

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Zambian Civil Society Demands Transparency and Accountability regarding the U.S/Zambia Health Aid Agreement

**Lusaka, Zambia - Monday, 30 March 2026**

The Coalition of Civil Society Organizations working on natural resource governance and public health advocacy, call on the Government of Zambia (GRZ) to halt the signing of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United States Government (USG) on Health Aid which is scheduled to be concluded on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026. The MOU must not be signed without full public disclosure and parliamentary oversight. Going ahead to sign in its current state will undermine health sector and natural resource governance and national sovereignty principles and integrity.

While we acknowledge that the United States of America has played a vital role in supporting Zambia's healthcare system - including providing antiretroviral therapy (ART) to an estimated 1.3 million people, we stress that lifesaving health assistance should never be used as leverage in mineral access or any other unrelated negotiations.

Our call today, follows a report on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2026 by [The New York Times](#) indicating that the US Government may condition the provision of lifesaving Health sector assistance on expanded access to Zambia's critical minerals and health data. The reported MOU includes USD 1.012 billion in health funding over five years, mainly for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, malaria, vaccines, maternal and child health, and pandemic surveillance. Additional reporting by [News Diggers](#) suggests the Government has not rejected the deal but is still negotiating its terms. News of the conditionalities were first revealed in detail as early as 25 January in [The Mast](#), with further coverage one month later in [The Guardian](#).

Further, global health and natural resource governance advocacy organizations have similarly warned that conditioning Health Aid assistance on extractive sector concessions will undermine Zambia's efforts to achieve its long-term health sector goals. On Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026, more than ninety development, public health, environmental and faith-based organizations, globally, co-signed [a letter urging U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio](#) to publicly reject threatening to withhold HIV assistance and other medical aid to Zambia as a negotiating tactic to pressure the country into signing a critical minerals agreement with the United States.

**As members of the civil society coalition, we highlight the following concerns regarding the reported draft MOU:**

1. **Lack of transparency and governance risks:** The health MOU as well as the 'Bilateral Compact' the MOU refers to have not been made public, making meaningful wider stakeholder engagement, parliamentary oversight and accountability impossible.
2. **Unrealistic Government of the Republic Zambia (GRZ) financing requirements:** Unless modified, the MOU would require GRZ to increase domestic financing at a pace that may not be aligned with current fiscal realities, risking service disruptions. Any interruption in funding could reverse the tremendous gains achieved in the health sector over the years.
3. **MOU remains lopsided:** The draft MOU raises serious questions about a severe imbalance between short term health sector support in exchange for long term US government access to health care data (10 years) and biological samples (25 years) including tax exemptions on procurements.
4. **Mineral sector governance risks:** The absence of public information on the Bilateral Compact on which the reported draft Health MOU is conditioned raises the possibility of weakened regulatory environment, heightened environmental impacts of mining and violation of human rights of host communities due to fast tracked conditional agreements.

**Civil society organizations therefore call on the Government of Zambia:**

1. To halt the signing of the proposed agreements without sufficient public scrutiny and wider stakeholder engagements and more importantly parliamentary oversight.
2. Publicly release the full draft MOU immediately, as well as the "Bilateral Compact".
3. Ensure HIV and health assistance remains unconditional and decoupled from mineral negotiations.
4. Protect national sovereignty over health data and protect data of citizens in with the Data Protection Act No.3 of 2021.
5. Ensure that any co-financing commitments are realistic, gradual, and aligned with Zambia's fiscal capacity and do not compromise continuity of lifesaving HIV and health services.
6. Strengthen public revenue generation to sustain domestic health financing and reduce dependence on external financing.

7. Safeguard mineral resources to ensure they support national fiscal gaps through taxation to cover the health financing gap and other critical sectors in the best interest of Zambia.

We strongly emphasize that Zambia's health system and mineral resources are both strategic national assets. Decisions affecting them must be transparent, accountable, and firmly in public and national interest. Any agreement that affects public health outcomes must be guided by evidence, realistic financing, and the urgent need for health program scale up.

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**This statement is issued on behalf of the Coalition of CSOs working on Natural Resource Governance and Public Health. These include;**

1. Oxfam
2. Action Aid
3. Publish what you Pay
4. Zambia Alliance of Women
5. Chapter 1 Foundation
6. Fighting Inequality Alliance
7. IPAS

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