

The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has announced a 90-day suspension of the USAID-funded Inclusive Nutrition and Early Childhood Development (INECD) program, locally known as Gikuriro Kuri Bose, according to a released letter seen by Rwanda Dispatch.

The decision follows a directive from the U.S. Secretary of State imposing a global suspension of work for all USAID-funded activities.

The Gikuriro Kuri Bose program has played a critical role in Rwanda's efforts to combat chronic malnutrition and promote child development.

According to CRS, the temporary suspension will affect a range of activities, including support for district nutrition plans, community counseling for parents, capacity building for early childhood caregivers, and the rehabilitation of children suffering from acute malnutrition.

In a statement, Umurungi Serubiri Yvonne, Chief of Party for CRS Rwanda, acknowledged the challenges posed by the funding pause but reaffirmed CRS's commitment to Rwanda's development agenda.

"This suspension risks undoing the significant gains made through USAID support in fighting chronic malnutrition in Rwanda," Serubiri stated, urging stakeholders to engage with U.S. officials to seek resolutions.

The U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda, Eric Kneedler, and USAID Mission Director Keisha Effiom were identified as key points of contact for local leaders to express concerns about the impact of the suspension on Rwanda's development efforts.

While acknowledging the potential setbacks, CRS highlighted its ongoing advocacy efforts to maintain the program beyond the 90-day period.

Observers note that the suspension may also affect broader international cooperation on health and nutrition programs. Nonetheless, CRS expressed optimism about finding a sustainable solution through continued dialogue with both U.S. authorities and the Rwandan government.

The letter was shared with key Rwandan government officials, including the Minister of Health, Minister of Local Government, Minister of Gender and Family Promotion, and the Director General of the National Child Development Agency.

Both CRS and USAID are expected to explore potential solutions to mitigate disruptions and maintain progress in supporting Rwanda's health and nutrition sector.