Impacts of USAID cuts on Rohingya Refugees

Mains (GS II): International relations- India and its neighbourhood relations.

Why in the news?

The abrupt cut down of United States Agency of International Development (USAID) support by US has worsened the conditions of Rohingya people in Cox's Bazaar.

What is USAID?

- It is the ***lead international humanitarian and development arm*** of the US government.
- **Created in** – *1961* under President John F. Kennedy.
- **Objective** – To provide *economic, humanitarian, and development assistance* globally, aiming to promote stability, health, education, democracy, and poverty reduction.
- **Role** – It provides assistance to other countries primarily by funding non-governmental organisations (NGOs), foreign governments, international organisations, or other US agencies.
- **Coverage** – It has provided assistance to ***around 130 countries*** in FY2023.
- **Priority Sectors** – Food security, disaster relief, healthcare, gender equality, and environmental protection.

Significance USAID For India
• The US has provided development and humanitarian assistance to India since 1951, when President Harry Truman signed the *India Emergency Food Assistance Act.* • **In education** - Economic aid from the US has also *helped establish 8 agricultural universities*, the first Indian Institute of Technology, and 14 regional engineering colleges. • **In health** – It also strengthened India's national programs on immunization, family planning, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and polio. • **Recent decline** – In 2004, the Indian government decided to reject any foreign aid that comes with conditions. • This has, over time, led to a decline in the quantum of such assistance.

What is the Rohingya crisis?

- **Rohingya –** They are a *Muslim ethnic minority* originating from *Myanmar's Rakhine* State.
- **Issues –** The Myanmar government does *not recognize the Rohingya as citizens,* leaving them stateless and vulnerable.

- **Mass Displacement** – Following brutal *military crackdowns in 2017* involving mass killings, sexual violence, and the burning of villages, over 700,000 Rohingya were forced to flee Myanmar.
- Most of the displaced Rohingya have taken *refuge in Cox's Bazar*, Bangladesh, which has become the ***largest refugee camp*** in the world.



- **Global Condemnation** – The United Nations has labeled the violence against the Rohingya as a "textbook example of *ethnic cleansing."*

How cut down of USAID funds affect Rohingyas?

- **Escalates humanitarian crisis** – Without renewed aid, hunger, disease, and death will surge, pushing the camps toward a humanitarian disaster.
- **Food insecurity** – It forced the World Food Programme (WFP) to slash food rations from USD 12.50 to USD 8/month per refugee, a *36% reduction*, pushing refugees closer to starvation.

With an annual budget of around $40 billion, it is the largest contributor to international organizations like the World Food Programme.

- **Dwindling medical aid** – At least *five hospitals shutting down*, and sanitation programmes collapsing.
- **Loss of protection services** – It *ended gender-based violence support* and psychosocial care, increasing the vulnerability of women and children in camps.
- **Inadequate global response**- Despite new pledges (e.g., EU: Euro 32.3M), other donors cannot offset USAID's massive withdrawal, leaving critical funding gaps.

What measures can be taken to resolve this?

- **Strengthening multilateral aid** – Boost funding for organizations like WFP for refugees.
- Supporting emergency funds or soft loans from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.
- Diversifying funding sources from other nations.
- **Encouraging private philanthropy** – Engaging global foundations & wealthy individuals to support through targeted donations.
- **Re-engagement with US** – Diplomatic channels can be used to persuade the U.S. to resume funding.
- **Focussing on long-term solutions** – The international community must intensify diplomatic efforts to push for recognition of Rohingya citizenship and rights.
- **Legal and human rights advocacy**- Support international legal mechanisms to investigate crimes against the Rohingya and advocate for justice and reparations.
- **Livelihood programs** – Investing in vocational training, education, and mental health services to reduce aid dependency and improve the well-being of refugees.

Reference

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