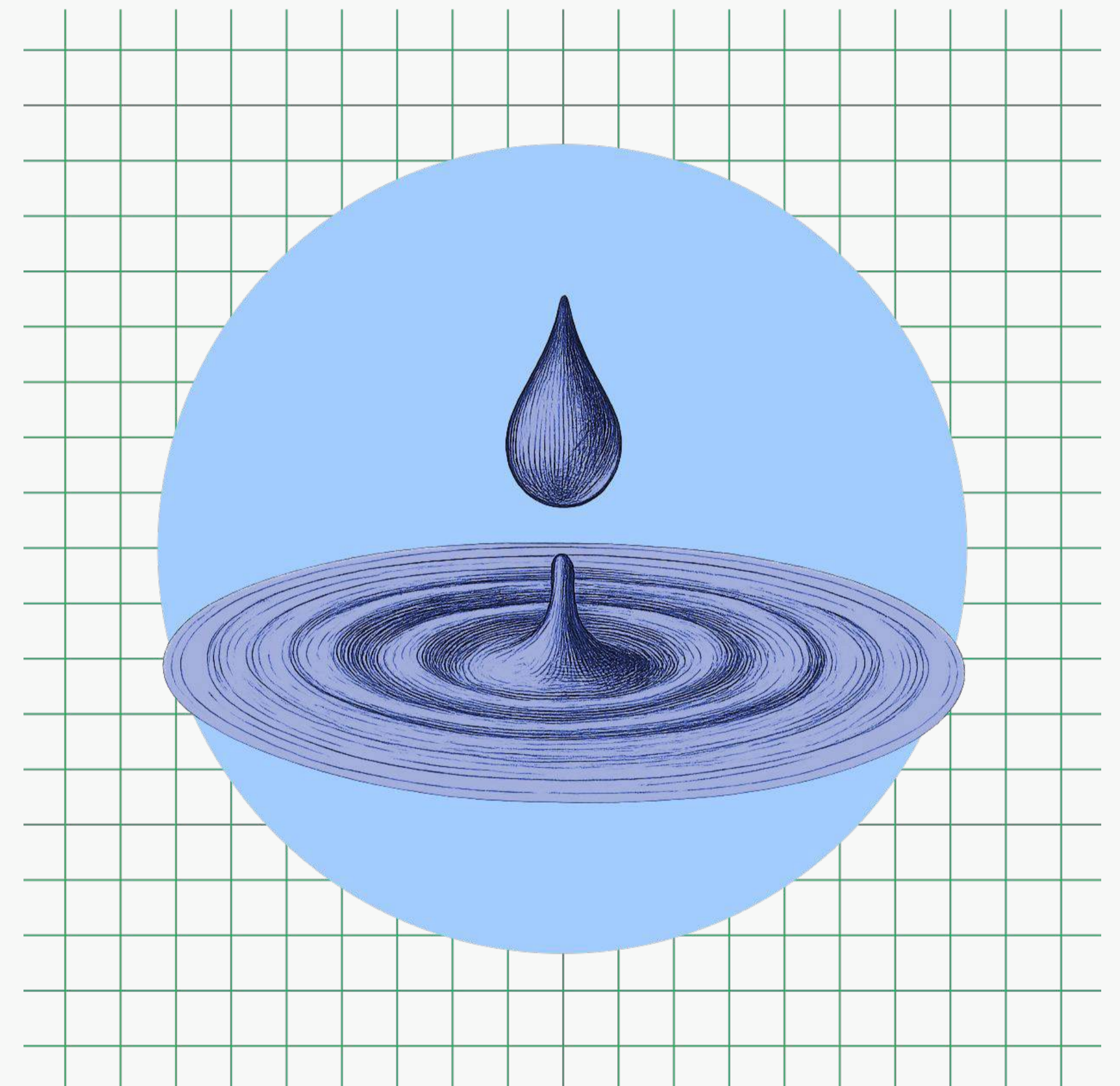
Learn more about how we're driving long-term solutions and tackling poverty in the following pages — meet Founders Pledge's GHD Catalytic Impact Fund and The Life You Can Save's Maximize Your Impact Fund.



Founders Pledge is focusing on proactive, transformational investment through the **GHD Catalytic Impact Fund** (CIF) — building a more resilient future that works to solve the world’s biggest problems.

With the CIF, we’re applying the collaborative spirit and evidence-based rigor that made our emergency response successful to a more durable strategy designed for the realities of uncertain government funding. This evolution ensures that donors can support the most effective interventions within improved infrastructure and systems needed for long-term progress in global health and development.

SUPPORT THE CATALYTIC IMPACT FUND



The Life You Can Save

The Life You Can Save is addressing multidimensional poverty through the **Maximize Your Impact Fund**.

We work to break barriers to well-being and support holistic solutions to advance human development, prioritizing high impact organizations fighting extreme poverty while actively directing resources where they are needed the most. This fund supports charities working on key characteristics of extreme poverty, including education, health, living standards, and barriers to women and girls' well-being.

[SUPPORT THE MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT FUND](#)

