

Credocast

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Funding in Freefall

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About Credo Advisory

Credo Advisory is a leading communications firm specialising in strategic, operational, and tactical communications initiatives. We support governments, development partners, and the private sector to raise awareness, build trust, and effect change with communication programmes. Collaborating with our partners, we develop products, initiatives, and campaigns based on research and industry insights.

Credo is committed to using communications to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with communication responses that promote transparency, good governance, advocacy, and public enlightenment.

Our mission is to provide technical assistance and programming that enable our clients to build strong relationships with stakeholders, shape attitudes, educate audiences, and influence behaviours to impact society positively. We leverage communications to end poverty, fight inequality, and foster a cleaner, safer, and more sustainable world.

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“But inside the clinic, the consequences were immediate: mothers travelling further for care, children missing vaccinations, a system that had once protected lives beginning to come apart at the seams.”

A Clinic Before Sunrise



Source: Critical Care International

In a small health facility in northern Nigeria, a nurse begins her day before sunrise. The waiting room fills quickly with mothers carrying infants wrapped in cloth. For years, a development-funded outreach programme brought vaccines, nutritional supplements, and maternal care to this community.¹ Then, without announcement, it stopped. Outreach visits grew infrequent. Supplies ran low. The programme quietly disappeared.

No headline marked the moment. No policy debate was convened. But inside the clinic, the consequences were immediate: mothers travelling further for care, children missing vaccinations, a system that once protected lives beginning to come apart at the seams. This is how development finance contracts: through gradual withdrawals that often appear, at first, as routine accounting decisions. Each cut, taken on its own, can seem administrative. But together, they weaken the architecture of care that took decades to build.

The people who depend on that architecture rarely get to speak in the spaces where these decisions are made. Their stories do not travel far enough, fast enough, or in the language required to interrupt the budget cycles shaping their futures. The gap between what is happening on the ground and what is understood in the corridors of power is not incidental. It is the crisis.



Patients in Al Nao Hospital in Omdurman. Source: NPR/Luke Dray

¹<https://www.who.int/news/item/03-11-2025>

“For the first time in nearly thirty years, the world's four largest development donors, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, have simultaneously cut their aid budgets.”

The Political Economy of Cuts

For the first time in nearly thirty years, the world's four largest development donors, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, have simultaneously cut their aid budgets.² The reasons vary by country, but a common logic runs beneath them. In an era of fiscal pressure and domestic political anxiety, spending that benefits people elsewhere has become extraordinarily difficult to defend at home.

The American case is the most consequential and the most explicit. The “America First” posture reframes foreign assistance not as investment, but as extraction: money taken from American workers and sent to distant strangers with no visible return. This framing has real political traction. It speaks to genuine grievances about economic precarity, institutional failure, and the feeling that governments no longer work for ordinary people. As a political argument, it is effective precisely because it is simple.

But it rests on a fundamental misreading of what development finance actually does. Health systems that detect and contain disease outbreaks protect populations across borders, including American ones. Food security programmes reduce the conditions that produce displacement, instability, and humanitarian crises that wealthy nations are later called upon to manage at far greater costs. Investments in energy, education, and economic opportunity help build resilient societies that are less likely to fracture into conflict or long-term dependency.

These are not acts of generosity extended from rich countries to poor ones. They are contributions to a shared global system that wealthy nations depend on, profit from, and are diminished by when it fails. When that argument goes unmade, or is made too quietly, development spending loses the political language it needs to survive.

The budget line disappears, and somewhere, a clinic shelf goes empty.



"America First" posters. Source: Reuters/Andrew Kelly

²<https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/06/cuts-in-official-development-assistance>

“The burden of proof falls entirely on the programmes, while the forces working against them operate freely and loudly.”

The Visibility Gap

Success, in the development space, does not always announce itself. Consider Idiche, a community in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State.³ For years, residents lived with streets heavy with the smell of human waste due to open and indiscriminate defecation. During the rainy season, floods swept discarded waste into narrow drainage channels, turning the community into a breeding ground for disease.

In July 2023, with small-scale World Bank funding and strong community mobilisation, a multi-block public sanitation facility was constructed. Through peer influence and community sensitisation, residents began to understand that using the facility was safer, cleaner, and more dignified. As people saw the streets become cleaner, and foul-smelling waste bags disappear, the benefits became visible and behaviour change became self-sustaining. Residents who had grown up practising open defecation became advocates for public hygiene. The cycle of diarrhoeal disease and intestinal worm infections, long linked to the deaths of thousands of Nigerian children under five, began to weaken.

This was a monumental victory; but in the architecture of global development, success of this nature does not announce itself. The funder reviewing the programme may only see a dense technical report that is statistically sound, but unread beyond a small sector committee. The journalist who could build public pressure may never visit the site. The parliamentarian overseeing donor relations may have no visual or emotional connection to the work. Those in the corridors of influence may never hear Idiche’s testimonies about the “Clean Nigeria: Use the Toilet” campaign. And so, when budget reviews come, the programme is treated as a line item rather than a lifeline.

Across the development sector, powerful work is delivered in communities, documented in technical PDFs, and barely communicated to the world. When data is not translated into human-facing narratives, we do not only weaken the case for funding. We put at risk the very lives those data points represents.



Drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: Global baseline report 2018. Source: UNICEF/UN0145995/Schermbrucker

³<https://nigeriahealthwatch.com/articles/torchlight/a-simple-two-block-toilet-is-transforming-sanitation-in-a-kogi-community/>

“ Strategic communication in development means reaching the right audiences through the channels they actually inhabit, and in the language they actually respond to. ”

Strategic Communication as a Programme Imperative



Development organisations need to make their work visible, not just to specialists, but to the public and policymakers who ultimately decide whether funding continues. This is a matter of survival.

Strategic communication in development means reaching the right audiences through the channels they actually inhabit, and in the language they actually respond to. It is not a supplementary function. It is as essential to sustained impact as is the technical design of a programme, and yet it remains one of the most chronically underfunded capacities in the development space. Strategic communication teams, where they exist at all, are frequently the first to be cut when programme budgets tighten, the precise moment when the case for the programme’s value most needs to be made.

Bridging this gap requires development organisations to move beyond viewing communication as mere dissemination, and instead treat it as infrastructure for public trust, political legitimacy, and long-term sustainability. This means investing in communication systems that keep programmes visible, understood, and supported long before funding decisions are made.

Media Engagement and Narrative Building

A well-placed feature story in a national or international outlet can shift a programme’s political standing in ways that a hundred evaluation reports cannot. Development organisations need to cultivate journalist relationships proactively long before any budget review begins, not when a funding crisis is already underway. Embed reporters in communities. Make the story accessible before it becomes urgent. Commission photojournalism that puts a human face on aggregate data.⁴

⁴<https://innocenceinterrupted.medium.com/beyond-statistics-heres-how-strategic-storytelling-can-transform-advocacy-in-nigeria-1a3e73a68e06>

Digital Storytelling and Public Visibility

A mother explaining in her own words why a nutrition programme changed her family's life often reaches further than any official summary. Short documentary content, community-produced testimonials, and data visualised in plain language can sustain a programme's presence in public discourse between formal reporting cycles. The organisations that endure are those that remain consistently visible, not merely reactive.

Policy Communication and Stakeholder Influence

A finance ministry official weighing budget allocations needs different evidence and different entry points than a community leader or a donor agency justifying its portfolio to its own legislature. This requires tailored briefs, direct stakeholder engagement, and a sustained presence in the political spaces where funding priorities are shaped before reviews take place, not during them.

Community Participation and Trusted Advocacy

When people understand a programme, trust it, and can articulate its value in their own words, they become its most credible advocates. Participatory communication, where communities are active storytellers rather than passive beneficiaries, is both ethically sound and strategically powerful. Effective communication goes beyond sharing narratives of challenge or triumph; it pairs those stories with measurable outcomes that demonstrate real progress. A compelling story should not only evoke emotion, it should also create a pathway for action, backed by evidence.

By the time a funding cut is announced, the window for narrative intervention has often already closed. The organisations that survive budget cycles are those that never wait for one.



“ Building the bridge between reality and political conversation is not a communications task. It is a development task. And it is overdue. ”

The Cost of Silence

The budget cuts will not reverse themselves. The political conditions that produced them are not easing. Development organisations that wait for the climate to improve before making their case may discover, when they finally speak, that the decisions have already been made in rooms they were never present in.

The stories exist. The evidence exists. The work is already happening, quietly and persistently, in the communities that development finance was always intended to reach. What is missing is the bridge between those realities and the political conversations that determine whether the work continues. Building that bridge, through media, through communities, through every available channel, is not merely a communications responsibility. It is a development responsibility. And it is long overdue.

Tomorrow morning, a nurse in northern Nigeria will begin her shift before sunrise, regardless of what is decided in Washington, London, or Berlin. The real question is whether, by the time those decisions are made, anyone in those rooms understands what is at stake if her clinic shelves remain empty. We must ensure that they do.



Source: UNICEF/UN0770732/Rutherford

Credo Experience

Credo Advisory's work on the Results for Development (R4D)-led Finance Capacity Development Platform (FCDP)⁵ illustrates what happens when communication is treated as integral rather than supplementary. FCDP was designed as a large-scale nutrition financing intervention targeting some of the world's most nutrition-vulnerable populations.

The communications work Credo Advisory built around FCDP, articulating its objectives, translating its technical mission into narratives, resonates with funders and decision-makers, sustaining the programme in a sector where many programmes have ended. The communication function makes a difference.

We must tell the stories of the importance and impact that development projects: resoundingly, consistently, and in language that funders and stakeholders understand.

⁵<https://credoadvisory.com/portfolio/assisting-the-poor-and-vulnerable/>